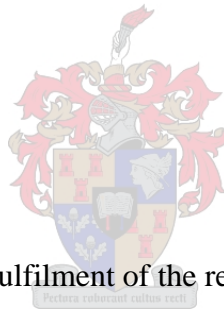


# **CURRENT PERSPECTIVES ON WISDOM IN JOB 28**

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Thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Theology at the University of Stellenbosch

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**December**

**2007**

## **DECLARATION**

I, the undersigned, hereby certify that the work contained in this thesis is my original work and has not previously, entirely or in part, been submitted at any University for a degree.

Signature.....

Date.....

## **ABSTRACT**

The aim of this thesis is to discern the trends in current scholarship on the concept of wisdom in Job 28. The trends differ according to methodological perspectives (literary, historical, and theological), depending on the relationship among the concepts of wisdom as the fear of the Lord, transcendent wisdom and traditional wisdom. However, in each perspective one can find some different interpretations which are also found in other perspectives.

Most current scholars from the literary perspective consider Job 28 as a wisdom poem or song, anticipating the speeches of Yahweh. For them, the theme of Job 28 criticises traditional wisdom which entails the doctrine of retribution and suggests transcendent wisdom, which is inaccessible to human being. The fear of the Lord is the practical conclusion of transcendent wisdom.

For the scholars working from the historical perspective, there are various opinions about the authorship, the date, the location, and the purpose of Job 28. However, for many scholars the concept of wisdom in Job 28 reveals only transcendent wisdom, which contradicts traditional wisdom that entails the doctrine of retribution. The concept of the fear of the Lord also belongs to traditional wisdom.

For many scholars who work from the theological perspective, the concept of wisdom is the fear of the Lord. The fear of the Lord in Job 28 is the repetition of the Prologue and anticipation of the speeches of Yahweh. The fear of the Lord is the practical conclusion of transcendent wisdom and can coexist with traditional wisdom.

## OPSOMMING

Die doel van hierdie tesis is om die onderskeid aan te dui in die verskillende tendense wat gevolg word deur geleerdes in hulle omskrywing van die term wysheid, soos dit in Job 28 gebruik word. Hierdie tendense verskil volgens die verskillende metodologiese perspektiewe (literêr, histories en teologies) en verskil ook in terme van die verhouding tussen die verskillende konsepte van wysheid wat geïdentifiseer word, naamlik: die vrees van die Here; transendentale wysheid en tradisionele wysheid. Daar moet in gedagte gehou word dat in elke perspektief daar elemente bestaan wat ook in van die ander perspektiewe aanwesig is.

Die meeste Ou-Testamentici wat 'n literêre perspektief gebruik, beskou Job 28 as 'n wysheidsgedig of lied wat die toesprake van Jahwe antisipeer. Vir hulle bestaan die tema van Job 28 as kritiek wat gelewer word teen tradisionele wysheid, wat die leerstuk van vergelding behels en wil voorstel dat transendentale wysheid ontoeganklik vir die mensdom is. Die vrees van die Here is die praktiese uitvloeisel van transendentale wysheid.

Vir akademici wat fokus op 'n historiese perspektief, bestaan daar uiteenlopende opinies oor die outeurskap, die datum, die plek en doel van Job 28. Vir baie van die akademici openbaar die konsep van wysheid slegs transendentale wysheid. Dit weerspreek tradisionele wysheid wat die beginsel van vergelding behels. Die vrees van die Here behoort ook tot tradisionele wysheid.

Vir baie geleerdes wat vanuit 'n teologiese perspektief werk, is die konsep van wysheid die vrees van die Here. Die vrees van die Here in Job 28 behels die herhaling van die proloog en die afwagting op die toesprake van Jahwe. Die konsep van vrees van die Here is die praktiese

uitvloeiSEL van transendentale wysheid en kan met tradisionele wysheid saambestaan.

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# Chapter 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background

Although the Old Testament contains wisdom literature as part of its witness to the religion of ancient Israel, the quest for a theological centre in the Old Testament made the wisdom literature almost marginalised (Day 1998:1). Since the wisdom literature did not accord with the preconceived notion of theology as a recital of God's action in history, such wisdom literature was regarded as wholly secular (Clements 1992:21). Reflecting such a past trend, Preuss (1995:25) still holds that the centre of the Old Testament is God's historical activity of electing Israel for communion with his world and the obedient activity required of this people, and even a modest degree of reflection leads to the critical question of how this centre relates to the wisdom literature.

In a certain sense, this marginalisation of the wisdom literature was found in conservative Korean churches.<sup>1</sup> When they read wisdom literature in the Bible, they sought for the unity and the theological centre of the Bible (Lee 2002:24). However, they had the difficulty in finding them in wisdom literature and they rather had to face the universal themes which other religions shared. This difficulty of finding the theological centre in wisdom literature has led the Korean scholars to neglecting the study of wisdom literature itself.

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<sup>1</sup> Conservative Korean churches believe in the Bible as the word of God with no error and revealing the uniqueness of the Christianity against other religions. This view regarding the Bible is inherited from the teaching of foreign missionaries. They regard other religions as equivalent to worshipping another god (Oosterrom 1990:79). Nevertheless, other religions still had an effect on the interpretation of the Bible.



However, on the other hand, Korean readers including the conservative church could not escape from the influence of neighbouring religious contexts, such as Buddhism, Confucianism and Shamanism (Chung 1997:34). According to Buddhism, since the world exists as a result of multiple cause and conditions, the concept of wisdom (*Panna*) consists of the direct apprehension of transcendent truths concerning the nature of the world and human existence (Brandon 1970:468). In order to break this law of cause and effect (*Karma*), a large number of good works are required, attaining *Nirvana* (Markham 1996:127).

Similar to the view of world of Buddhism, Korean Confucianism has a kind of view of world which is composed of *Li* and *Ki* (Chung 1997:6; Lee 2002:22). A perfect man is a sage who is conscious of the will of Heaven, which is *Li*, and who makes an effort to possess the original state of *Li*. The original state can be attained only through obeying the will of Heaven and conducting oneself and relating to others properly. Korean Shamanism also has a view of the world in which human beings can have access to the supernatural world through the shaman who exercises priestly functions. They seek fortune, happiness, ousting calamities, and healing diseases through communication between the deity and man (Clark 1961:173; J T Kim 1996:42-46).

Even though Buddhism, Confucianism and Shamanism in Korea have different views of the world, they reflect the Oriental system of the world, and the concept of wisdom for them is recognising the reality of cause and effect and trying to break the cycle of the evil consequence by means of human efforts. This Oriental view of the world has an effect on the interpretation of Korean readers on the concept of wisdom. The

recognition of the view of world as cause and consequence can be found in the interpretations of the Korean scholarship. God's blessing can be understood as a response to good works such as prayers and offerings for building churches (Chung 1997:34). Taking these phenomena into account, one can recognise that the neglect of the study of wisdom literature has brought about this undesirable result in the understanding of biblical wisdom.

Fortunately, in the current biblical scholarship outside Korea, the trend to disregard the wisdom literature has reversed itself. New interest in wisdom has increased and deepened by a scholarly appreciation of the importance of wisdom thinking and literature among Israel's neighbours (Day 1998). Wisdom literature has renewed our appreciation for the understanding of reality expressed in traditions. Consequently, wisdom literature has moved towards the centre of interest among Old Testament scholars. However, in the Korean scholarship the study of wisdom literature has not been done adequately. Therefore, this thesis has as its purpose the recognition and development of wisdom literature that Korean theology has hitherto neglected.

The newly emerging interest in wisdom literature caused current scholars to search for the origin and the concept of wisdom in the wisdom literature. However, it is difficult to define the concept of wisdom. The idea is as broad as reality and constitutes a culturally articulated way of relating to the entire world (Van Leeuwen 2000:848). Nevertheless, most scholars acknowledge that there can be some possibility of arranging several opinions about the origin and the concept of the wisdom.

According to one opinion regarding the origin of the wisdom, biblical wisdom emanates from the effort to discover order in human life and natural world. Human beings make an effort to seek hidden orders in the confusion of varied experiences to which they are subject. According to another opinion, biblical wisdom originates from creation theology. Zimmerli (1978) expressed a concern to justify the creation theology of wisdom out of the Torah. Von Rad (1972) sought to integrate creation theology with salvation history. Faith is not limited to the area of God's history with his people, but to the total experience of the world. However, some recent scholars such as Westermann (1995) and Brueggemann (1997) have a tendency to assert that wisdom comes from both the ethos of the people and the royal court.

Agreeing with this recent trend on the origin of wisdom, Crenshaw (1976:3) presents four kinds of wisdom concepts: natural, juridical, practical, and theological. Natural wisdom is an attempt to master matters for human survival and well-being. Juridical and practical wisdom focus on human relationships in an ordered society or state; and theological wisdom moves in the realm of theodicy, and in so doing affirms God as ultimate meaning even when denying a purpose to life. Thus wisdom can be described as the sum of several aspects, and the understanding of the concept of wisdom can depend on the appreciation of the relationship among several aspects of wisdom.

## **1.2 Problem**

What types of wisdom do current scholars recognise in the book of Job? Can one find a certain trend in the current scholarship on the concept of wisdom in the book of Job? In the wake of the interest in the wisdom itself, current Joban scholars have a tendency to

focus on Job 28, since Job 28 reveals transcendent wisdom (Job 28:1-27) and the fear of the Lord as the concept of wisdom (Job 28:28), while Job 28 responds to traditional wisdom of Job's friends (chs 3-27). The interpretation on the concept of wisdom in Job 28 is diverse. However, three types of interpretation on the concept of wisdom in Job 28 can be discerned according to the methodological perspectives of the interpreters.

First, some scholars who work from the literary perspective (Van Wolde: 2003; Newsom 2003), find the concept of wisdom in both transcendent wisdom<sup>2</sup> and the fear of the Lord (Job 1:1; 28:28), against the friends' traditional wisdom. According to them, the concept of wisdom in Job 28 criticises traditional wisdom of Job's friends which entails the doctrine of retribution<sup>3</sup>. By denying that human beings know wisdom, Job 28 contradicts the doctrine of retribution. By stating that wisdom only belongs to God, Job 28 suggests transcendent wisdom and the fear of the Lord. The only thing that human beings can do is the fear of the Lord (Job 28:28) which becomes the practical conclusion of transcendent wisdom.

Van Wolde (2003:30) holds that Job 28 exhibits a negative aspect of human activity. Wisdom does not belong to this category of human activities. Rather she accepts the last verse: 'The fear of the Lord is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding

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<sup>2</sup> In this thesis, transcendent wisdom can be referred to as divine order. Some elements of transcendent wisdom as divine order can be found in traditional wisdom, but the extreme traditional wisdom as the doctrine of retribution remains a rigid dogmatized system.

<sup>3</sup> The doctrine of retribution is the belief that there is an exact correspondence between one's behaviour and one's destiny. Certain behaviour earns rewards, while certain other kinds of behaviour bring pain or disaster. Sometimes there can be a match between this doctrine and reality. However, at other times there can be a mismatch between them, as in Job's case. To this mismatch both the narrator and the characters of the book of Job turn their attention (Clines 1989: xxxix).

(28:28)', in the sense of the limitation of human activity. The concept of wisdom belongs to the category of not doing. Understanding is not presented as something which is the part of the category of analysing something, but which fits in the category of fearing or respecting something. Focusing on the dialogue among genres, Newsom (2003:181) also contends that the fear of the Lord and turning from evil are the effective equivalents of transcendent wisdom that remains inaccessible to human beings.

Secondly, for some scholars who work from the historical perspective (Westermann 1995, Blenkinsopp 1995), the concept of wisdom is only related to transcendent wisdom or divine order, rejecting both the fear of the Lord and the doctrine of retribution. According to them, Job 28 was written or edited in the post-exilic period. The author or the editor criticises the current opinion of the time, which represents both the doctrine of retribution and the fear of the Lord. Job and his friends are typical examples of the doctrine of retribution and the fear of the Lord, which are referred to as the later wisdom.<sup>4</sup> Job 28 criticises them and suggests a new concept of transcendent wisdom.

For Westermann (1995:107), the later wisdom which manifests itself in Proverbs 1-9 is reflected in the speeches of Job's companions and in the Elihu speeches. For him, the later wisdom implies to the doctrine of retribution, the personification of wisdom, and

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<sup>4</sup> According to Westermann (1985:98), early wisdom admonishes toward cooperation with one's neighbour and is directed toward conduct in a narrow, restricted sphere of living. On the other hand, later wisdom is characterised by the series of summons to listen with an accompanying address as well as substantiation in the form praising wisdom. It is both abstract and yet functional; it can be personified. It tends to be rigid and repetitive in its exhortations and warnings, whereas early wisdom is multiform, lively, and humorous.

the fear of the Lord. However, one can find the continuation of early proverbial wisdom initially in the core of the poem in chapter 28 and also in the author's polemic against a dogmatic antithesis of the righteous and the wicked.

Thirdly, for other scholars who work from the theological perspective (Van Selms 1985, Y S Park 1987), the concept of wisdom refers to the fear of the Lord<sup>5</sup> to which transcendent wisdom leads, while traditional wisdom does not contradict this. The concept of wisdom acknowledges the general rule of traditional wisdom, but it attempts to explain the exceptional cases within some general principle, whenever it faces particular circumstances. The folly of Job's friends is that they know the general rule of theological wisdom, without recognising that this does not apply to Job's particular case.

For Van Selms (1985:105), wisdom is God's secret. God surveys the entire scene and knows how to establish limits for the least tangible things. To mortals God did not reveal what, at its innermost, holds the world together, but God limited them to concerns of practical reason: reverent obedience to the divine commandments and a life that shuns evil against God and men. However, this wisdom does not reject what the friends say as untrue. Though the general truths are not applicable to Job's case, the author accepts the relative validity of their arguments (1985:105).

Y S Park (1987:270), who represents conservative Korean theology, accepts the concept of wisdom in Job 28 as the fear of the Lord. Only God knows the wisdom, since God is

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<sup>5</sup> The fear of the Lord has its origins in awe at God's mighty works, but eventually becomes the meaning of religion. The authors of the wisdom literature used to connect their works to the larger biblical world view, even when they did not take up historical themes so prominently elsewhere (van Leeuwen 2000:848).

omniscient and the creator of the universe. Therefore, the only way to know wisdom is the fear of the Lord. The fear of the Lord can coexist with the doctrine of retribution where the wicked are punished in this world. He attributes Job 27:13-23 to Job's mouth, which means that Job acknowledges the effectiveness of the doctrine of retribution. That the friends are on the wrong is tantamount to not realising that the general principle of retribution is not applicable to Job's case.

Consequently, many current scholars focus on Job 28 in order to identify the intention of the author or the theme of the text in the book of Job. This approach to Job 28 gave birth to various interpretations on the concept of wisdom. This leads to the central question of this thesis being: *what trends can one discern in existing Joban scholarship on the concept of wisdom in Job 28?*

### **1.3 Hypothesis**

The first hypothesis of this thesis is that *the modern research on the concept of wisdom in Job 28 exhibits literary, historical and theological trends*<sup>6</sup>. It means that one can discern several different trends in scholarship concerned with the concept of wisdom in Job 28. Special attention will be paid to the underlying methodologies.

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<sup>6</sup> The assumption that three types of categories can be found does not mean that there is no overlap between them. In some cases it is difficult to categorize scholars into one particular trend. Even the scholars who work from the historical perspective can consider literary aspects and proceed toward theological observations. Nevertheless, one can discern main concerns in most scholars, and the main concerns are focused on for the purpose of this thesis.

The second hypothesis is that *the different trends in the modern research of wisdom in Job 28 share a certain common understanding*. It presupposes a common understanding that *the concept of wisdom in Job 28 depends on the relationship among three concepts of wisdom: transcendent wisdom, the fear of the Lord, and traditional wisdom as the doctrine of retribution*.

#### **1.4 Methodology**

The methodology in this thesis is a literature study of the interpretations on the book of Job. This literature study requires the process of selecting the relevant writings and analysing the writings in three methodologies (literary, historical, and theological). According to each perspective, this thesis will attempt to discern the trends in current scholarship on the interpretation of Job 28. When Job 28 is seen by the scholars from their own perspective, the concept of wisdom in Job 28 will play a crucial role to interpret this chapter. By comparing the concepts of wisdom in each methodology and analysing commonalities and differences between methodologies, one will discern trends in the current scholarship on the concept of wisdom in Job 28.

#### **1.5 History of the study of wisdom in Job**

From the early Christian community up to the present, the book of Job has attracted the attention of various readers and scholars. The oldest surviving interpretation of the book of Job is probably the *Testament of Job* that comes from Alexandria in the first century BCE (Crenshaw 1992:866). It is characterised by the patient Job, including the zeal against idols, extensive speculation about Satan, cosmological dualism, interest in women, burial customs, magic, patience, and so on. Even though it differs considerably



from the biblical story, it may have affected the interpretation of the book of Job, presenting the patient Job as the main centre of the book.

In the third century Origen (c 185-254), who was the greatest early theologian of Alexandria, wrote one of the most important commentaries on Job, but unfortunately this commentary did not survive. However, scholars dispose of more than 300 citations from his writings, often accompanied by detailed exegesis (Newsom & Schreiner 1999:586). Origen is characterised by allegorical interpretation. He explained the mystery of evil in terms of the initial fall of pre-existent souls. According to him, Job was a just man who feared God before the law was given to Moses. He portrayed the suffering of the righteous as a divine gift meant to heal and strengthen the sufferer.

In the fourth and fifth centuries Chrysostom (c 347-407), Ambrose (c 339-97), and Augustine (c 354-430), wrote several important commentaries and sermons on Job (Newsom & Schreiner 1999:587). Chrysostom, who was born in Syrian Antioch, interpreted the book of Job as typological. Job was the model of philosophy, the sage who was glorious in adversity because he had always been detached in prosperity. In the whirlwind speech Job discovered true wisdom, namely his own human weakness and the fear of God. Ambrose also equated the wisdom of suffering with detachment. The adversaries of Job and David enabled them to transcend the waves or sea of this temporal, ever fluctuating world. Suffering frees the sufferer from earthly entanglements.

However, Augustine (c 354-430)'s interpretation was somewhat different from

Chrysostom's and Ambrose's regarding the view on suffering (Crenshaw 1992:866). Whereas Chrysostom considers suffering as a divine gift, since suffering is good, Augustine considers Job's suffering as evils that all the elect have to endure. For Augustine the story of Job portrays suffering as a test of the just person. Job knew the universality of sin and recognised that the righteous person could expect no reward for right conduct.

By the fifth century in the early and patristic era, Job's virtue and patience were a common theme. Job became a just figure who feared God and endured suffering. Since the suffering was considered as a providential benefit, it was beneficial, medicinal, and pedagogical. Furthermore, the early authors associated Job's suffering with wisdom. The insight and discernment gained by Job led to a wisdom that gave them a deeper perception and allowed them to perceive the vanity and nature of earthly prosperity and power. Although these interpretations do not appear to have exercised any major influence on the medieval Joban tradition, nonetheless several themes emerge that characterise the patristic image of Job, some of which recur in medieval interpretation.

The characteristics of medieval interpretation were the allegorical tradition established by Gregory the Great (c 540-604) and the literal tradition formulated by Thomas Aquinas (c 1225-57). Gregory interpreted Job as a multilayered text with innumerable literal, allegorical, and moral meanings (Simon 1990:357). For him, Job was the literal embodiment of moral truth. Job's friends also dispensed lofty truths, but misapplied the truths to Job, since they did not understand that this suffering was not punished for past sins. For Gregory, Job's complaint became words about the vanity of earthly prosperity.

Job knew that providence was most indiscernible when the good prosper and the wicked suffered, since suffering freed the elect from the world and led to wisdom. Hence Job discovered an anthropological wisdom that allowed him deeper insight into the self and the proper home of the soul in the eternal realm.

Whereas Gregory interpreted Job allegorically, Thomas Aquinas (c 1225-57) expounded the text according to the literal sense (Simon 1990:355). Job's complaints were an honest and experimental observation about human events. For him, if providence is restricted to history, then disorder is the true character of that providential rule. This problem of God's injustice disappears if there is an afterlife where God remedies historical injustices. Job did not ascend through suffering and affliction. It was Job's faith in immortality that allowed him a deeper perception of reality.

Thomas Aquinas's literal interpretation had an effect on reformalists' literary interpretation. Calvin (1554) wrote 159 sermons on Job, mostly polemical defences of providence (Schreiner 1994:5). Calvin portrayed Job as the lone defender of immortality against his friends. As in the case of Thomas, Calvin used the doctrine of immortality to set up the same perceptual opposition between Job and his friends. Unlike Job's friends, Job knew that history often seemed confused. Providence is not always discernible, and sometimes God hides while the wicked prospers. Job's suffering drove him toward a deeper awareness of the darker side of God and confronted him with two aspects of divine hiddenness: the inscrutability of God's justice and the incomprehensibility of divine providence.

For Calvin (1554), Job encountered two levels of God's justice, namely, that revealed in

the law and higher secret justice (Newsom & Schreiner 1999:591). Job knew he was not being punished according to the lower justice of the law. However, his search for the cause of his afflictions led him to confront the secret justice of God. Since God's will is the rule of justice, even those actions that transcend the justice of the law are righteous. Calvin placed visibility and invisibility of justice within nature's dialectic between hiddenness and clarity. While nature reflects the wisdom of divine providence, it also transcends human understanding and leaves us with only a glimpse of God's providence. On the basis of the revelation of nature, Job trusted that God is ordering human events with justice.

As biblical criticism was introduced, the question of the historicity of the story of Job became a topic of contention in the eighteenth century. Lowth's lectures on Hebrew poetry (1753) represent an important stage in literary analysis and appreciation of Job. Lowth held that Job did not fit the formal criteria of Greek tragedies. The artistic quality of the book should be judged rather according to criteria appropriate to Hebrew poetry. In particular, Lowth praised Job for the poet's descriptive power in expressing character and manners, sentiments and descriptions of natural phenomena.

Blake understood Job in his initial state as fundamentally failing to comprehend the nature of God, the world, and human existence (Simon 1990:356). His outward piety is merely life according to the letter rather than the spirit, represented in the first engraving by Job's holding the book of the Law on his lap. Thus, for Blake, Job is not perfect and upright, as is the biblical Job, but is rather misguided and a sinner. His suffering serves to give him gradual awareness of his pride and his misperception of reality. God's

appearance to Job in the whirlwind serves as the critical moment of recognition for Job, who now sees the true God.

In the nineteenth to mid twentieth century, the historical critical approach still dominated the study of the book of Job, generally focusing on innocent suffering as the central theme of Job (Crenshaw1992:866). The rebellion of Job and the universal human condition was dealt with. The modern interpretation contended not only with the book's meaning, but also increasingly with the investigation of the textual, historical, and comparative issues that became the hallmark of scientific biblical criticism at this time. These issues largely set the agenda for the study of Job until the present.

In the mid twentieth century, the focus shifted to the dialogue and its discussion of the doctrine of retribution; and it often seemed to be in tension with the prologue and epilogue. This also raised the issue of theodicy, or justifying God's moral governance of the universe. Furthermore, the book of Job was read as protesting and unorthodox, calling into question such notions as the doctrine of retribution or traditional understanding of God.

Throughout the late twentieth century, numerous commentaries and studies on Job have appeared. One can divide the commentaries and monographs into three categories. The first includes works that concentrate on the findings of the historical critical method. The studies by Pope (1965) and Fohrer (1968) represent this approach. A second group of commentaries reflect a more literary approach to the biblical narratives. The scholars such as Gordis (1978), Terrien (1982), and Habel (1985) are influential scholars in this

regard. Such final form approaches have sought to give full weight to each section of the book. Additionally, twentieth century interpretations of Job encompass a wide variety of other genres, including the theological approach (Van Selms 1985, Wharton 2000), the liberationist approach of Gutierrez (1988), and also a deconstructive reading approach (Clines 1989, Good 2000).

Clines's commentary (1989) is more conscious of the role of the reader in producing different but legitimate readings. In an article, Clines (1990:65) reinforced his own mostly reader-oriented approach with deconstructionist reading, demonstrating how the book as a whole undermines the positions it affirms about suffering and moral order in a way that prevents any determinate meaning. Current scholars have the privilege to see and enjoy all the interpretations of the past on the book of Job. They do not displace their predecessors completely. Rather they exhibit the complexity and diversity of the concept of wisdom in the book of Job.

## **1.6 Summary of chapters**

**Chapter 1 Introduction** deals with the background and the motive of the research and states the problem, hypothesis, methodology, and history of the study of wisdom in Job. This thesis aims to discern the trends in current scholarship on the concept of wisdom in Job 28. It is assumed that the understanding of wisdom in Job 28 consists in the relationship among three concepts of wisdom: the fear of the Lord, transcendent wisdom, and traditional wisdom as the doctrine of retribution.

**Chapter 2 Literary interpretation of Job 28** shows the trend of the scholars who work

from the literary perspective. Most literary perspective scholars consider Job 28 as a wisdom poem or song while some regard it as a monologue or soliloquy. The function of the wisdom poem can be the conclusion of the dialogue (chs 3-27), or the bridge between the dialogue and the monologue (chs 29-31), or the anticipation of the speeches of Yahweh (chs 38-41). For them, the theme as the concept of wisdom in Job 28 plays a crucial role to understand the structure of the book of Job, since the theme of Job 28 criticises traditional wisdom which entails the doctrine of retribution and suggests both transcendent wisdom and the fear of the Lord.

**Chapter 3 Historical interpretation of Job 28** deals with the scholars working from the historical perspective. There are various opinions regarding the authorship, date, location, and purpose of Job 28. While many scholars attribute Job 28 to the unknown author of the book, and it was written in the post-exilic period for the purpose of criticising traditional wisdom, there are still different opinions about the historical interpretation on Job 28. For many scholars the concept of wisdom in Job 28 reveals only transcendent wisdom, but the fear of the Lord is criticized by traditional wisdom.

**Chapter 4 Theological interpretation of Job 28** suggests that most scholars who work from the theological perspective consider the concept of wisdom in Job 28 as the fear of the Lord. The fear of the Lord appears in the Prologue and is repeated in Job 28 and is fulfilled in the confrontation with God. Transcendent wisdom leads to the fear of the Lord. Traditional wisdom as the doctrine of retribution can coexist with the fear of the Lord. This chapter discusses the relationship between transcendent wisdom and the fear of the Lord, and between traditional wisdom and the fear of the Lord.

**Chapter 5 Research into the concept of wisdom in Job 28** deals with the comparison between the conclusions which had already been reached. One can discern the different understandings of the scholars working from three different perspectives on the concept of wisdom in Job 28. The main interpretation of each perspective is different. However, in each perspective one can find some different interpretations.

**Chapter 6 Conclusion** summarises the previous chapters and suggests that the recognition of the different interpretations on the concept of wisdom in Job 28 coexist in Job 28 and provides us with a crucial example of how to approach the final text of the book of Job. This consideration on the concept of wisdom in Job 28 can provide the Korean church and its scholars with interest in the wisdom literature which has been neglected, telling them the importance of the coexistence between traditional wisdom and transcendent wisdom including the fear of the Lord.



## **Chapter 2 Literary interpretation of Job 28**

### **2.1 Introduction**

Since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, a number of important commentaries and monographs, along with hundreds of articles, have been published on the book of Job (Newsom 1996:177). This level of interest in the book of Job is not limited to biblical scholars. Significant books and articles on the book of Job have been written by philosophers, psychologists and even political commentators. When the rich variety of work on the book of Job is considered, the discussion of the current scholars on the book of Job may be expected to be even more diverse in the current twenty-first century.

At the same time, methodologically, a new literary approach in the study of the book of Job emerged partly arising from dissatisfaction with the tendencies of traditional historical criticism (Newsom & Schreiner 1999:596). While the traditional methods of historical criticism are being abandoned or radically modified or given secondary consideration, the intentionality of the book of Job as the text is sought after through a close analysis of the structure of the book of Job. The long history of redaction of the book of Job is ignored and a detailed account of the book of Job's plot is dealt with.

This shift from a historical-critical to a literary paradigm in the study of the book of Job

has made a big contribution in dealing with the book of Job as a whole, especially including Job 28 and the Elihu speeches (chs 32-37) and the second of God's speeches (chs 40-41). Job 28 was considered as a literary technique for various purposes in the book of Job, unlike many historical critical scholars who reject Job 28 as secondary, for the reason that the form and the content of Job 28 does not fit with those of the preceding and following chapters.<sup>7</sup>

The theme of the wisdom in Job 28 provides a crucial key to explain the function of Job 28, since Job 28 exhibits divine transcendent wisdom which is inaccessible to human beings, and the fear of the Lord (28:28), and it responds to traditional wisdom of the friends (Job 3-27, 29-37) which entails the doctrine of retribution. The theme of wisdom in Job 28 can belong to the conclusion of the dialogue (chs 3- 27), or can be a different voice from the dialogue and may be similar to the speeches of God (chs 38-41).

Most scholars who work from the literary perspective reflect one of three different opinions on the literary function of Job 28 in the entire book of Job. Firstly, some scholars consider Job 28 as the climax of the dialogue (chs 3-27) between Job and his friends (Janzen 1985, Zuck 1992, Wolfers 1995, Habel 1992, Van der Lugt 1995). Secondly, other scholars think of Job 28 as a poem or an interlude which functions as a bridge between the previous chapters 3-27 and following chapters 29-31 (Clark 1982, Reyburn 1992, Cheney 1994, Hoffman 1996, Newsom 2003). Thirdly, other scholars

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<sup>7</sup> For many historical critical scholars (Driver 1964; Fohrer 1968; Pope 1970), chapter 28, the Elihu speeches and some part of God's speeches are rejected as secondary.

have a tendency to consider Job 28 as an anticipation of the speeches of Yahweh (chs 38-41), even if they acknowledge that Job 28 is an interlude between dialogue (chs 3-27) and Job's monologue (chs 29-31), or the conclusion of the dialogue (chs 3-27) between Job and his friends (Andersen 1976, Terrien 1982, Hartley 1985, Alter 1992, Van Wolde 1997; 2003).

## **2.2 Job 28 in view of literary technique**

### **2.2.1 Soliloquy or monologue**

Most scholars who work from the literary perspective agree that Job 28 is a unique form in comparison with previous chapters and following chapters. They consider Job 28 as a wisdom poem, but some scholars are of the opinion that Job 28 is a soliloquy or a monologue which was uttered by Job (Wolfers 1995, Van Wolde 1997). At the end of the dialogue (chs 3-27), Job turns his speech from a dialogue to a monologue or a soliloquy. Therefore, Job 28 is considered the continuation and conclusion of chapter 27.

According to Wolfers (1995:492), Job 28 is a soliloquy of Job as the climax of the dialogue. In an early version of the drama, the author intended to conclude the whole book with a symmetrical balancing of the opening announcement. The position in which the chapter has been placed suggests that it is to be considered the continuation and conclusion of chapter 27. Each of chapters 27 and 29 is introduced with a phrase indicating Job as the speaker. Chapter 27 is a part of Job's final monologue. Chapter 28 follows from 27 with only the conjunction '*ki*'. If there is continuity, it is apparent that the monologue has modulated into a soliloquy.

For Wolfers (1995:492), Job resents the pretensions to wisdom of his friends, their advice on the nature of man's relations with God. But so far Job's own position has appeared to lack logic. The wicked prosper and only their descendants suffer for it, or they themselves feel their position only at the last moment. Those who adhere to God are chosen for ceaseless scrutiny and punishment. God is capricious and even actively malign towards those who obey him. Yet Job maintains both his integrity and his loyalty to his persecutor.

For Wolfers (1995:493), Job 27 and 28 insist on the superiority of intuitive knowledge (27:2-6) and revealed knowledge (28:28) to wisdom and understanding. The progress which begins with the stubborn certitude of the first verse of Job 27 leads to the assertion of undiluted faith in the last verse of Job 28. The application of observation, analysis, and debate is futile. Wisdom cannot be found or even located; only received. Something is occurring beyond our powers of comprehension, in a dimension we cannot negotiate. Nevertheless, Job will continue to fear God and avoid evil. Job 28 demonstrates that God really won his wager. Therefore, for him, Job 28 is the soliloquy which belongs to the mouth of Job.

Similarly, for Van Wolde (1997:88), Job 28 refers to a monologue by Job. As Job's first monologue in chapter 3 functions as a hinge between the prologue and the dialogues, so Job's second monologues in chapters 28-31 make possible the transition from the dialogue to the last part of the book. In this second monologue, Job 28 points forward to the rest of the book and especially to God's speech, while Job 29-31 points back to the previous dialogues in the book.

Van Wolde (1997:89), refers to Job's monologue, and states that Job celebrates human power and impotence in Job 28. Human beings, who are capable of so much, are not capable of finding wisdom; their worth is limited by contrast with that of God. God is the only one who knows the way to wisdom and who has found it. When God was planning and establishing the cosmos, he discovered wisdom. So wisdom is a phenomenon which precedes creation and at the same time is revealed through and to God in the process of creation itself. Wisdom is the ordering principle of his process of creation, the hidden design behind everything. Wisdom does not fit in this category of human activities. Wisdom is here described as fitting in the category of not doing. One should refrain from doing. Therefore, for the author, Job 28 belongs to Job's monologue.

The researcher thinks that Job 28 could well be a monologue or soliloquy of Job. However, he cannot deny the form of Job 28 as being a poem or song. Job 28 can function as the monologue or soliloquy of Job in the form of poem or song, especially since Job 28 has the internal structure of a poem.

### **2.2.2 Wisdom song**

While some scholars consider Job 28 as a soliloquy or monologue which belongs to the mouth of Job, other scholars think of Job 28 as a wisdom song which stands in itself. For them, Job 28 was written by the author of the book as a whole, even though it constitutes an independent unit. The wisdom song plays a role of musical interlude (Andersen 1976) or cadenza (Hoffman 1996) which provides a needed relief for the reader.

For Andersen (1976:222), Job 28 stands complete in itself. Yet it does not interrupt the flow. The dialogue with the friends ends with chapter 27, and chapter 28 provides an interlude which prevents Job's soliloquy in chapters 29-31 from following too abruptly on his peroration in chapter 27. The tranquillity of this meditation contrasts with the turbulence before and after it, and provides a needed relief for the reader. By a similar device Job's final challenge (chs 29-31) and Yahweh's reply (chs 39-41) are kept apart by the speeches of Elihu (chs 32-37), whose slowness of movement creates an interval of suspense against which the words of the Lord become all the more majestic..

For Andersen (1976:224), Job 28 emanates from someone other than the known characters, and he appreciates that the dramatic function of the piece is like that of a commentary supplied by a chorus between the acts of a play. The interlude is spoken by the narrator. It emphasises the failure of human mind to arrive at the hidden wisdom, and so, far from interfering with the speeches of the God, it lays the foundation for them by showing their necessity. Here the author expresses his own point of view. Therefore, this song has a key importance for understanding the entire book.

Like Andersen (1976), for Hoffman (1996:282) it is difficult to imagine that chapter 28 was originally composed either as a speech of Job, or of one of the friends, or of God. Rather, it stands entirely by itself. He regards chapter 28 as the term 'cadenza' from the realm of music. It creates an interlude in the natural development of the work without disturbing it. This chapter does not contain any emotional element, or any expression of mutual tension between Job and his friends, nor rebellion against the conduct of the

creator. However, from the linguistic viewpoint, chapter 28 is not markedly different from the other poetic chapters. It is written on the same scale as the book as a whole, and does not create disharmony, even though it constitutes an independent unit.

According to Hofmann (1996:288), the absence of a heading in chapter 28 may indicate that the editor who incorporated it felt that its contents did not suit any of the speakers and, as the song originally had no heading, he left it that way. For him, the key word of this chapter is wisdom. Not only has humankind not found wisdom, but it is so much beyond their attainment that they are unable to even assess it properly. Wisdom is not the lot of humanity, but of God alone. The limited quality of knowledge is an immanent human quality, not subject to correction by means of learning. Errors and mistaken views stem from an inaccurate use of the concepts of wisdom.

The researcher does not deny that Job 28 can be a wisdom song. Nevertheless, Job 28 is originally a poem and has the internal structure of a poem. As a poem, Job 28 can function as a song, providing the reader with a kind of relief. Furthermore, as a poem, it can be either a soliloquy or a monologue by Job.

### **2.3.3 Wisdom poem**

Despite some different opinions, many scholars (Clark 1982, Hartley 1988, Alter 1992) hold that Job 28 is a wisdom poem, especially since Job 28 has an internal structure as a poem. The poet composed this poem about wisdom. This poem stands in the contradiction with the immediate context in order to address the issue of human suffering and God's wisdom more generally than would be possible within a Joban

speech.

According to Clark (1982:402), Job 28 is a poem about the concept of wisdom, which does not have a very close connection with its context and is not really a part of the argument between Job and his three friends. However, Clark holds that Job 28 itself has a reasonable internal structure as a poem. When Clark analysed the first part of chapter 28 (28:1-11), it held repeated ideas and themes. He listed these repetition as A (1-2), B (3), C (4), A (5-6), C (7-8), B (9), A (10-11). Paragraph breaks appear at the beginning of verse 12, verse 20, and verse 28. Verse 12 and 20 both ask where wisdom can be found and they use an almost identical wording.

Clark (1982:402) explains that the verses following them can be in some way parallel with each other. Verse 13-14 and 21-22 both attempt to answer the question where wisdom can be found. At least, they give a partial answer and state where wisdom cannot be found. Verses 15-19 compare the value of wisdom with that of gold and other precious objects. Verses 23-27 state that God only knows the location and the true value of wisdom. The last verse is not part of either pattern, and stands on its own as the climax of the whole poem.

Hartley (1988:382) also considers Job 28 as a poem. At the end of the dialogue, the poet composed this poem about wisdom and appropriately placed it at the end of the dialogue to provide the audience a reflective respite, allowing them to ponder the preceding discussion, and also to prepare them for the course the dramatic action will take next. For him (1985:44), the wisdom poem (ch28) denies that humanity knows



wisdom. The wisdom poem starts, showing that human beings have a vast knowledge and great technical skills (28:1-11). However, no human being can bring wisdom into his own service. Neither can wisdom be bought with precious metals or gems.

Like Hartley, for Alter (1992:87) the book of Job has been designed by the poet using formal features of the poem. The wisdom poem (ch 28) emphasises the vast scope of God's wisdom against man's limited understanding (1992:92). And specific details of the cosmic imagery that will begin the divine discourse are strategically anticipated. God's speech regarding the storm is not only an effectively structured poem, but also a climactic development of images, ideas, and themes that appear in different and sometimes antithetical contexts earlier in the poetic argument.

The researcher agrees with the scholars who consider Job 28 as a wisdom poem, especially because Job 28 has the internal structure as a poem. As a poem, Job 28 repeats ideas and themes. However, the researcher is of the opinion that Job 28 can either be a monologue or soliloquy of Job, or a wisdom song with the form of a wisdom poem.

## **2.3 Function of Job 28 in the entire book**

### **2.3.1 Climax of the dialogue (chs 3-27) between Job and his friends**

Considering Job 28 as a wisdom poem (song) or Job's soliloquy (monologue), the scholars exhibit several opinions regarding the function of Job 28 in the entire book. Some scholars (Janzen, 1985, Zuck 1992, Wolfers 1995, Habel 1992, Van der Lugt 1995) consider Job 28 as a climax of the dialogue between Job and his friends. In Job

28, Job contradicts the friends' retribution and confesses that human beings cannot know wisdom, since this belongs to only God (Job 28:1-27). The fear of the Lord (Job 28:28) becomes the conclusion of Job 28. Climactically, Job expresses his opinion about wisdom in the form of the fear of the Lord in the last verse of Job 28.

Janzen (1985:189) insists that the desire and the search for wisdom have carried Job through the dialogue (chs 3-27) and the wisdom poem in chapter 28. The dialogue was terminated in chapters 25-27. Job 28 ends as monologue, just as he began in monologue in chapter 3. Job 28:28 becomes the climax of the dialogue (chs 3-28). In Job 28:28, Job comes to attain wisdom, since Job has survived the test and continues to be God's loyal servant in spite of the removal of the hedge of which the Satan had spoken (1:10).

According to Janzen (1985:189), in Job 28, a question is posed as to the place from which wisdom can be obtained. However, the answer to the question is that man failed to acquire such wisdom. In contrast, a meditation on the divine creativity is presented in verses 23-28. Wisdom, in its primal reality, is inaccessible to human beings. On account of this inaccessibility, human beings are to occupy themselves with such wisdom's earthly and creaturely analogies, which are piety and uprightness (28:28). In Job 29-31, though there is no explicit search for wisdom, Job continues to display the task of fearing the Lord and departing from the evil.

Like Janzen (1985), Zuck (1992:302) holds that in chapter 28 Job refuted the three friends who maintained that they knew God's ways. Job contradicted the friends by saying that wisdom is inaccessible to human beings. Man, in spite of his engineering

skills (28:1-11), cannot discover or purchase wisdom (28:12-22). Only God knows where true wisdom is to be found (28:23-28). The friends did not acquire wisdom, since they stuck to the conventional doctrine of retribution. Job 28 argues that Job feared God and hated evil, but that the friends did not. Job 28:28 becomes one of the great and climatic moments in the book of Job.

According to Zuck (1992:302), the necessity of divine, propositional revelation is indicated next: “to man he said” (28:28). Although man is impotent to discover or purchase wisdom, he can know its very essence, for God has unveiled what otherwise would remain “hidden from the eyes of all living” (28:21). The essence of wisdom is twofold, “the fear of the Lord” and “to depart from evil.” The last verse of chapter 28 serves as an apposite link to chapters 29-31. In chapter 29 Job rehearsed his past virtues – a testimony to the fact that he feared God; and in chapter 31 he recounted his innocence by referring to numerous examples of evidence that he had turned from evil. Therefore, Job 28 becomes the climax of the dialogue between Job and his friends.

Even though some scholars (Habel 1992 and Van der Lugt 1995) consider Job 28 as the climactic conclusion of previous chapters, they hold different interpretations on Job 28. For them, the confession that wisdom is the fear of the Lord in Job 28:28 is an ironic expression that the concept of wisdom as the fear of the Lord turns out to be useless. Job feared God in Job 1-2. However, in the desperate suffering, the fear of the Lord did not play a role to solve his problem. Therefore, in Job 28, Job realises that wisdom only belongs to God. No human being can have access to wisdom.

Habel (1992:25) argues that the book of Job challenges the adequacy of the traditional characterisation of God and the traditional concept of wisdom. Job was the model of success, the perfect sage. He was not only blameless, but also feared God and shunned evil (Job1:1). This model is confirmed by the inclusion that links this verse with 28:28. However, in the suffering world the wisdom of piety proves useless. In the dialogue speeches the bankruptcy of that tradition is exposed.

For Habel (1992:37), while the God of the prologue is too arbitrary and selfish, the God of the friends is too mechanical, reacting according to a rigid code of reward and retribution. While God of Job is too violent, harassing human beings and creating anarchy, the God of the poet in Job 28 is too remote and inaccessible. Only God's poetic defence from the whirlwind offers a genuine alternative characterisation. God's cosmic world is a paradoxical world where the regular and the unexpected, the good and the bad coexist. God does not annihilate the evil, but contains it within certain boundaries. Therefore, for the author, Job 28 becomes the ironic climax of the dialogue for the sake of the transcendent wisdom of God's speeches.

Like Habel (1992), Van der Lugt (1995:521) infers a different conclusion in Job 28 from the majority of the scholars who work from the literary perspective. He presents the case that chapter 27 and 28 together constitute a speech by Job which has to clear the way for the discussion between Job and God. Chapter 27 intends to show that the arguments of the friends did not contribute anything to solve Job's problem. In 27: 7 Job accuses his friends of being his enemies and he curses them with the fate of the wicked. The portrayal of the wicked in verse 14-23, which is very similar to the speeches by Eliphaz, functions here as a warning and accusation in the direction of the friends

themselves. They are thus permanently written off by Job.

According to Van der Lugt (1995:522), Job 28 is testimony of Job's despair. It was originally placed between chapter 27 and chapter 29 by the poet himself with a very deliberate purpose. The definition of wisdom in v 28 contains a deliberate allusion to the prologue where Job is described as fearing God and shunning evil. But this attitude did not provide Job with the wisdom to understand his present sufferings. So chapter 28 is an extensive demonstration of Job's failing to attain the wisdom, which he so badly needs in his present circumstances. Even though Job struggled to look for wisdom, he was not able to find wisdom, which is found in the confrontation with God. Therefore, for him, job 28 functions as an ironical climax of the dialogue.

The researcher disagrees with Habel and Van der Lugt that Job 28 functions as the ironic climax of the dialogue, and that the fear of the Lord (28:28) did not provide Job with the wisdom to understand his present sufferings. Job 28 can function as the climactic conclusion of the dialogue, since wisdom as the fear of the Lord becomes a theological climax.

### **2.3.2 Bridge between Dialogue (chs 3-27) and Monologue (chs 29-31)**

Unlike the scholars who consider Job as the climax of the previous dialogue, some others (Cheney 1994, Hoffman 1996, Newsom 2003) regard Job 28 as a wisdom poem or song which plays a bridging role between the previous chapters and following chapters (chs 29-31), even though Job 28 has no direct connection with them.

According to Cheney (1994:43), the book of Job is composed of frame (chs 1-2, 28, 42:7-17) and core (chs 3-27, 29-42:6). He considers Job 28 as a part of the frame which marks a point of transition in the book. The core is divided into two different types of recorded speech: debate speeches and monologues. Job 28 marks a major transition in the plot in which all human endeavour, like the debate between Job and his friends, is judged to fall short of attaining wisdom. This provides the transition to Job's summation soliloquy, which in turn provokes the angry monologue of Elihu and the monologue of Yahweh.

According to Cheney (1994:278), Job 28 examines and evaluates the results achieved by the debate speeches. The narrator now confirms this and then deconstructs it. Wisdom is not available to human beings. The previous debates serve to demonstrate this unattainability. In Job 29, Job turns away from the debate with his friends and revisits his state of blessedness described in the frame. Therefore, for him, Job 28 functions as a bridge between the dialogue and Job's monologue.

Newsom (2003:170) takes chapter 28 as one voice among others within the original polyphonic text, including the last verse of the poem. Whether Job 28 is considered as a part of the Job poet's work or as a secondary addition, it introduces a recognisably new voice, different from either the voice of the prose tale narration or from the characters who speak in the wisdom fashion. This new voice engages what has come before in a dialogic fashion.

For Newsom (2003:183), Job 28 attempts to highlight their dialogic relationship by

taking sides with one against the other and shows that it has already implicitly performed an act of allegorical translation, recasting the issues of the prose tale and the wisdom dialogue. As a result, the wisdom poem critiques the limitations of the wisdom dialogue which overlooks the inherent limitations of human understanding, and takes sides with the prose tale against the dialogue. Job 28:28 echoes the words of the prose tale when it advises that for human beings the fear of the Lord and turning from evil are the effective equivalents of transcendent wisdom that remains inaccessible to humans, since both agreement and disagreement are dialogical.

According to Newsom (2003:183), Job's speech in chapters 29-31 can be read as a reply to Job 28:28, for he presents himself as one who has feared God and turned from evil and who still seeks to have his claims heard and addressed. However, Newsom disagrees with those who regard Job 28 as simply another version in a more meditative mood of what God will say in the divine speeches. On the contrary, the reinterpretation that the wisdom poem negotiates between transcendent wisdom and human piety will be sharply contested by the divine speeches. Therefore, for her, Job 28 functions as a bridge between the dialogue (chs 3-27) and chapters 29-31.

The researcher agrees with Newsom that chapter 28 performs an act of allegorical translation, recasting the issues of the prose tale and the wisdom dialogue. Job 28 critiques the limitations of the wisdom dialogue which overlooks the inherent limitations of human understanding. Furthermore, he agrees that the fear of the Lord in Job 28:28 echoes the words of the prose tale. However, he does not agree that Job 28 only functions as a bridge between the dialogue and the following chapters. Rather Job

28 as a wisdom poem anticipates the speeches of God.

### **2.3.3 Anticipation of the speeches of Yahweh (chs 38-41)**

There are many scholars who consider Job 28 as an anticipation of the divine speeches (Andersen 1976, Terrien 1982, Hartley 1985, Alter 1992, Van Wolde 1997; 2003). According to them, Job 28 summarises Job's case and forms the introduction to the speeches of God, even though it functions as the conclusion of the previous chapters or the bridge between the previous and following chapters.

Terrien (1982:1100) holds that the wisdom poem (ch 28) does not belong to the discourses of Job, but rather to the hand of the poet. Job 28 provides a musical interlude between the poetic discussion and Job's peroration (chs 29-31). It also foretells in some way the speeches which are unfolded in the discourses of Yahweh (chs 38-41), since the language and style of the wisdom poem (ch 28) show close affinities with those of the discourses of Yahweh.

For Terrien (1982:1100), the poet of Job faced a desperate experience and looked beyond the wisdom of men and sought the wisdom of God. Both Job and his friends have made vain claims to discern the ways of God with men. The friends provide an eloquent example of wisdom with the greatness, the power, and the justice of God. They are wrong when they uphold mechanically the dogma of retribution. In the friends' conception, there is no room for the category of doing grace. For them religion is a bargain, and humility is the best policy. Their orthodoxy, learned at school, is a devious attempt to maintain the sense of their own honour.



According to Terrien (1982:1105), Job 28 begins with man's quest for wisdom. He is not able to find such wisdom by his own endeavour. However, Job claims that he is able to reach human perfection in terms of utter devotion to the divine and of freedom from evil. The poet slowly takes his audience into his confidence and prepares them to hear Job's discovery of a need for repentance. Therefore, for Terrien, Job 28 anticipates God's speeches and Job's repentance.

Like Terrien (1982), Hartley (1988:382) also considers Job 28 as the anticipation of the speeches of God. At the end of the dialogue, the poet composed this poem about wisdom to provide the reader with a reflective respite, allowing them to ponder the preceding discussion, and also to prepare them for God's speeches that the dramatic action will take. Job 28 judges the efforts of the friends to teach Job wisdom as a failure. The wisdom poem (ch28) denies that humanity knows wisdom.

For Hartley (1985:384), the wisdom poem starts, showing that human beings have a vast knowledge and great technical skills (28:1-11). However, no human being can bring wisdom into his own service. Neither could wisdom be bought with precious metals or gems. Only God sees everything and has structured the world order in his wisdom. God set up wisdom as his counsellor. Wisdom played a vital role, as it is God's counsellor or his closest companion. Therefore, Job 28 allows the reader to ponder the previous debate and anticipate the following speeches of Yahweh (chs 38-41).

For Van Wolde (1997:88), as the second monologue, Job 28 points forward to the rest of

the book and especially to God's speech, while Job 29-31 points back to the previous dialogues in the book. In Job 28 and God's speeches, God is the only one who knows the way to wisdom and who has found it. For her (2003:32), God reacts to Job's second monologue (chs 28-31) in God's second speech (chs 40-41). In a series of rhetorical questions God asks whether Job has knowledge of the divine plan for creation. Indirectly, God is talking about what Job has already recognised in Job 28. Both God and Job recognise that only God has true knowledge or insight into the plan of creation. In Job 28, Job draws the conclusion that human beings should fear God. Thus Job's monologue and God's speech do not differ in their view of knowledge of the universe, but they differ over the connection between the wisdom and the idea of justice.

The researcher agrees with the scholars who consider Job 28 as the anticipation of the speeches of Yahweh (chs 38-41), even though Job 28 functions as the bridge with the previous chapters (chs 3-27). Furthermore, the researcher agrees that Job 28 reveals the concept of wisdom as transcendent wisdom and the fear of the Lord. However, the researcher does not agree that Job in Job 28 and God in the speeches of God have a radically different opinion on the problem of justice.

## **2.4 Conclusion**

When one analyses the works of the current scholars who work from the literary perspective, one can notice that they consider Job 28 as a literary technique of the entire book of Job, whereas the previous historical-critical scholars rejected Job 28 as secondary. Most scholars consider Job 28 as a wisdom poem (Clark 1982:402, Janzen 1985, Hartley 1988:382, Alter 1992:87, Van der Lugt 1995:521, Newsom 2003:170) or

as a wisdom song (Andersen 1976:19, Hoffman 1996:282), even though some scholars consider Job 28 as Job's soliloquy or monologue (Wolfers 1995:492, Van Wolde 1997).

According to Clark (1982:402), Job 28 is a poem about the concept of wisdom which does not have a very close connection with its context and is not really a part of the argument between Job and his three friends. Clark holds that Job 28 itself had a reasonable internal structure as a poem. He analysed chapter 28 as the repetition of ideas and themes. Paragraph breaks appear at the beginning of verse 12, verse 20, and verse 28. Verse 12 and 20 both pose the question as to where wisdom can be found and they use an almost identical wording. Verse 13-14 and 21-22 both attempt to answer the question where it can be found. Verses 15-19 compare the value of wisdom with that of gold and other precious objects. Verses 23-27 state that the only God knows the location and the true value of wisdom.

Regarding the function of the wisdom poem (ch 28), there are three different opinions among the scholars. Firstly, some scholars (Janzen, 1985, Zuck 1992, Wolfers 1995, Habel 1992, Van der Lugt 1995) consider Job 28 as a climax of the dialogue between Job and his friends. In Job 28, Job contradicts the friends' retribution and confesses that human beings cannot know wisdom, since wisdom belongs to only God (Job 28:1-27). The fear of the Lord (Job 28:28) becomes the conclusion of Job 28. However, the understanding the climax of Job 28 can proceed toward a different way, since the confession that wisdom is the fear of the Lord can be an ironic expression that the fear of the Lord turns out to be useless.

While some scholars (Janzen 1985, Zuck 1992, Reyburn 1992, Wolfers 1995) consider the theme of Job 28 as both transcendent wisdom and the fear of the Lord, other scholars (Habel 1985, Van der Lugt 1995) regard Job 28 as the ironic climax to reveal the failure of the fear of the Lord and the doctrine of retribution. According to the former, in Job 28 Job critiques the friends' wisdom that entails the doctrine of retribution. Rather Job 28 suggests new transcendent wisdom, which only belongs to God. Since transcendent wisdom is inaccessible, wisdom to human beings, namely the fear of the Lord, becomes the practical wisdom to which human being can have access.

However, Habel (1992) and Van der Lugt (1995) separate the fear of the Lord (Job 28:28) from the new concept of transcendent wisdom in Job 28. For them, the confession that wisdom is the fear of the Lord is the ironic climax of the failure. Job feared God in Job 1-2. However, in his desperate suffering, the fear of the Lord did not play a role to solve his problem. At the last verse in Job 28 Job reveals the uselessness of the fear of the Lord by expressing an irony that wisdom is the fear of the Lord.

Secondly, for some scholars (Cheney 1994, Hoffman 1996, Newsom 2003), Job 28 is a wisdom poem and song that act as the bridge between the previous chapters (chs 3-27) and following chapters (chs 29-31), even though it has no direct connection with the previous and following chapters. For Hoffman (1996:282), Job 28 was originally composed neither as a speech of Job, nor of one of the friends, nor of God. Rather, it stands entirely by itself. He regards chapter 28 as the term 'cadenza' from the realm of music.

For Newsom (2003:170), Job 28 introduces a recognisably new voice, different from either the voice of the prose tale narration or from the characters who speak in the wisdom fashion. This new voice engages what has preceded it in a dialogic fashion. The wisdom poem critiques the limitations of the wisdom dialogue which overlooks the inherent limitations of human understanding, and takes sides with the prose tale against the dialogue. Job's speech in chapters 29-31 can be read as a reply to Job 28:28, for he presents himself as one who has feared God and turned from evil and who still seeks to have his claims heard and addressed.

Thirdly, some scholars consider Job 28 as the anticipation of the speeches of Yahweh (chs 38-41). Even if they think of Job 28 as an interlude or as the conclusion of the dialogue (chs 3-27), they see an anticipation of the speeches of Yahweh (Andersen 1976, Terrien 1982, Hartley 1985, Alter 1992, Van Wolde 1997; 2003). For Alter (1992:87), the book of Job has been designed by the poet using the formal features of a poem. The wisdom poem (ch 28) emphasises the vast scope of God's wisdom against man's limited understanding (1992:92). Specific details of the cosmic imagery that will begin the divine discourse are strategically anticipated.

For Van Wolde (1997:88), as Job's first monologue in chapter 3 functions as a hinge between the prologue and the dialogues, so Job's second monologues in chapters 28-31 makes possible the transition from the dialogue to the last part of the book. In this second monologue, Job 28 points forward to the rest of the book and especially to God's speech. God reacts to Job's second monologue (chs 28-31) in God's second speech (chs 40-41). God speaks about knowledge in a way which strongly resembles Job's

monologue on wisdom (ch 28). Indirectly, God is talking about what Job had already recognised in Job 28.

The researcher agrees with most scholars who consider Job 28 as a wisdom poem that is different from the previous and following chapters. Regarding the function of Job 28 in the entire book, the researcher holds that Job 28 plays a role as the anticipation of the speeches of God, even though it functions as the climax of the previous dialogue or the bridge between the previous and following chapters. As the climax of the dialogue, a poet or Job criticises the extreme element of the friends' wisdom which implies the doctrine of retribution, even though the principle of retribution itself can not be denied. As a wisdom poem, Job 28 plays another role to make the reader ready to hear the speeches of God. Therefore, both Job 28 and the speeches of God have a common message. That is transcendent wisdom which exhibits the divine order or design.

Divine order as the concept of wisdom in Job 28 and the speeches of God explains that the world is not only a constant cycle of renewing life, but also a constant destroying clash. This is not a direct answer to the question of why the good man should suffer, but provides harmonious order to which violence is indispensable and where destruction is part of creation, since the world which God created exhibits both cosmos and chaos.

## Chapter 3 Historical interpretation of Job 28

### 3.1 Introduction

Although the literary and theological interpretations on the book of Job have formed the main stream of the current scholarly discourse, historical critical interpretation is still being practiced up to the present. While the current scholars who work from the literary perspective seek for the literary theme of the book of Job as a text, the scholars who work from the historical perspective attempt to reconstruct the history of the formation of the book of Job. Since historical criticism<sup>8</sup> was introduced in the book of Job, the stylistic and theological incongruity of the prose narrative with poetic dialogue has led scholars to posit separate compositions.

For earlier critics (W De Wette 1807; K.Kautzsch 1900), the dialogue was the oldest part of the book and the prose frame was a later addition. More commonly, the prose tale was assumed to be an old written or oral tale that was taken over by the author of the dialogue as a narrative setting (Wellhausen 1871; Duhm 1897). Some scholars (Driver 1913) insisted that the Elihu speeches constituted a later addition to the book by another author. In addition, the enthusiasm for recovering the book's compositional history has led scholars into increasingly subtle arguments for considering the wisdom poem in chapter 28 as secondary (Fohrer 1968, Pope 1965). However, more recent scholars (Westermann 1995, Murphy 1996, and Strauss 2000) have a tendency to

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<sup>8</sup> Historical criticism seeks to understand the ancient text in light of its historical origins, the time and the place in which it was written. Its primary goal is to ascertain the text's original meaning in its original historical context. It may include reconstructing the historical situation of the author and recipients of the text and reconstructing the true nature of the events (Newsom & Shreiner 1999:593).

acknowledge that Job 28 is an original part of the book of Job.

At the same time, the scholars who work from the historical perspective have searched for various stages of historical development of the concept of wisdom. As a result, they have witnessed several concepts of wisdom in Job 28 as well as in the rest of the book of Job. Transcendent wisdom in Job 28:1-27 and the fear of the Lord as wisdom in Job 28:28 have been quoted for the reconstruction of the historical development of the concept of wisdom. However, there have been various interpretations on the understanding of the concept of wisdom in Job 28 in the historical critical scholarship.

Even though there is still an open debate on the authorship of Job 28, most historical scholars consider the author of Job 28 as the author of the dialogue (Crenshaw 1976:24, Westermann 1995:107, Murphy 1996:41) or the editor of a different hand in a later period (Fohrer 1968:310, Rowley 1970:18). However, reflecting on the scholars who work from the literary perspective, some scholars such as Strauss (2000:157) attributes Job 28 to Job, rather than the author of the dialogue, or a later editor.

Regarding the date of the book, generally most scholars accept the post-exilic period (Blenkinsopp 1995, Clements 1998). However, some scholars attribute the date of book to the pre-exilic period (Kaufmann 1972, Pope 1965, Crenshaw 1998), while others acknowledge the continuous development of the book through history (Fohrer 1968, Von Rad 1972, Perdue 1991). The location in which the book of Job was written depends on the opinion of the date of the book. Most scholars who attribute the date of the book to the post-exilic period have a tendency to consider the location as the Yahud



at that time. However, if it was written in the pre-exilic period or early post-exilic period, it could have been written in northern Israel (Kaufmann 1972) or southern Judah (Pope 1965, Zerapa 1978).

After considering the authorship, date and location, one should analyse why Job 28 was written or had portions added to it. In this regard there are three different opinions. According to an opinion, Job 28 was written by the author for the purpose of criticising traditional wisdom that was supported by Job's friends. According to another opinion, Job 28 attempts to recover traditional wisdom by a later editor against the radical search for wisdom in the dialogue (Fohrer 1968, Perdue 1991). However, some scholars hold that Job 28 serves to reject the extreme element of traditional wisdom and reveals the importance of the application of traditional wisdom to a particular situation (Von Rad 1972, Murphy 1996).

## **3.2 Authorship (To whom is Job 28 attributed?)**

### **3.2.1 The speech of Job**

In the previous chapter, it was dealt with that many current scholars who work from the literary perspective attempt to attribute Job 28 to the mouth of character Job, rather than the author of the book or the later editor. The scholars such as Zuck (1992), Wolfers (1995), and Van der Lugt (1995) considered Job 28 as the climax of the mouth of Job.

According to Wolfers (1995:492), the position in which the chapter has been placed suggests that it is to be considered the continuation and conclusion of chapter 27. Each of chapters 27 and 29 is introduced with a phrase indicating Job as the speaker. Chapter

27 is a part of Job's final monologue. Chapter 28 follows from 27 with only the conjunction 'ki'. If there is continuity, it is apparent that the monologue has modulated into a soliloquy.

However, there are a few scholars (Strauss 2000) working from the historical perspective who attribute Job 28 to the mouth of Job. In fact there are two dominating opinions about the authorship of Job 28 in the current historical critical scholarship. According to one opinion, the author of the dialogue or the book of Job composed the wisdom poem. According to the other opinion, a later editor discovered the poem, which was written by an anonymous poet and inserted it into the book of Job.

Nevertheless, Strauss (2000:157), a German scholar, accepts the literary interpretation on Job 28 and attributes Job 28 to the mouth of Job, since chapter 28 is not the third imagined person's speech against the false theology of the friends, but rather Job's reflective summation as the speaker of the circle of the wise. Before Job tries to encounter God directly, at the end of debate once again it needed to be clarified that human beings are able to attain wisdom in principle, but in certain spheres this wisdom cannot be achieved at all.

For Strauss (2000:157), Job in chapter 28 expresses not only the failure of experimental wisdom which entails the doctrine of retribution, but also the value-laden explanation of human wisdom in the ancient Near Eastern wisdom literature. Human wisdom should not be annihilated completely. One has to acknowledge the pride and the width of human wisdom in the sphere of human science and human desire for development, and

thus the human interest in knowledge needs to be continued.

For Strauss (2000:157), the problem of the effectiveness on the doctrine of retribution lies in wisdom that cannot be controlled by human beings. Human technological possibility seems to conquer various limitations. Nevertheless, the development of wisdom in chapter 28 is not at a loss at the line of limitation, but rather leads human beings to God. Therefore, Job 28 reveals these double functions to us. It completes the critical debate, and at the same time, it prepares for the final direct encounter with God. Therefore, for Strauss, Job 28 can be attributed to the mouth of Job, and not to a later editor nor to a different person. The researcher agrees with Strauss that Job 28 can indeed belong to the mouth of Job. However, Job 28 can also be the product of the author of the book of Job, showing the intention of the author through this wisdom poem.

### **3.2.2. Unknown author of the book of Job**

Unlike Strauss, many scholars who work from the historical perspective attribute Job 28 to the author of the dialogue or the book of Job. For Crenshaw (1976:24), the wisdom poem (ch 28) and the speeches of God (chs 39-41) are the main genre which deals with wisdom, and they reflect the intention of an author of the book of Job. The author of the book of Job shows the freedom of God to act contrary to human definitions of justice. The main concept of wisdom in the wisdom poem (ch 28) and God's speeches (chs 38-41) is the inaccessibility of wisdom.

Like Crenshaw, for Murphy (1996:41) Job 28 is a product of the author of the entire

book. The wisdom poem could appear as a continuation of Job's words in chapter 27. But the whole tenor of the poem is tangential to the points Job is making. The mere sequence of chapters 27 and 28 does not force one to place it in Job's mouth, although chapters 26-27 are attributed to Job. It appears to be another view of the situation that the writer provides. The new viewpoint is that the problem is beyond the understanding of created beings, for they lack the wisdom that God alone possesses. Hence this chapter implicitly warns against even attempting to answer the problem. The best that human beings can do is to fear the Lord, an old wisdom ideal.

The researcher agrees that the main genre of book of Job refers to wisdom, which appears especially in the wisdom poem (ch28) and God's speeches. He also agrees that Job 28 and the speeches of God were written by the inspired unknown author from God. Job 28 anticipates the speeches of God. However, for the researcher, even if it reflects the intention of the author, Job 28 can be attributed to the mouth of Job.

### **3.2.3 Later editor as author**

While some historical scholars consider Job 28 as the intention of the author, there are other scholars who regard Job 28 as the secondary addition of a later hand (Fohrer 1968, Driver and Gray 1964, Pope 1965, Rowley 1970). According to Fohrer (1968:308), the reference in chapter 28 telling to wisdom's inaccessibility to man is a large addition to the poem. The rest of the book of Job is concerned with a kind of wisdom quite unlike the wisdom described in this song. Its inaccessibility to man renders the arguments of God's speech superfluous. The song does not derive from the author of the poem, but from a representative of the theological wisdom system rejected by the poet.

For Driver and Gray (1964:lxx), the Prologue, most of the dialogue, God's first speech and the epilogue are the original elements of the book of Job, but some third cycle of the dialogue, chapter 28: wisdom poem, Elihu speech (32-37) and God's second speech (40:6-41:24) are the addition of some later hand. For them, chapter 28 is an independent poem on the limitations of human achievement (1964:233). It contains no single obvious connection with the stage of the debate now reached. On the other hand, in the mouth of Job the poem anticipates the speeches of Yahweh.

Following Driver and Gray, Rowley (1970:18) also rejects chapter 28 (though probably composed by the author of Job), Elihu speech (32-37) and God's second speech (40:6-41:24) as addition. The reason why Rowley (1970:234) attributes the wisdom poem (ch 28) as an addition is that if Job had reached the recognition that the wonders of the world surpassed man's understanding and that the way of wisdom lay in humble submission to God and obedience to him, the divine irony from God's speeches would scarcely have been called for. The researcher disagrees with the scholars who consider Job 28 as a later addition. Rather Job 28 as a wisdom poem has affinity with the author's thought and it anticipates the speeches of Yahweh (chs 38-41).

### **3.3 Dating (When was Job 28 written?)**

#### **3.3.1 Pre-exilic period**

Generally most scholars place the date of the book in the post-exilic period (5<sup>th</sup> century), but several scholars place it before the exilic period (Kaufmann 1972, Pope 1965, Crenshaw 1998). The Israeli scholar, Kaufmann (1972:334), contends for a pre-exilic date for Job. According to him, the legend of Job's trials at the insistence of Satan

belongs to the ancient moralistic literature of Israel. The antiquity of the prose framework is vouched for by its highly naive images of God. A theophany in the full light of day is last mentioned in the Elijah story in 1 Kings 19.

According to Kaufmann (1972:338), the poetry of Job is classical Hebrew, but he observes that the contacts with Ugaritic, Aramaic, and Arabic are most naturally understood as arising out of the antique literary dialect that the author employed. Kaufmann admits that the author may have known and have been influenced by the wisdom of the Easterners, but he insists on the Israelitic character of the work. Therefore, for him, the book was composed in the golden age of Israel's creativity, the age before the exile.

For Pope (1965:xxxvii), the date of the book of Job is still an open question. However, he also places the date of the book in the pre-exilic period. According to him, the recovery of portions of a Targum of Job from the Qumran caves indicates that the book must have been in circulation for some time before the first century BCE. While the completed book may have been written as late as the third century BCE, it may also be several centuries earlier. Parts of the book may have very early antecedents. There is the probability of the existence of an ancient Job legend among the western Semites. For him, therefore, the seventh century BCE seems the best guess for the dialogue

For Crenshaw (1998:45), the date of the book of Job is the sixth century BCE and he places the book of Job within the context of a spiritual crisis in ancient Israel. Against the process of theologisation of wisdom, the author of the book of Job champions the

freedom of God to act contrary to human definitions of justice. The main concept of wisdom in the wisdom poem (ch 28) and God's speeches (chs 38-41) is the inaccessibility of wisdom. This wisdom rejects the principle that the universe moves according to rationality. Even though Job first stuck to the principle, he eschews this principle after facing freedom.

The researcher disagrees that the book of Job was written in the pre-exilic or seventh century BCE and that Job 28 is a later addition by a different hand. For the researcher, Job 28 as well as whole of the book of Job, was rather completed in the post-exilic period and Job 28 suggests the coexistence of transcendent wisdom, which is inaccessible, and traditional wisdom, which is accessible. The fear of the Lord in 28:28 emphasises the example of such coexistence.

### **3.3.2 Post-exilic period**

Against some scholars who insist that the book of Job was written in the pre-exilic period (Kaufmann 1972, Pope 1965, Crenshaw 1998), most scholars consider the date of the book as the post-exilic period (Westermann 1995, Blenkinsopp 1995, Murphy 1996, Clements 1998). The role of Satan reminds of the Persian periods. For Westermann (1995:107), the speeches of Job's friends are indicative of a post-exilic period. The later wisdom which manifests itself in Proverbs 1-9 is reflected in the speeches of Job's companions and in the Elihu speeches.

Blenkinsopp (1995:28) also insisted that the book of Job is to be dated to the Persian period (six to fourth centuries BCE). Among the indications favouring this epoch is the

role of Satan, which is reminiscent of the Persian officials, known as the king's eye or the king's ear, whose task was to tour the provinces, checking local officials. The bleak view of social conditions, and especially the contrast between wealth and poverty, power and powerlessness, presented by both sides in the debate, also fits with that period. The provinces took a long time to recover from the effects of the Babylonian conquest. Economic conditions were bad. The wealthy upper class showed no concern for the poor, and their lack of concern led to social unrest and occasional violence, which in turn made them question traditional religious ideas.

For Clements (1998:152), the book of Job – as well as Job 28 – is the product of the theologisation of wisdom in the post-exilic period. In the process of the development of wisdom, a crisis point arose for wisdom within Israelite Jewish history. The strongly pragmatic and anthropocentric character of the earlier wisdom proved unable to accommodate the realities of Jewish experience. So wisdom was forced to choose between a sterile agnosticism and an acceptance of the concept of a higher wisdom given by divine revelation. He finds that phenomenon in the writings of Qoheleth and the book of Job.

For Murphy (1981:20), there are no convincing arguments for a fixed date. Nevertheless, the final form of the book is probably post-exilic period. But this does not eliminate the possibility of much earlier material having been used. The researcher agrees with Murphy that one can make no firm conclusions about a setting in terms of the date, even though many scholars attribute the date of the book of Job to the post-exilic period.



### **3.3.3 Continuous development**

There are several scholars who acknowledge the continuous development of the book of Job, as well as Job 28 (Fohrer 1968, Von Rad 1972, Perdue 1991). According to Fohrer (1968:308), the frame tale (1-2, 42: 7-17) is not the work of the Job poet. Chapter 28 is a substantial addition to the poem. All the rest of the book of Job is concerned with a kind of wisdom quite unlike the wisdom described in this song. The song does not derive from the author of the poem, but rather from a representative of the theological wisdom system rejected by the poet (1968:329). Therefore, the concept of wisdom in Job 28 is theological wisdom which the poet of the book of Job attempts to reject.

Following Fohrer (1968), Von Rad (1972:148) acknowledges that there is unanimity about chapter 28 as having been inserted secondarily into the dialogue section of the book of Job. However, for him, this makes it much more difficult to determine its point of origin; it could be late, but it could equally also be early. If one considers it to be a late, post-exilic text, then the question would still remain open whether such perceptions could be expressed really only in such a late period. It is highly probable that Job 28:28 is to be regarded as an addition. It stems from someone who did not wish to leave the reader only with the magnificent, negative result that otherwise characterises this book.

Recently, more in detail, Perdue (1991:75) contends that the prose narratives were written during the monarchy, the poetic dialogues during the exilic period, and Job 28 and the Elihu speeches after the exilic period. The poet, combining the techniques of historian and story-teller, draws together traditional forms and creates a compelling literary composition. The narrative in chs 1-2 and 42.7-17 continues the literary

trajectory in the Hebrew wisdom tradition. The secondary literary trajectory is the lament in 3 and 29-31. The third dominating trajectory is the disputation in 4-27 and 38-42:6. Two later insertions occur in a second and third edition: the Elihu speeches 32-37 and the wisdom poem in Job 28.

According to Perdue (1991:247), regardless of its redactional positioning in the book of Job, the hermeneutic of Job 28 leads to no revelation, produces no theophanic vision, and structures no alluring mythic world into which human beings may enter. It rather attempts to return to a simpler, precritical faith yet unchallenged by the crisis of a holocaust. While elegantly crafted, it still represents the naive stance of Job in the Prologue and of the friends in the Dialogues: wisdom is unquestioning piety and obedience to divine commands (1991:247). Therefore, for him, Job 28 is a later insertion and reflects the last process of the development of the entire of the book of Job.

The researcher disagrees that the process of redaction of the book of Job could be identified. The book of Job as a whole has a message and it reflects the situation of the time. Job 28 is not a later addition by a different hand. Rather it reveals the intention of the author of the book with the speeches of Yahweh (chs 38-41).

### **3.4 Location (Where was Job 28 written?)**

#### **3.4.1 Northern Israel**

The question about where the book of Job was written is related to the previous questions about the authorship and dates of the book of Job. Most scholars consider the place where the book was written as Judah in the pre-exilic period (Pope 1965, Zerapa

1978) or Yehud in the post-exilic period (Blenkinsopp 1995, Clements 1996). However, some scholars insist that it is the literature of northern Israel in the golden age (Kaufmann 1972).

The Israeli scholar, Kaufmann (1972:334) contends that the book of Job was written in northern Israel. According to him the legend of Job's trials at the instance of Satan belongs to the ancient moralistic literature of Israel. Job is a righteous non-Israelite, a hero of popular legend mentioned together with Noah and Daniel in Ezekiel 14:14. The wisdom author of the book of Job utilised this early story for his own purposes. In chapter 28 heathen inspired pride of wisdom is rejected.

For Kaufmann (1972:338), the antiquity of the prose framework is vouched for by its highly naive images of God. A theophany in the full light of day is last mentioned in the Elijah story, 1 Kings 19. The poetry of Job is classical Hebrew, but he observes that the contacts with Ugaritic, Aramaic, and Arabic are most naturally understood as arising out of the antique literary dialect that the author employed. Kaufmann admits that the author may have known and have been influenced by the wisdom of the Easterners, but he insists on the Israelite character of the work. Therefore, for him, the book was composed in northern Israel in the golden age of Israel's creativity.

### **3.4.2 Judah**

Unlike Kaufmann (1972), most scholars consider the location of the book of Job as Judah (pre-exilic period) or Yehud (post-exilic period). For Zerapa (1978:184), the author of the book of Job belongs to the class of people who had never been deported

and who had succeeded to eke out a decent living from the ravaged land of Palestine. He resented the returning exiles who took over the place in the name of a new and ideal nation. In his view, they were as good as foreigners. He compared them to a conceited Edomite potentate. Their boasting was out of order. Therefore, he composed the book in Judah towards the end of the sixth century.

Zerapa (1978:52) claims that chapter 28 forms the centre of the book of Job. The wisdom poem proclaims God's unique wisdom and excludes all human claims to understanding. He claims that the original one act drama was divided into two separate phases by the wisdom poem and the Elihu speeches. The first phase comes to an end with the hymn which proves that man can not acquire wisdom. The drama restarts with the Elihu speeches and Job's soliloquy. It makes a final attempt to reassert the previous view about human wisdom. The theophany squashes the arrogant pretensions of Job and exposes the foolishness of his friends' reasoning.

The researcher disagrees that the location of the book was northern Israel or southern Judah in the pre-exilic period. Rather he considers the location as Yehud at the time in the post-exilic period.

### **3.4.3 Yehud**

More recently, Blenkinsopp (1995:28) insisted that the book of Job should be read against the background of conditions in the province of Yehud at that time (1995:41). According to Blenkinsopp (1995:56), the author of Job probably belonged to the upper class lay intelligentsia, and educated in the tradition of public morality and piety. The

contestants on both sides of the debate clearly belonged to the same privileged class and subscribed to the same social code. Job is a wealthy landowner with a large household employing slaves and labourers. However, they are different from those of the same class who violate the accepted social norms. They are not accused of oppressing the poor and corrupting the judicial process by bribery.

For Clements (1992:12), in a Jewish community in a predominantly Gentile world, wisdom helped to *theologise* the religious inheritance of ancient Israel by promoting the rationalising and systematising of cult symbolism and mythology and by spiritualising many of its concepts. Fundamental abstract notions, such as the fear of the Lord and the way of wisdom, were used to coordinate and integrate a variety of inherited traditions. The fear of the Lord became identified with the way of wisdom. The researcher agrees with most scholars who consider the place where the book was written as Judah in the pre- exilic period or Yehud in the post-exilic period, even though he disagrees with the process of lineal *theologisation* of the concept of wisdom in post exilic period.

### **3.5 Purpose (Why was Job 28 written or added?)**

#### **3.5.1 Criticism of traditional wisdom**

Even though there are various opinions why Job 28 was written or added, one could encounter three main understandings in the scholarship. Many scholars consider Job 28 as the criticism of traditional wisdom, which is supported by Job's friends. Rather Job 28 as well as the book of Job as a whole suggests transcendent wisdom which leads to the fear of the Lord (Zerapa 1978, Westermann 1995).

For Zerapa (1978:184), the people in the post-exilic period presented themselves as just people, rewarded for their righteousness. The liberated exiles from Babylon identified themselves with the elect of God, the ideal Israel, and the saviours of the nation. The author reacted and attacked their haughtiness, as the author is attacking haughtiness of Job as well as his friends. Job 28 forms the centre of the book of Job. The wisdom poem proclaims God's unique wisdom and excludes all human claims to understanding. Man cannot attain wisdom, since he is inaccessible to wisdom. Only God is wise, and his ways cannot be controlled or overseen by man's foolish mind.

For Zerapa (1978:262), with the exile, Yahweh promotes the welfare of all the nations. His providence is universal. The national catastrophe became a comprehensive plan by which Yahweh intended to bring salvation to the other nations. Yahweh's interventions were an enactment of the primordial creative act. The idea of the order of creation established by God as the foundation of all world history coincided with the notion of God's wisdom aired by the exilic and post-exilic texts. The author of the book of Job adopted this fresh biblical motif and used it to extol God's mysterious ways with mankind and to destroy the petty wisdom of the human sages who were unable to influence God's plan's plan but pretended to share his wisdom.

According to Westermann (1995:107), in a later era – after the exile – wisdom and righteous became more clearly associated. The later wisdom appears in new forms of the doctrine of retribution, the personification of wisdom, and the fear of Yahweh. The author of the book of Job intends to criticise the later wisdom and shows the importance of the early wisdom in the book of Job. The early wisdom is found in the wisdom poem

(chapter 28) and also in the author's polemic against Job's friends.

For Westermann (1995:110), the book of Job is a dramatised lament where Job protests strongly and his friends argue. Structurally the dialogues of the friends are a consolation speech, though from the beginning consolation is transformed into disputations. The friends in every case present arguments, their chief argument being the doctrine about the fate of the transgressor. Throughout the whole dialogue section there is a juxtaposition of doctrine and lament. The doctrine, which emanates directly from tradition but is now rigidified, stands over against the burning lament, which arises from an existential anguish. Therefore, for Westermann (1995), the concept of wisdom in Job 28 attempts to criticise the rigid traditional wisdom, which means the later wisdom and suggests early wisdom as transcendent wisdom.

The researcher does not agree that Job 28 as well as the book of Job as a whole suggests transcendent wisdom and criticises traditional wisdom which entails the doctrine of retribution. Furthermore, he disagrees that the criticism aims at eliminating traditional wisdom itself. Rather Job 28 rejects the extreme dogmatised system of traditional wisdom and exhorts the readers to maintain a balance between the fear of the Lord, transcendent wisdom, and traditional wisdom.

### **3.5.2 Attempt of recovering traditional wisdom**

While some historical scholars consider Job 28 as criticism against traditional wisdom, there are some scholars who think of Job 28 as an attempt of recovering traditional wisdom (Fohrer 1968, Driver and Gray 1964, Pope 1965, Rowley 1970). For Fohrer

(1968:309), in the post-exilic period, the concept of wisdom was subjected to theological scrutiny and incorporated into a comprehensive theological system. This system inevitably provoked criticism on account of the doctrine of retribution and the very existence of this system itself. The books of Job and Qoheleth bear witness to this criticism. However, Job 28 does not derive from the author of the poem, but from a representative of the theological wisdom system rejected by the author of the book (Fohrer 1968:329). Therefore, the editor of Job 28 attempts to recover the traditional wisdom that the author of the book would want to reject.

Perdue (1991:75) also contends that the prose narratives were written during the monarchy, the poetic dialogues during the exilic period, and Job 28 and the Elihu speeches after the exilic period. In the wisdom poem (Job 28), wisdom is personified as a goddess of insight and life in the fashion of Maat or Iris in Egypt. Wisdom is the mediator between God and world, revealing both the creator and the order of creation. For the traditional sages, wisdom is not only accessible to human beings, but indeed goes in search of them. Wisdom as a goddess in Job 28 no longer seeks human beings as her lovers, but hides in secret from their desire. Only God knows where she resides.

For Perdue (1991:247), Job 28 attempts to return to a simpler, precritical faith which was unchallenged by the crisis of holocaust. Though it was beautifully composed, it still represents the naive stance of Job in the Prologue and of the friends in the Dialogues. Wisdom is unquestioning piety and obedience to divine commands (Perdue 1991:247). Therefore, the concept of wisdom in Job 28 acts against the wisdom in dialogue and attempts to recover traditional wisdom.



The researcher disagrees that the concept of wisdom Job 28 points to traditional wisdom, which the poet of the book of Job attempts to reject, and Job 28 attempts to recover traditional wisdom. Rather he holds that the message of Job 28 is the same as the theme of the book of Job as a whole, and Job 28 as well as the book of Job as a whole attempts to reject the extreme element of traditional wisdom and suggest the reasonable relationship between transcendent wisdom and traditional wisdom.

### **3.5.3 Rejection of extreme traditional wisdom<sup>9</sup>**

While some scholars consider Job 28 as criticising traditional wisdom or attempting to recover traditional wisdom, there are other scholars who regard Job 28 as a rejection of the extreme element in traditional wisdom. They insist that Job 28 as well as the book of Job does not completely deny the ancient Israelite wisdom, even though it rejects the rigid dogmatised system of traditional wisdom.

Von Rad (1972:155) agrees that Job 28 as well as Prov 8 gives expression to a completely new idea. However, for him, the comparatively late texts are dealing with an ordering power whose existence has been felt in Israel from the earliest times. A generation of teachers felt the necessity of thinking through in very basic terms and of reformulating a subject which had for long been implicitly presupposed in their teachings.

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<sup>9</sup> When the researcher mentions the extreme traditional wisdom, it means a rigid dogmatised system. Originally traditional wisdom acknowledged the limitation of human understanding and shared some elements with transcendent wisdom. However, at certain times, traditional wisdom became a rigid dogmatised system and did not acknowledge particular cases, such as the case of Job. However, transcendent wisdom emphasises the limitation of human understanding. The researcher suggests the tension relationship or coexistence between the limitation and possibility.

According to Von Rad (1972:62), the old proverbial wisdom coexisted with the fear of the Lord from the earliest stage of the Israelites. For the wisdom teachers amongst the Israelites, the understanding of the world was like the understanding of God. When they searched the order of the world, they always believed in Yahweh in Israel. They always had to maintain a balance between proverbial wisdom and faith in Yahweh. Even in the later period the balance between the fear of the Lord and the search for order continued, even though they acknowledged that the concept of wisdom had been developed further.

Consequently, for Von Rad (1972:155), it is appropriate to consider the personification of wisdom in Job 28 as the reinterpretation of a very old insight which had never been experienced before. In Job 28, wisdom must be somewhere in the world, while being distinct from the works of creation, it is immanent in the world; whether it is called “mysterious order” or the “meaning” created in the world. The world, as the creation of God, is the arena of his activity and of human life. The experiences of the world were for her divine experiences as well, and the experiences of God were for her experiences of the world. Wisdom theology is creation theology. Therefore, for him, the concept of wisdom in Job 28 is both the search of order and the fear of Lord. Furthermore, the search for order includes transcendent order and the arguments of Job’s friends

Following Von Rad (1972), for Murphy (1996:124), the Israelite sages were Yahwists. What they learned about the Lord from creation and experience was associated with what they learned from their historical traditions. The manner and style may have differed, but it was the message about the one Lord that was communicated. Biblical wisdom is a thematic expression of God’s revelation as mediated through creation.

Human beings live in supernatural order. The traditional theological approach to Yahwism and wisdom developed along prejudicial lines. However, the religious dimension of the wisdom experience is an appropriation of the lessons that one may draw from day to day living from the realm of personal intercourse and the surprise of creation.

Murphy (1996:34) denies that the book of Job is seen as an iconoclastic attack on the traditional ideas of divine justice and retribution, which are so firmly upheld in the book of Proverbs. For him, the problem of retribution has to be viewed in the perspective of the entire Bible. First, the Bible is a broad treatment of the issue recognised already in the questions addressed by Abraham to the Lord in Gen 18:22-32, in the confessions of Jeremiah (Jer 12:1-5), in the book of Habakkuk (1:4, 13), in several Psalms (37, 73), and in the book of Jonah. Secondly, the author of the book does not attempt to impose an answer. He develops various approaches to the problem to shed as much light as possible on the issue of human suffering and divine justice. The book's most positive teaching is that the application to Job of the traditional theory of divine retribution is not relevant. The fact that Job is restored in the end bears witness to the author's belief in the traditional goodness and justice of the Lord.

The researcher agrees with Von Rad and Murphy that the book of Job does not attack the traditional ideas of divine justice and retribution. Rather the book of Job attempts to reject the extreme element of traditional wisdom, while it maintains the principle of traditional wisdom. The researcher also agrees that when Israelite sages searched for order in daily life, they thought that it also applied to the fear of Lord.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

Unlike most scholars whose approach is based on a literary perspective and had a tendency to consider Job 28 as a main literary theme, most scholars who work from the historical perspective delved into the history of the redaction of Job 28 and sought through history for the development of the concept of wisdom (Fohrer 1968, Zerapa 1978, Perdue 1991, Westermann 1995, Blenkinsopp 1995, and Clements 1998).

Even though there is still an open debate on the authorship of Job 28, most historical scholars have a tendency to consider the author of Job 28 as the author of the dialogue (Crenshaw 1976:24, Westermann 1995:107, Murphy 1996:41) or the editor of a different hand in a later period (Fohrer 1968:310, Rowley 1970:18). However, reflecting on the scholars who proceed from the literary perspective, some scholars such as Strauss (2000:157) attempt to attribute Job 28 as the mouth of Job, rather than the author of the dialogue.

For Crenshaw (1976:24), the wisdom poem (ch 28) and the speeches of God (chs 39-41) are the main genres which deal with wisdom, and they reflect the intention of the author of the book of Job. For Murphy (1996:41), the mere sequence of chapters 27 and 28 does not force one to place it in Job's mouth, although chapters 26-27 are attributed to Job. It appears to be another view of the situation that the writer provides.

Regarding the date of the book, generally the post-exilic period is accepted by most scholars (Blenkinsopp 1995, Clements 1998). However, some scholars attribute the date of the book to the pre-exilic period (Kaufmann 1972, Pope 1965, Crenshaw 1998),

while others acknowledge the continuous development of the book throughout history (Fohrer, 1965 Von Rad 1972, Perdue 1991).

For Westermann (1995:107), the speeches of Job's friends are indicative of a post-exilic period. The later wisdom which manifests itself in Proverbs 1-9 is reflected in the speeches of Job's companions and in the Elihu speeches. Blenkinsopp (1995:28) insists that the book of Job is to be dated to the Persian period (six to fourth centuries BCE). Among the indications favouring this epoch is the role of Satan. The social condition fits with that period. The provinces took a long time to recover from the effects of the Babylonian conquest. The wealthy upper class showed no concern for the poor, and their lack of concern led to social unrest and occasional violence. That made them question traditional religious ideas.

The location in which the book of Job was written depends on the opinion regarding the date of the book. Most scholars who attribute the date of the book to the post-exilic period consider the location as the Yahud at that time. However, if it was written in the pre-exilic period or early post-exilic period, it could well have been written in northern Israel (Kaufmann 1972) or southern Judah (Pope 1965, Zerapa 1978). For Zerapa (1978:184), the author of the book of Job belongs to the class of people in Judah who had never been deported and who had succeeded to continue a decent living from the ravaged land of Palestine. They resented the returning exiles who took over the place in the name of a new and ideal nation in Judah.

After considering the authorship, date and location, the last question was why Job 28

was written or added. In this regard, there are three different opinions. According to one opinion, Job 28 was written by the author for the purpose of criticising traditional wisdom that was supported by Job's friends. According to Westermann (1995:129), the author of the book of Job intends to show the importance of the early wisdom in the book of Job.

According to another opinion (Fohrer 1968, Perdue 1991), Job 28 attempts to restore the traditional wisdom of the later editor against the radical search for wisdom in the dialogue. Lastly, some scholars (Von Rad 1972, Murphy 1996) hold that Job 28 rejects the extreme element of traditional wisdom, while retaining the principle of traditional wisdom, and suggesting the tense relationship or coexistence of transcendent wisdom and traditional wisdom. Murphy (1996:34) denies that the book of Job is seen as an attack on the traditional ideas of divine justice and retribution, which are so firmly upheld in the book of Proverbs.

The researcher agrees that Job 28 was written by the author of the book as a whole. It was most probably written in Yehud, in the post-exilic period, for the purpose of rejecting the extreme element of traditional wisdom, while keeping the principle of traditional wisdom. Job 28 is not an addition of a later editor, but is rather the central intention of the author. The researcher disagrees that the concept of wisdom in Job 28 was developed lineally through the history. Rather he agrees with Von Rad (1972) and Murphy (1996) that the concept of wisdom in Job 28 is the reformulation of ancient wisdom in a new context.

Originally, traditional wisdom acknowledged the limitation of human understanding and shared some elements with transcendent wisdom. However, at certain times traditional wisdom becomes rigid dogmatized system and does not acknowledge particular cases, such as the case of Job. Against this system, Job 28 suggests transcendent wisdom which leads to the fear of the Lord, and rejects the extreme element of traditional wisdom. It implies that the tense relationship or coexistence between the limitation and possibility of human understanding or wisdom is indispensable in the world of reality.

## **Chapter 4 Theological interpretation of Job 28**

### **4.1 Introduction**

While the scholars who proceed from the historical perspective have an interest in the historical background on the book of Job, many contemporary scholars relate to the book of Job from various perspectives. Some scholars have a tendency to be interested in the role of the reader and of some specific interpretive community (Newsom & Schreiner 1999). It means that the presupposition of the reader and interpretive community has affected the reception of the book. The scholars belonging to the Jewish and Christian community made every effort to interpret the concept of wisdom in their canonical context. In the Jewish and Christian traditions, the distinguishing presupposition of theological interpretation is that the Bible is sacred Scripture. It means that it has its origin and purpose in God, and it is also a norm for the community's life and knowledge of God.

When they consider their faith community, it is natural that the understanding of the concept of wisdom is spiritual and it is related to the relationship with God. On account of that reason, most theological scholars hold that the book of Job exhibits Job's faith and the wisdom as the fear of the Lord. They notice that Job had already feared the Lord (chs 1-2), and continued to fear of the Lord in the face of the desperate disaster and conflicting dialogue with his friends. Job 28:28 provides a crucial example of Job's wisdom as the fear of the Lord and leads to the presence and speeches of Yahweh (Job 38-41) where the fear of the Lord will be realised entirely.

In the process of reaching an entire understanding of the wisdom as the fear of the Lord



(ch 28:28), traditional wisdom as the doctrine of retribution and transcendent wisdom as divine order make a big contribution. Even though traditional wisdom makes every effort to answer mysterious questions, such as the cause of Job's suffering, it appears to turn out to be a failure. Instead, Job 28 reveals transcendent wisdom which belongs to God. This transcendent wisdom as the divine order is inaccessible to human beings. However, God revealed his will and wisdom through his revelation in Job 28 and the speeches of Yahweh (chs 39-41): the fear of the Lord. It means that transcendent wisdom in Job 28 and God's speeches lead human beings to the fear of the Lord.

Then the question arises: does the fear of the Lord, based on transcendent wisdom, criticise traditional wisdom which applies to Job's friends in the dialogue (chs 3-27, 32-27), or does it complement it or reject its extreme? This is a tricky question, since even though traditional wisdom which entails the doctrine of retribution is supported in many parts of the Bible, there are also some parts of the Bible which do not correspond to the doctrine of retribution.

Some scholars explain the above in a logical manner whenever they encounter the contradicting teachings in the Bible. They compare theologically the book of Job with the book of Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes. They cannot state that the book of Job completely undermines the doctrine of retribution, since the book of Proverbs supports, next to Deuteronomy, the doctrine of retribution very strongly. Rather the book of Job is seen to address the exception to the general doctrine of retribution. In this regard, one can find various opinions in the ranks of biblical scholars.

## **4.2 Wisdom of Job 28 as the fear of the Lord (ch 28:28)**

### **4.2.1 Repetition of the Prologue (chs 1-2)**

For most scholars, when they interpret the concept of wisdom as the fear of the Lord in Job 28:28, they insist that it reveals the repetition of the fear of the Lord in the Prologue (chs 1-2). Job was a righteous person and feared God (chs 1:1-2). In his state of a desperate disaster, he still praised God and continued to fear the Lord. This fear of the Lord is the canonical teaching of the Bible. Job 28 Job repeats the fear of the Lord and in the confrontation with God Job fulfils the fear of the Lord.

For Childs (1979:54), the fear of God offers an explicit canonical directive on how the critical stance to wisdom found in the book of Job relates to the wider wisdom corpus. Thus chapter 28 provides a link between the portrayal of the patient Job of chapter 2 and the impatient Job of the dialogue. For Wharton (2000:117), Job 28:28 takes on a special meaning in close connection with Job 1:1 and 2:3. It is obvious from Job's speeches that he does not comprehend hidden wisdom. Yet he persists in his integrity toward God and people. From this perspective, Job 28:28 is a perfect lead into Job's final chapters 29-31.

For House (1998:425), in the canonical context Israelite wisdom integrates faith into life's daily details. The fear of the Lord is the beginning (Proverbs 1:7) and sum total (Job 28:28). The belief that secular wisdom gradually moves toward religious expressions is an unproved developmental view of this literature's emergence. The canon makes no such distinction. Only one God is able to inspire or impart wisdom. God possessed wisdom before the foundation of the world, which his status as creator demonstrates (Job 28).

For House (1998:427), the book of Job reveals the fear of the Lord as the concept of wisdom. In the Prologue (chs 1-2) Job feared God. Even during the debate with friends (chs 3-27), Job repeats the fear the Lord in Job 28. The fear of the Lord is the primary way to be wise. Job completes the wisdom in confrontation with God, as the coming Saviour will embody wisdom in its best and fullest sense. Therefore, for House, the fear of the Lord in Job 28 is the repetition of the Prologue as the main theme in the book of Job. The researcher agrees that the fear of the Lord (Job 28:28) is the repetition of the Prologue (Job 1-2). However, for him, it is not a simple repetition, but it rather shows the progress of the meaning of this notion.

#### **4.2.2 The fear of the Lord as theological climax of Job 28**

Even though Job fears the Lord in the Prologue (chs 1-2), Job shows a different style in the dialogue with his friends (chs 3-27). His experience makes him criticise traditional wisdom which entails the doctrine of retribution to which he adhered in the past. After the dialogue, Job or a poet writes a beautiful poem about wisdom in Job 28. This poem deals with the inaccessibility of wisdom, which only belongs to God. However, in the last verse, human beings are able to access wisdom through the fear of the Lord. The latter concept in Job 28:28 becomes the theological climax of Job 28.

The fear of the Lord appears in the Prologue (chs 1-2) and reappears in Job 28:28. However, the understanding of the fear of the Lord in both cases may be different. In the Prologue (chs 1-2), Job feared the Lord in the sense of traditional wisdom. However, the fear of the Lord in Job 28 no longer represents traditional wisdom, but belongs to transcendent wisdom. The fear of the Lord is the practical conclusion of transcendent

wisdom, which is inaccessible to human beings.

For Simundson (1986:110), chapter 28 is a statement by the author, a transition, a time to stop and catch one's breath. On the one hand, it points to the futility of the search for answers that have continued for so many chapters. On the other hand, it points ahead to the climax of the book. Human beings are able to produce treasures from the depths of the earth. But they cannot find or buy wisdom. Only God knows where to find it. God has a relationship with wisdom, which is impossible for humans to emulate.

For Simundson (1986:113), even though human beings cannot find wisdom, there is something possible to be done to approach wisdom. It is to fear God and to be obedient to God. Though human beings cannot come to complete knowledge on their own, God has not left them in the dark. God lets them know what they need to know. So, if human beings approach God with fear, God will reveal to them how to live and will take care of the uncertainty of life which will always remain. If one trusts God and is obedient, one need not know the answer to every question. Therefore, the fear of the Lord in Job 28:28 becomes the theological climax of Job 28.

For Birch (1999:141), chapter 28 stands by itself and is rumination upon the inscrutability of wisdom. The chapter ponders the amazing technical capacity of humankind to probe the earth, but concludes that all human investigations are bound to fail. The reason for human failure is that wisdom is not accessible to human discovery. This undermines the confidence of Job's friends and the proverbial tradition to which they appeal. The friends think that they know wisdom because they trust in the simple

moral principles of Proverbs.

However, in verse 28, according to Birch (1999:401), wisdom consists of a life aimed towards Yahweh and lived responsibly. This is the very life Job has lived. For that reason, the dispute is resumed after the interlude of chapter 28. However, it is different from the previous debate. Job no longer addresses his friends. Job now only addresses God. Therefore, the fear of the Lord in Job 28 functions as the theological climax in Job 28. The researcher agrees that Job 28:28 is the theological climax of Job 28. Furthermore, for him, Job 28:28 anticipates the confrontation with God and God's speeches in Job 38-41.

#### **4.2.3 Anticipation of the fear of the Lord (chs 38-41)**

Most theological scholars are of the opinion that Job 28 anticipates the speeches of Yahweh, which could make Job reach an entire understanding of the concept of wisdom as the fear of the Lord. Even though Job fears the Lord in the Prologue (chs 1-2) and Job 28, the fear of the Lord cannot be complete until he enters into a confrontation with God directly. In the confrontation with God, Job repents sincerely and fears the Lord completely. Therefore, the fear of the Lord in Job 28 plays a role as a bridge between the fear of the Lord in the Prologue and that of the speeches of Yahweh.

For Smick (1988:858), Job 28 anticipates the theophany, but does so without creating a climax. In Job 28, like the speeches of Yahweh, God alone has the answer. Human beings may be clever, but they are rarely wise. God alone knows where wisdom may be found. Wisdom is the summary of the genius God used to fashion the universe. Job 28

comes to a climax with the admonition that wisdom may be attained only through submission to God (1988:957). Man has to look to God for wisdom. Man may share in such wisdom only through an acknowledgement of the revealed mind of God. To know him as God and live within the sphere of life-giving precepts is wisdom for man. Therefore, the fear of the Lord in Job 28 anticipates God's speeches and it is completely realised in confrontation with God.

According to Hunt (1991:799), Job 28 Job concludes that real wisdom can only be found in a proper faith relationship with God: the fear of the Lord. Though Job knows this is true and seeks to live a righteous life, he is still hurting and does not understand why this is so. Thus Job cries out on God in Job 29, reminding God of how he has lived faithfully in the past. Job issues a friendly plea in Job 31 to God to vindicate him. God's appearance shows that God cares, that he still controls the world. Even in a world with unexplainable suffering, his creation proves that human beings must live under God's control. People need to be content with a God who speaks to them. God can be trusted in the worst of circumstances, as well as in the best. Faith may amount to struggling in the dark for answers, but this is struggling with God, and not with people. Therefore, the concept of wisdom in Job 28 anticipates the speeches of Yahweh.

For Dillard (1994:204), in chapter 28 Job has a moment of insight as he responds to Zophar's speech reconstructed from 27:13-23. In this poem, Job anticipates the conclusion of the book by ascribing all wisdom to God. However, under the burden of his suffering this insight soon passes and gives way to depression once again. The view that Job comes to a heartfelt repentance of his own impatience toward God, no matter

how right his defence against the three friends, is the correct interpretation of the original intention of the book, and it certainly fits in more appropriately with a canonical attitude of reverence toward God.

The researcher agrees with the scholars who consider Job 28 as the suggestion of the fear of the Lord. The fear of the Lord appeared in Prologue (chs 1-2) and here in Job 28 it is repeated. Furthermore, the fear of the Lord in Job 28 anticipates the confrontation with God where the fear of the Lord will be complete. For him, however, the fear of the Lord in the Prologue belongs to traditional wisdom, but the fear of the Lord in Job 28 reflects the failure of human discussion and becomes a practical conclusion of transcendent wisdom.

### **4.3 Transcendent wisdom (ch 28) and the fear of the Lord (ch 28:28)**

#### **4.3.1 Transcendent wisdom as divine order**

Most scholars who work from a theological perspective consider Job 28 as a wisdom poem which deals with transcendent wisdom. The wisdom poem offers us a calm moment of reflection on the ultimately impossible human quest to find and comprehend the wisdom that belongs only to God. In Job 28 transcendent wisdom is celebrated without reference to the argument that has raged between Job and his friends. Transcendent wisdom belongs to God alone and human beings cannot gain access to it. All that human beings are allowed to know is the fact that there is divine order in this world, even though human eyes notice the coexistence of both cosmos and chaos in this world.

For Wharton (2000:113), the poet begins by celebrating the quite remarkable technologies that human beings have developed to discover and exploit valuable objects that were originally quite hidden from human sight. Yet, even this remarkable human urge to explore and discover hidden things is not capable of finding the place where wisdom and understanding are to be found. Nevertheless, Wharton thinks that it would be a mistake to find comfort in this passage for an anti-intellectual, anti-scientific, or anti-technological attitude. The poet stands quite frankly in awe before the human capacity to achieve such remarkable results. However, the human cleverness is simply not capable of breaking through to the discovery and exploitation of what ultimately matters most.

According to Wharton (2000:116), while wisdom literature in general often regards the acquisition of wisdom as the highest human goal (Prov 4:5-7; 16:16; 23:23), the ultimate wisdom of which Job 28 speaks, eludes all human capacities to search out and acquire. The dwelling place of transcendent wisdom is permanently hidden from the sharpest eye, whether human or otherwise (vv 20-21). Even death and the chaotic underworld, here personified, have at best heard rumours of wisdom's place of origin. Only God understands the way to wisdom and knows its place. God discovered the place of wisdom already at the beginning of God's creative activity. Job 28:23-27 are the metaphors of transcendent wisdom that belongs only to God.

For Birch (1999:141), chapter 28 shows that all human investigations are bound to fail. The reason for human failure is that wisdom is not accessible to human discovery. This undermines the confidence of Job's friends and the proverbial tradition to which they



appeal. The friends think that they know wisdom, because they trust the simple moral principle of Proverbs, but Job 28 warns human beings that wisdom belongs to God. That wisdom is transcendent wisdom and reflects divine order.

### **4.3.2 Transcendent wisdom against the fear of the Lord**

Then what relationship is there between transcendent wisdom and the fear of Lord? Most theological scholars hold that transcendent wisdom leads human beings to the fear of the Lord; since the fear of the Lord is the only thing that human beings can do before the inscrutability of divine wisdom. However, there are some scholars who disagree with this opinion (Fyall 2002:67). They propose that this transcendent wisdom criticises the fear of the Lord, as well as traditional wisdom. They insist that the fear of the Lord belongs to traditional wisdom and transcendent wisdom in Job 28 reveals the failure of the fear of the Lord as wisdom.

For Fyall (2002:67), chapter 28 is the metaphor of the entire book and shows the place of wisdom which lies behind creation itself. The theme of wisdom and its intertwining with creation and providence is expressed in a vivid metaphorical manner. Even though the evocation of mining has connotations of suffering and solitude which mirrors Job's plight, it also provides the images of the mysteries of the underworld which are a powerful reminder of the supernatural dimensions of these sufferings.

According to Fyall (2002:70), the images of ordered society in chapter 29 are a reflection of the order of the cosmos evoked in chapter 28 and depend for their stability on that order. The fear of the Lord did not prevent Job's suffering and indeed it is

largely in protest against this that he makes his final speeches in chapters 29-31. Thus a further revelation from God is necessary.

The researcher agrees that Job 28 provides the order of the cosmos and that the image of order appears in Yahweh's speeches. However, the researcher does not agree that since the fear of the Lord did not prevent Job's suffering, further revelation from God is necessary. Wisdom does not only consist in the search for divine order, but also in the fear of the Lord.

#### **4.3.2 Transcendent wisdom for the fear of the Lord**

Unlike Fyall(2002), most theological scholars consider the fear of the Lord as the practical conclusion of transcendent wisdom. Even though human beings cannot access transcendent wisdom, human beings are able to obtain wisdom through the fear of the Lord, since God disclosed his will and wisdom in his revelation.

For Gutierrez (1988:38), a liberation theologian in Latin America, transcendent wisdom in Job 28 is identical with the fear of the Lord. For him, the poet gives us a beautiful poem on wisdom and puts us in the presence of the greatness of God and the hidden understanding of God's intentions for the human race. The poet reminds us that the quest on which Job is bent requires a prudence that wisdom alone gives. The poem tells us that human beings know where to find silver, iron, and a great many other things, but God alone understands wisdom's path and knows where it is to be found. At the same time, he also shows in a subtle way that something new is needed if we are to share in the knowledge of God. Possession of this wisdom is identical with the fear of the Lord

For Park (1987:275) who represents conservative Korean theologians, Job 28 shows that real wisdom cannot be found on the earth and in the sea. Wisdom cannot be compared with the value of gold and silver. Only God knows wisdom, since he is omniscient and the creator of the universe. Park (1987:280) explains that human beings cannot find wisdom, since human beings are already darkened by sin. Therefore, the concept of wisdom in Job 28 shows transcendent wisdom which is inaccessible to human beings.

However, Park (1987:280) does not only discover transcendent wisdom, but also accessible wisdom in Job 28. Even though human beings cannot have the power to reach wisdom, God revealed his wisdom in the Bible and in the creation and our world. Anyone who knows the wisdom of God can attain this through the Bible. For him, depending on the Bible which is the word of God, is the same as the fear of God. Human beings must fear God. That is the wisdom that human beings can obtain. The researcher agrees that in Job 28 transcendent wisdom is for the fear of the Lord, not against it. The fear of the Lord is the practical conclusion of transcendent wisdom.

#### **4.4 Traditional wisdom and the fear of the Lord (ch 28:28)**

##### **4.4.1 Criticism of traditional wisdom**

While most scholars consider the fear of the Lord in Job 28:28 as the practical conclusion of transcendent wisdom, most scholars have a tendency to hold one of two different opinions about the relationship between traditional wisdom and the fear of the Lord. According to one opinion, the book of Job criticises traditional wisdom, which entails the doctrine of retribution, but suggests that transcendent wisdom leads to the

fear of the Lord. In this case, the fear of the Lord as the concept of wisdom becomes the replacement of traditional wisdom in the book of Job.

Dillard (1994:204) has a negative perspective on the doctrine of retribution. Job's friends represent the age old wisdom of retribution theology. In their case, however, it has become quite rigid and mechanical. God blesses the righteous; he curses the wicked. Then, if Job suffers, he must be a sinner in need of repentance (4:7-11; 11:13-20). Job reacts strongly against the doctrine of retribution. Both Job and his friends set themselves up as sources of wisdom and ridicule the wisdom of the other.

For Dillard (1994:209), the question of wisdom is at the centre of the book. God alone is the source of wisdom. The proper human response is repentance and submission. The book of Job is a canonical corrective against a faulty doctrine in that it guards against a mechanical application of a proper biblical retribution theology. It rejects retribution theory of the three friends as the only explanation of the origin of suffering.

For Simundson (1986:20), the doctrine of retribution is the starting point in the book of Job. Job and his friends start with this traditional belief. The friends never abandon it. Job, too, is stuck with the residue of this doctrine as he struggles to harmonise it with his own personal integrity. This was the prevailing interpretation of suffering at least until the time of Judah's exilic period. The great poet who wrote this book wanted to say something about the inappropriateness of applying this answer to every instance of suffering.

According to Simundson (1986:113), after God's speeches, Job acknowledges that his actions toward God according to the doctrine of retribution were wrong. Job repents because he has come to think of God as a punisher, avenger and enemy. It means that Job does not repent because of any wrong he has committed, but the problem lies in his reaction to his suffering. Therefore, for him, the concept of wisdom in Job 28 is the fear of the Lord which excludes the doctrine of retribution. One should not find some fault in the sufferer and one should not revert to some variation of a doctrine of retribution. Human beings should rather approach and trust God with fear.

For Watts (1971:28), the book of Job deals with human existence as a whole, not just the question of suffering. It sees suffering and disaster as part of the human situation in which every person is involved, the righteous as well as the wicked. Job makes it clear that the explanation of suffering can never be deduced from human wisdom alone. This prepares the way for the religious message. Wisdom does not have the answer, but faith has a solution. Thus the orthodoxy expressed by friends is not Israelite orthodoxy, but that of a distorted emphasis of international as well as Israelite wisdom thought.

According to Watts (1971:24), within the speeches of Job and his friends there are sections of proverbial wisdom (4:8-11; 5:1-7; 8:11-19; 12:11-12; 14:1-2; 15:17-35). The two speeches of Yahweh are cast in the form of wisdom. So the book of Job deals with criticising various aspects of wisdom. Chapter 28 proclaims the mystery which surrounds God, the fact that God has all wisdom, but that man knows very little. Just as man's knowledge and experience are local and terminable, his reason and ability are partial until all of man is brought into proper relationship to God. While man gives a

distorted answer, only God can provide that universal answer. Therefore, for Watts (1971:28), the concept of wisdom in Job 28 is the fear of the Lord, while criticising traditional wisdom.

The researcher agrees that the concept of wisdom in Job 28 shows divine wisdom and the fear of the Lord. However, he does not agree that the doctrine of retribution does not represent Israelite wisdom. Rather, the wisdom in Job 28 does not only suggest divine wisdom, but also the accessible wisdom which includes the doctrine of retribution.

#### **4.4.2 Complementing traditional wisdom**

As against the scholars who criticise traditional wisdom, there are many scholars who interpret the book of Job as an exceptional case of the general principle, which is called the doctrine of retribution. For them, the book of Job does not deny the efficiency of the doctrine of retribution, but they rather suggest that the book of Job and the Ecclesiastes complement the general principles of Proverbs, which deal with the doctrine of retribution.

According to Van Selms (1985:13), the book of Job dissents strongly from the prevailing views of wisdom. Job experiences the inadequacy of the doctrine of retribution in his own experience. Nevertheless, the author does not reject what the friends say as untrue. He accepts the relative validity of their arguments. One can learn much, not only from Job's discourse, but also from the utterances of the other participants in the dialogue. The contradictions between speakers need to be resolved in some clever way into a final harmony. In general, one has to agree with the friends'

arguments, but also to deny that these general truths are applicable to Job's case. There is much in human life that can be explained neither as reward for Job's irreproachable conduct, nor as punishment for sins committed.

Hunt (1991:800) holds that cause and effect of suffering and the justice and care of God are two important issues in the book of Job. For him, the friends' belief in the doctrine of retribution is not wrong and it explains the cause of suffering. Eliphaz notes that suffering will not last forever for the innocent. Bildad notes that Job's punishment is not as bad as it could have been. Being alive means that Job's sin is not unforgivable and his suffering can be endured. Eliphaz pleaded for Job to listen to God's word in the experience, for his suffering should become a means of seeing God's will and God's way in the situation. This should lead Job to confess his sin and praise God.

For Alden (1993:41), the purpose of the book of Job, like the lament Psalms and Ecclesiastes, is to address this matter of exceptions to the general principle of just rewards. The message of the book of Job is that when we meet a situation as Job did, we should live and die by grace and faith. What cannot be comprehended through reason should be embraced in love. The book of Job leads us to ask ourselves: Do I believe in God? Do I reverently and obediently fear him? With all my heart, soul, mind, and strength do I love God?

Alden (1993:41) describes the concept of wisdom in Job 28 as elusive and precious; something that can only be had through "the fear of the Lord." Human beings cannot obtain wisdom, since wisdom belongs to God and amounts to transcendent wisdom.

However, God exposed wisdom through his revelation. Consequently, the only way in which human beings can obtain wisdom is by means of the fear of the Lord. The book of Job would have been a wisdom book without a wisdom chapter (28:28), but its inclusion raises the value of Job to even loftier heights

Park (1987:275) also does not deny the efficiency of the doctrine of retribution that the wicked are punished in this world, since this doctrine is also part of the Bible. Park (1987:270) attributes Job 27:13-23 to Job's mouth, which means that Job acknowledges the effectiveness of the doctrine of retribution. This means that the problem of the friends is that they do not realise that the general principle of retribution is not applicable to Job's case. Therefore, for Park, the concept of wisdom in Job 28 is the both transcendent wisdom and the fear of the Lord and does not exclude the doctrine of retribution.

The researcher agrees that the concept of wisdom in Job 28 reveals both transcendent wisdom and the fear of the Lord, and that it does not exclude the doctrine of retribution. However, he does not agree that the doctrine of retribution is the general principle and that the book of Job suggests the exception to the general principle. Rather the researcher insists that even though there is some contradiction between them, the Bible reveals the coexistence or ambivalence between the doctrine of retribution and the fear of the Lord.

#### **4.4.3 Rejection of the extreme traditional wisdom**

If the book of Job, as well as Job 28, neither criticises traditional wisdom, nor



complements it, what does it do? Some scholars attempt to reject the extreme element of traditional wisdom and reveal the tension among transcendent wisdom and the fear of the Lord and traditional wisdom. They reject the systematised dogma and attempt to prove the coexistence between the inaccessibility and accessibility of wisdom. As happens in life, one can obtain within limits some kind of human principle. However, there is also a mystery in life that such principle cannot understand. All one needs in such a time is the fear of the Lord that belongs to the sphere of mystery.

For Childs (1979), in Job 28 Job does not only recognise the divine limitations set on human wisdom, but also Job affirms a positive role for wisdom within the relevant restrictions. Therefore, the concept of wisdom in chapter 28 reveals the tense relationship between traditional wisdom, which entails the friends' doctrine, and the limitation of wisdom to which Job appeals.

Wilcox (1989:182) also holds that the view that Job was tempted to express is the extreme notion that wickedness always pays, and that righteousness is never rewarded. However, the book of Job rejects this extreme. Even though the book chastises Job and his friends, and never suggests any alternatives to their views, one could argue that what the author presupposes about our knowledge of these matters provides a base for more moderate claims made with less dogmatic self-confidence. The book of Job presupposes that we can know a good deal about the moral character of human beings and about how they fare in the world. Though the righteous do not always prosper, there may be characteristic rewards of righteousness.

Like Childs (1979) and Wilcox (1989), many theological scholars such as Birch, Brueggemann, Fretheim and Petersen (1999:390) hold that the wisdom teachers believed that experience teaches us about reality, that the latter is ethically ordered, and ethical order is rooted in the purpose of God. The sum of this teaching is *theodic settlement*, where the rewards and punishments of reality are seen as appropriate and uncompromising consequences of actions taken. However, the wisdom teachers know that the theodicy refers to God and is not to be reduced to any system of consequences. There is something inscrutable about the future that is not automatically produced by our actions, but which belongs to the elusive ways of God. Thus theodicy tends to be a mixture of practical observation and inscrutability.

According to Birch (1999:393), while the book of Proverbs is the elaboration of Israel's principle *theodic settlement*, the book of Job is regarded as the principle *theodic protest* in the Old Testament that challenges the serene justifications of social reality given in the book of Proverbs. Three friends are agreed in the moral calculus that the righteous prosper and the wicked suffer. They assume Job's guilt in order to sustain the system and in order to affirm that God is a fair, reliable arbiter. What is important is that Job does not reject the system of retribution any more than do his friends. Job and his friends have laid out the issues, but are incapable of adjudicating the issues between orthodoxy and the truth Job knows.

The researcher agrees that Job does not reject the system of retribution any more than do his friends. Agreeing with the interpretation of Birch (1999) on Job 28, one can detect the mismatch between the inscrutability of wisdom and the simplicity of Proverbs, as it

is found in God's speeches. However, the researcher prefers to coexistence between transcendent wisdom as inscrutability of wisdom and traditional wisdom.

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

As the current scholars who proceed from the literary and historical perspective discovered several concepts of wisdom in Job 28, the scholars who work from the theological perspective discussed several concepts of wisdom according to their theological background. Most scholars who work from the theological perspective have a tendency to hold that the book of Job exhibits Job's faith and the wisdom as the fear of the Lord (Childs 1979:536, Smick 1988:589, Van Selms 1985:105, Wilcox 1989:179, Alden 1993:41, Wharton 2000).

When they interpret the concept of wisdom as the fear of the Lord in Job 28:28, it is considered the repetition of the fear of the Lord in the Prologue (chs 1-2). Job was righteous a person and feared God (chs 1:1-2). In his state of a desperate disaster, he still praises God and continues to fear the Lord. This fear of the Lord is the canonical teaching of the Bible. In Job 28 Job repeats the fear of the Lord and in the confrontation with God Job completes the fear of the Lord. Consequently, the fear of the Lord in Job 28 anticipates the speeches of God.

Most theological scholars consider the fear of the Lord as the practical conclusion of transcendent wisdom. Even though human beings cannot access transcendent wisdom, they are able to obtain wisdom through the fear of the Lord, since God revealed his will and wisdom in his revelation. However, there are some scholars who disagree with this

opinion (Fyall 2002). They are of the opinion that this transcendent wisdom criticises the fear of the Lord as well as traditional wisdom. They insist that the fear of the Lord belongs to traditional wisdom and that transcendent wisdom in Job 28 reveals the failure of the fear of the Lord as wisdom.

While most theological scholars consider the fear of the Lord in Job 28:28 as the practical conclusion of transcendent wisdom, most scholars hold one of two different opinions about the relationship between traditional wisdom and the fear of the Lord. According to one opinion, the book of Job criticises traditional wisdom, which entails the doctrine of retribution, but equates transcendent wisdom with the fear of the Lord. In this case, the fear of the Lord as the concept of wisdom becomes the replacement of traditional wisdom in the book of Job.

Against the scholars who criticise traditional wisdom, there are many scholars who interpret the book of Job as an exception to the general principle, which is called the doctrine of retribution. For them, the book of Job does not deny the efficiency of the doctrine of retribution, but they rather suggest that the books of Job and Ecclesiastes complement the general principle of Proverbs, which deals with the doctrine of retribution.

However, some scholars attempt to reject the extreme element of traditional wisdom and reveal the tension between transcendent wisdom with the fear of the Lord and traditional wisdom. They reject the extreme systematised dogma and attempt to reach coexistence between the inaccessibility and accessibility of wisdom. Within this limit

one can obtain some kind of human principle. There is also a mystery in life that the principle cannot understand. All one needs in such a time is the fear of the Lord that belongs to the sphere of mystery.

For Childs (1979:54), Job 27-28 rules out the theory that Job is rejecting Israel's wisdom *per se*, since in Job 27:11-23 even Job describes the certain fate of the ungodly in terms reminiscent of his friends' arguments. Rather Job refutes the false application of sapiential tradition to explain his suffering in the dialogue. For Birch and Brueggemann (1999:393), the *theodic settlement* as the rewards and punishments of reality is seen as appropriate and uncompromising consequences of actions taken. Job does not reject the system of retribution any more than do his friends. Therefore, for them, the concept of wisdom in Job 28 is transcendent wisdom which includes the fear of the Lord, and which does not exclude even the doctrine of retribution.

The researcher follows the last trend of the theological perspective of scholars in the sense that transcendent wisdom includes the fear of the Lord, and does not exclude the doctrine of retribution. However, the researcher does not accept the attempt of the theological scholars that they are able to systematise all the concepts of wisdom. Furthermore, he does not agree that the book of Proverbs states the general principle of retribution and the book of Job is to address the exception to the general principle. Rather the researcher prefers to the state of the coexistence or ambivalence.

## **Chapter 5 Research into the concept of wisdom in Job 28**

### **5.1 Introduction**

In previous chapters we analysed the literary, historical and theological interpretations on Job 28. We discerned several different trends on the concept of wisdom in Job 28 according to the methodological fashion. Now in this chapter, we will deal with the comparison between the conclusions which were previously reached. The specific focus will be the concept of wisdom in Job 28. Furthermore, it will revolve around the question about the possibility that the different trends in the modern research of wisdom in Job 28 share a certain common understanding and that the concept of wisdom in Job 28 depends on the relationship among three concepts of wisdom.

Before commencing with the comparison between perspectives, it is necessary to compare the scholars by means of the same methodology. Even though they have some different opinions in the concept of wisdom in the same methodology, one can nevertheless detect some main common trends in the understanding of the concept of wisdom in Job 28. As a result, one could compare the conclusions which have been reached through three different perspectives. This comparison will provide us some clarity as to the trends of current scholars on the concept of wisdom in Job 28.

### **5.2 Concept of wisdom from a literary perspective**

1. For the scholars who work from a literary perspective, chapter 28 plays a crucial role as the main theme of the book of Job, dealing with the concept of wisdom. As the main trend of the scholars from the literary perspective, Job 28 judges the efforts of the friends to teach Job wisdom as a failure (Hartley 1985:44). While these friends have

adhered to the tradition of the fathers, they misinterpreted Job's specific case and failed to offer him any insight into God's amazing ways in regard to his affliction. In chapters 1-2 Job feared God and avoided evil. After chapters 1-2 Job got engaged in the debate with his friends. In chapters 3-27, the friends insisted that they had wisdom. According to their wisdom, they insisted that suffering Job had to be a sinner. Job also contended that God must be unjust, according to his wisdom. Job's friends and Job did everything they could solve the cause of Job's suffering with traditional wisdom which entails the doctrine of retribution. But they failed to obtain this wisdom (Hartley 1985:373).

However, soon after debate, in chapter 28 Job or the poet confess that they do not know where wisdom is and only God finds it. Wisdom is inaccessible to human beings, so it is transcendent. It means that the doctrine of retribution by the friends is erroneous and they do not know the cause of the mystery, such as why innocents suffer. However, although human beings cannot discover the way to wisdom, they can discover wisdom by fearing God, as stated in Job 28:28. The fear of God becomes the practical side of divine transcendent wisdom. The fear of the Lord in chapter 28:28 anticipates Job's encounter with God in God's speeches and words (Alter 1992: 92).

For Gordis (1965:297), the universe is mystery to man and only God possesses transcendent wisdom. However, as for man, the only wisdom that he could have consists of religion and morality, the fear of the Lord and avoidance of evil. For Dhome (1968:414), wisdom is inaccessible to man and God alone can discover it. Job 28:28 is a practical conclusion: the fear of the Lord. For Janzen (1985:189), since wisdom is inaccessible to man in its primal reality, man has to seek wisdom's earthly and

creaturely analogy: piety and uprightness. For Newsom (2003:176), the fear of the Lord and turning from evil are the effective equivalents of transcendent wisdom that remains inaccessible to humans. Therefore, the concept of wisdom in Job 28 is transcendent wisdom, which is inaccessible to human beings, being the fear of the Lord, against the friends' wisdom which entails the doctrine of retribution.

2. However, some scholars who work from the literary perspective (Habel 1992, Van der Lugt 1995) regard transcendent wisdom as the concept of wisdom, but they do not hold that the fear of the Lord is the practical conclusion of transcendent wisdom. For them, the fear of Lord is only traditional wisdom which transcendent wisdom in Job 28 contradicts. The fear of the Lord in Job 28:28 could be equated to the fear of the Lord in Job 1-2. Job feared God and shunned evil (Job1:1). However, amidst the desperate suffering, wisdom as the fear of the Lord proves useless. The fear of the Lord did not provide Job with the wisdom to understand his present sufferings. Job 28 demonstrates Job's failing to attain wisdom, and it rather suggests transcendent wisdom which is divine design which governs orders of the cosmos.

Habel (1992:25) argues that the book of Job challenges the adequacy of the traditional characterisation of God and the traditional concept of wisdom. Job was the model of success, the perfect sage. He was not only blameless, but he feared God and shunned evil (Job1:1). This model is confirmed by the inclusion that links this verse with 28:28. However, in the suffering world the wisdom of piety proves useless. In the dialogue speeches the bankruptcy of that tradition is exposed. Van der Lugt (1995:524) also contends that chapter 28 is an extensive demonstration of Job's failing to attain wisdom.



Therefore, for these authors, the concept of wisdom in Job 28 is the primordial principle or design which governs order of the cosmos, but it does neither represent the doctrine of retribution nor the fear of the Lord.

3. Unlike most scholars who work from the literary perspective, some scholars (Andersen 1976:71 and Clines 1989: xliv) insist that the concept of wisdom Job 28 does not contradict the theme of the friends and Job completely, even though they acknowledge that the concept of wisdom in Job 28 is transcendent wisdom and the fear of the Lord. They rather attempt to combine transcendent wisdom and traditional wisdom into a whole.

According to them (Andersen 1976:71 and Clines 1989: xliv), Job feared God and shunned evil and he believed in the traditional doctrine of retribution in Job 1-2. However, during the debate (Job 3-17), he began to doubt the doctrine of retribution or of divine justice. Nevertheless, he did not try to eliminate the doctrine of retribution and the fear of the Lord completely. His attack on his friends and even God was an existential lament in a situation of desperate suffering. At the end of the debate, Job again acknowledges the doctrine of retribution (Job 27-28). Especially in Job 28, Job or the poet produces a beautiful poem in which transcendent wisdom and traditional wisdom are mixed.

For Andersen (1976:71), the book of Job provides several ways of reconciling human suffering with the justice of God. Most of them are heard on the lips of Job's friends. The problem is not their views, but the soundness of their views and the cogency of

their arguments. The book of Job shows that one should be careful to apply the doctrine of retribution to every suffering.

For Clines (1989:xliv), the book of Job provides a remarkable answer to the cause of innocent suffering in God's speeches. There is not a word of the retributive principle in God's speeches. It may mean that it is not entirely wrong, but God rather invites Job to reconsider the mystery and complexity. Even if in every instance the principle of retribution does not explain human fate, mainly the book of Job as the truth about the moral universe affirms it. Consequently, the book of Job provides partial answers to the cause of innocent suffering by even Job's friends, even though no satisfactory answer is given. All that Job learns from God is that the doctrine of retribution is not the issue, but whether God may be trusted to run his world.

In conclusion, although most scholars who work from the literary perspective regard the concept of wisdom in Job 28 as the main theme of the book of Job, one can find three different understandings on the concept of wisdom in Job 28 among such scholars working from the literary perspective. Despite some differences between them, the main interpretation is that the concept of wisdom in Job 28 is transcendent wisdom and the fear of Lord. Transcendent wisdom contradicts traditional wisdom which entails the doctrine of retribution that Job's friends held strongly. Nevertheless, the fact that there are two different interpretations provides us with the opportunity of listening to the debate being conducted in various voices.

### **5.3 Concept of wisdom from a historical perspective**

Most scholars who work from a historical perspective have searched for various stages of historical development in the concept of wisdom. As a result, they witnessed several concepts of wisdom in Job 28, as well as the book of Job. Transcendent wisdom in Job 28:1-27 and the fear of the Lord in Job 28:28 have been extensively quoted for the reconstruction of the historical development of the concept of wisdom. However, there have been various interpretations on the understanding of the concept of wisdom in Job 28 amongst the historical critical scholarship. Three main interpretations on the concept of wisdom could be found in Job 28.

1. Firstly, many scholars who work from the historical perspective analyse the lineal development process of the concept of wisdom throughout history (Zerapa 1978, Perdue 1991, Westermann 1995, Blenkinsopp 1995, and Clements 1998). It was assumed that the earliest wisdom was the proverbial wisdom, which searched for some order in human life and the universal world. The order was the result of observation and experience and dealt with behaviour and its consequence. Subsequently, in some later period, the concepts of wisdom – such as transcendent wisdom and the fear of the Lord – developed gradually and evolved from the early wisdom to the later wisdom.

The *first stage of theologisation* gave birth to the identification of wisdom with the fear of the Lord. This may be dated to the monarchic period (Zerapa 1978:248, Blenkinsopp 1995:27) or in the post-exilic period (Clements 1992:61, Westermann 1995:129). The fear of the Lord as the concept of wisdom is the supreme virtue, which is to be encouraged, sought after and maintained by everybody who desires a good life. It

established the norms of understanding by which daily life was governed and which controlled its activities (Clements 1992:63).

After that, as *the second stage of theologisation*, the concept of wisdom became personified as mysterious order implanted in the creation by God. This new concept of wisdom challenged previous traditional wisdom which already entailed the fear of the Lord and the doctrine of retribution (Zerapa 1978:184, Westermann 1995:107). According to this theory, Job 28 and God's speeches in the book of Job attack this traditional wisdom and it is the main intention of the book of Job. Finally, as the *third stage of theologisation*, wisdom was identified with Torah in the Wisdom of Solomon and the book of Sirach (Hayes 1979:323).

In following this historical perspective on the concept of wisdom, the book of Job was written or finally edited in the exilic or post-exilic period and the author(s) or the editor(s) criticise(s) the current opinion of the time which represents the doctrine of retribution and the fear of the Lord. Job's friends and Job are typical examples of the doctrine of the retribution and the fear of the Lord which appears in the later wisdom. The book of Job criticises the dogmatic doctrine of retribution and suggests a new concept of transcendent wisdom. For them, the new concept of wisdom is pure order of creation. The book of Job, especially Job 28, provides an example of transcendent wisdom, which contradicts the fear of the Lord and the doctrine of retribution.

2. One can find another trend on the concept of wisdom in the scholars working from the historical perspective (Pope 1965, Fohrer 1968, Rowley 1970, Strauss 2000). Even

though they acknowledge the lineal development of the concept of wisdom, the concept of wisdom in Job 28 entails both the search for mysterious order and the fear of the Lord, but it is not the doctrine of retribution. The divine wisdom by which God created and regulates the cosmos is beyond man's grasp and knowledge. For man there is only the practical wisdom of piety.

According to Rowley (1970:20), the author of the book of Job protests against the principle of retribution, which lies in the mouth of Job's friends. The purpose of the writer could not have been to offer an explanation of innocent suffering, and his failure to provide a solution should not be interpreted as a failure to attain his purpose. It is in the sphere of religion, rather than in theology, that the meaning of the book is to be found. Job discovered God in his suffering, and so found relief not from his misfortunes, but in them. God was to him far more precious than He had ever been. The past experience of God he had known is transcended in the experience he now has. Only God has wisdom. But God in his grace reveals to him the secret, which lies in reverential submission of himself to God and in eschewing evil. Therefore, for Rowley, wisdom is something that God alone has, and the fear of the Lord is not tantamount to the doctrine of retribution.

3. Unlike most scholars who work from the historical perspective, scholars such as Von Rad (1972:62), Crenshaw (1976:27), and Murphy (1996:40) do not acknowledge the lineal development of the concept of wisdom throughout history, even though they cannot deny the process of development to some extent. They do not believe the later product of the fear of the Lord. Since the earliest stage of the Israelites, the fear of the

Lord coexisted with the old proverbial wisdom. For the wisdom teachers amongst the Israelites, the understanding of the world was equal to the understanding of God. When they searched the order of the world, they always believed in Yahweh in Israel. They always had to keep balance between proverbial wisdom and faith in Yahweh (Von Rad 1972:62). The religious dimension of the wisdom experience can get the lessons that one can draw from day to day living from the realm of personal observation and the surprise of creation (Murphy 1996:124).

According to these scholars (Von Rad 1972, Murphy 1996), even in the later period the balance between the fear of the Lord and the search for order continued. It is appropriate to consider the personification of wisdom in Job 28 as the reinterpretation of a very old insight, which had never been experienced before (Von Rad 1972:155). At the same time, the fear of the Lord in Job 28:28 is interpreted as the limitation of wisdom, while Job 28 reveals the search for mysterious order. Therefore, the concept of wisdom in Job 28 is both mysterious order and the fear of the Lord, which does not eliminate the principle of retribution, and it rather rejects the extremes of traditional wisdom.

Consequently, we may find three main trends regarding the concept of wisdom amongst the scholars working from the historical perspective. Firstly, the concept of wisdom in Job 28 is only transcendent wisdom found in post-exilic period, against the fear of the Lord and the doctrine of retribution. Secondly, the concept of wisdom in Job 28 contains both transcendent wisdom and the fear of the Lord, which militate against the doctrine of retribution. Lastly, the concept of wisdom in Job 28 refers to transcendent wisdom, which implies that the fear of the Lord does not exclude the doctrine of retribution.

## **5.4 Concept of wisdom from a theological perspective**

The current scholars who work from a theological perspective are presently discussing several concepts of wisdom according to their theological background. In common with many current scholars from the literary and historical perspective, most scholars who work from the theological perspective consider the concept of wisdom in Job 28 as the fear of the Lord (Childs 1979:536, Smick 1988:589, Van Selms 1985:105, Wilcox 1989:179, Alden 1993:41, Wharton 2000). However, even when they agree that the concept of the wisdom in Job 28 is the fear of the Lord in Job 28, one can nevertheless notice several types of relationship among the concepts of wisdom.

1. Many scholars insist that the concept of wisdom in Job 28 is both transcendent wisdom and the fear of the Lord, but such concepts contradict the doctrine of retribution (Watts 1971:28, Simundson 1986:113, Gutierrez 1988:16, Dillard 1994:209, Wharton 2000:113). They consider the doctrine of retribution as foreign wisdom, not Israelite wisdom, even though it was written in the Bible. For Watts (1971:28), the book of Job sees suffering and disaster as part of the human situation in which every person is involved, the righteous as well as the wicked. Job makes it clear that the explanation of suffering can never be deduced from human wisdom alone. The orthodoxy expressed by his friends is not Israelite orthodoxy, but that of a distorted interpretation of international as well as Israelite wisdom thought.

2. However, other scholars hold that both transcendent wisdom and the fear of the Lord do not exclude the doctrine of retribution as traditional wisdom. Rather transcendent wisdom and the fear of the Lord complement traditional wisdom, or reject the extremes

of traditional wisdom (Childs 1979:536, Park 1987:30, Wilcox 1989:182, Van Selms 1985:13, Smick 1988:858, Hunt 1991:800, Alden 1993:41, Birch and Brueggemann 1999:392). For them, the wisdom of the book of Job does not contradict traditional wisdom, which entails the general doctrine of retribution, since some teachings of the Bible support the latter doctrine. There is something inscrutable about the future that is not automatically produced by our actions, but one can not deny the general consequence of any activity.

The researcher follows the second trend of the theological perspective scholars in the sense that transcendent wisdom entails the fear of the Lord, and that this does not exclude the doctrine of retribution. However, the researcher does not accept the attempt of some theological scholars that they can systematise all the concepts of wisdom. Rather the researcher supports the coexistence or ambivalence between the search for order and the fear of the Lord, even though there is some measure of contradiction between them.

## **5.5 Comparison to three perspectives in Chapter 28**

### **5.5.1 Literary and historical perspectives**

When one compares the works of the scholars who operate from the literary and from the historical perspectives, one can notice a common understanding on the concept of wisdom in Job 28, even though their interest and perspective may be somewhat different. While most scholars who approach their work from a literary perspective understand transcendent wisdom and the fear of the Lord in Job 28 as a main literary theme, many scholars who work from the historical perspective regard the lineal development process



of the concept of wisdom as transcendent wisdom and the fear of the Lord.

1. First, most scholars who approach their work from a literary perspective (Terrien 1982:900, Hartley 1988:382, Zuck 1992:302, Hoffman 1996:250, Newsom 2003:176) agree that the concept of wisdom in chapter 28 is a main literary theme, which reveals transcendent wisdom, which implies the fear of the Lord and which excludes the doctrine of retribution. Similarly, many scholars working from the historical perspective (Pope 1965, Fohrer 1968, Rowley 1970, Crenshaw 1972, Strauss 2000) also consider the concept of wisdom in Job 28 as both the search for mysterious order and the fear of the Lord, but this cannot be equated with the doctrine of retribution. The divine wisdom by which God created and regulates the cosmos is beyond man's grasp and knowledge. For man there is only the practical wisdom of piety.

2. Secondly, while some scholars (Habel 1992:25 Van der Lugt 1995:552) who deal with their work from the literary perspective regard the fear of the Lord as traditional wisdom along with the doctrine of retribution, many scholars (Zerapa 1978, Perdue 1991, Westermann 1995 Blenkinsopp 1995, and Clements 1998) who work from the historical perspective insist that transcendent wisdom in Job 28 contradicts traditional wisdom which entails both the fear of the Lord and the doctrine of retribution.

For Habel (1985:401), Job 28:23-27 and God's speeches reveal transcendent wisdom as primordial order against traditional wisdom within which Job and his friends argued with one another. Wisdom is the ordering principle of the creation progress, the hidden design and designer behind all things, but neither the fear of Lord nor the doctrine of

retribution. For Blenkinsopp (1995:27), as *the second stage of theologisation*, the concept of wisdom became personified as mysterious order implanted in the creation by God. This new concept of wisdom challenged the previous traditional wisdom which entailed the fear of the Lord and the doctrine of retribution.

3. Thirdly, some scholars who regard their work from both the above perspectives hold that the concept of transcendent wisdom in Job 28 can coexist with the doctrine of retribution. Andersen (1976) and Clines (1989) insisted that the concept of wisdom in Job 28 does not contradict the theme of the friends and Job completely, but attempts to combine transcendent wisdom and traditional wisdom. For Von Rad (1972) and Murphy (1996), the concept of wisdom in Job 28 is also both mysterious order and the fear of the Lord, which does not eliminate the doctrine of retribution, but it rather rejects the extreme aspects of traditional wisdom.

### **5.5.2 Historical and theological perspectives**

When one compares the works of the scholars who work from the historical and theological perspectives, one can identify numerous scholars who share the concept of wisdom in Job 28 as transcendent wisdom and the fear of the Lord. While many historical scholars view the lineal development process of the concept of wisdom in Job 28 as transcendent wisdom and the fear of the Lord, many theological scholars consider the concept of wisdom as transcendent wisdom and the fear of the Lord, based on their specific theological background. However, one can normally find that there are three understandings regarding the relationship among several concepts of wisdom in Job 28.

1. Firstly, many scholars working from the historical perspective (Pope 1965, Fohrer 1968, Rowley 1970, Crenshaw 1976, Strauss 2000) consider the concept of wisdom in Job 28 as both transcendent wisdom and the fear of the Lord, but this cannot be equated with the doctrine of retribution. Similarly, many scholars from the theological perspective insist that transcendent wisdom in Job 28 contradicts the doctrine of retribution (Watts 1971:28, Simundson 1986:113, Gutierrez 1988:16, Dillard 1994:209, Wharton 2000:113). The divine wisdom by which God created and regulates the cosmos is beyond human beings' understanding. For man there is only the practical wisdom of piety.

2. Secondly, while many scholars (Zerapa 1978, Perdue 1991, Westermann 1995, Blenkinsopp 1995, and Clements 1998) who approach their work from the historical perspective insist that transcendent wisdom in Job 28 contradicts both the fear of the Lord and the doctrine of retribution as traditional wisdom, there are, if any (Fyall 2002:70), few scholars from the theological perspective who exclude the fear of the Lord as the concept of wisdom. Rather the concept of wisdom in Job 28 suggests pure divine wisdom, which means divine design or order.

3. Lastly, many scholars from the theological perspective hold that transcendent wisdom does not exclude the doctrine of retribution (Childs 1979:536, Park 1987:30, Wilcox 1989:182, Van Selms 1985:13, Smick 1988:858, Hunt 1991:800, Alden 1993:41, Birch and Brueggemann 1999:392). However, some scholars who work from the historical perspective hold that the concept of transcendent wisdom in Job 28 is able to coexist with the doctrine of retribution. For Von Rad (1972) and Murphy (1996), the concept of

wisdom in Job 28 is both mysterious order and the fear of the Lord, which does not eliminate the doctrine of retribution, but they rather complement it.

### **5.5.3 Theological and literary perspectives**

When one compares the works of the scholars working from the theological and the literary perspective, one would find that they equate the concept of wisdom in Job 28 with transcendent wisdom and the fear of the Lord. However, while many scholars who work from the theological perspective (Childs 1979:536, Park 1987:30, Wilcox 1989:182, Van Selms 1985:13, Smick 1988:858, Hunt 1991:800, Alden 1993:41, Birch and Brueggemann 1999:392) do not exclude the doctrine of retribution as the concept of wisdom, many scholars who relate to their work from the literary perspective (Terrien 1982:900, Hartley 1988:382, Zuck 1992:302, Hoffman 1996:250, Newsom 2003:176) exclude the doctrine of retribution as the concept of wisdom.

1. Many scholars from the theological perspective insist that transcendent wisdom in Job 28 contradicts the doctrine of retribution (Watts 1971:28, Simundson 1986:113, Gutierrez 1988:16, Dillard 1994:209, Wharton 2000:113). Similarly, most scholars who approach their work from the literary perspective (Terrien 1982:900, Hartley 1988:382, Zuck 1992:302, Hoffman 1996:250, Newsom 2003:176) agree that the concept of wisdom in chapter 28 includes the fear of the Lord and excludes the doctrine of retribution.

2. There are, if any (Fyall 2002:70), few scholars from the theological perspective who exclude the fear of the Lord as the concept of wisdom. However, some scholars (Habel

1992:25, Van der Lugt 1995:552) who work from the literary perspective regard the fear of the Lord as traditional wisdom along with the doctrine of retribution. For Van der Lugt (1995:524), chapter 28 is an extensive demonstration of Job's failing to attain wisdom by the fear of the Lord.

3. Many scholars from the theological perspective hold that transcendent wisdom does not exclude the doctrine of retribution (Childs 1979:536, Park 1987:30, Wilcox 1989:182, Van Selms 1985:13, Smick 1988:858, Hunt 1991:800, Alden 1993:41, Birch and Brueggemann 1999:392). However, some scholars who work from the literary perspective hold that the concept of the transcendent wisdom in Job 28 can coexist with the doctrine of retribution. Andersen (1976) and Clines (1989) insist that the concept of wisdom in Job 28 does not contradict the theme of the friends and Job completely, but attempt to combine transcendent wisdom and traditional wisdom.

## **5.6 Conclusion**

When one compares the works of the scholars who work from the literary, historical, and theological perspectives, one can notice a common understanding of the concept of wisdom in Job 28, even though their interests and perspectives are different. Most scholars who work from literary perspective and many scholars who work from the historical and theological perspectives understand transcendent wisdom and the fear of the Lord as the concept of wisdom in Job 28. However, for them, transcendent wisdom and the fear of the Lord cannot coexist with traditional wisdom as the doctrine of retribution.

There are also two other understandings regarding transcendent wisdom and the fear of the Lord on the one hand and traditional wisdom on the other. Many scholars who work from historical perspective and some scholars who work from the literary perspective do not consider the fear of the Lord as well as traditional wisdom as the concept of wisdom, while there are few scholars who work from the theological perspective that contradict the fear of the Lord. Rather many theological scholars consider the concept of wisdom in Job 28 as transcendent wisdom, which does not exclude traditional wisdom as well as the fear of the Lord. In conclusion, one can find three perspectives on wisdom in Job 28

Firstly, most scholars who approach their work from the literary perspective (Terrien 1982:900, Hartley 1988:382, Zuck 1992:302, Hoffman 1996:250, Newsom 2003:176) agree that the concept of wisdom in chapter 28 is a main literary theme, which reveals transcendent wisdom that implies the fear of the Lord and excludes traditional wisdom. Many scholars working from the historical perspective (Pope 1965, Fohrer 1968, Rowley 1970, Crenshaw 1976, Strauss 2000) also consider the concept of wisdom in Job 28 as both transcendent wisdom and the fear of the Lord, but these cannot be equated with traditional wisdom. Furthermore, many scholars from the theological perspective insist that transcendent wisdom in Job 28 criticises traditional wisdom (Watts 1971:28, Simundson 1986:113, Gutierrez 1988:16, Dillard 1994:209, Wharton 2000:113).

Secondly, many scholars (Zerapa 1978, Perdue 1991, Westermann 1995, Blenkinsopp 1995, and Clements 1998) who work from the historical perspective insist that the transcendent wisdom in Job 28 criticises traditional wisdom, which entails both the fear

of the Lord and the doctrine of retribution. Some scholars (Habel 1992:25 Van der Lugt 1995:552) who work from the literary perspective regard the fear of the Lord as traditional wisdom along with the doctrine of retribution. However, there are few, if any (Fyall 2002:70), scholars from the theological perspective who exclude the fear of the Lord as the concept of wisdom.

Thirdly, many scholars from the theological perspective hold that transcendent wisdom and the fear of the Lord do not exclude traditional wisdom (Childs 1979:536, Park 1987:30, Wilcox 1989:182, Van Selms 1985:13, Smick 1988:858, Hunt 1991:800, Alden 1993:41, Birch and Brueggemann 1999:392). Even some scholars who work from both the literary and historical perspectives (Andersen 1976, Clines 1989, Von Rad 1972, and Murphy 1996) attempt to combine transcendent wisdom and traditional wisdom. The concept of wisdom in Job 28 is both mysterious order and the fear of the Lord which does not eliminate the doctrine of retribution, rather reject the extreme aspects of traditional wisdom.

The researcher agrees with the theological scholars who hold that Job 28 rejects only the extremes of traditional wisdom, and rather supports the notion of transcendent wisdom which leads to the fear of the Lord. It is indeed possible for the concepts of wisdom, such as the fear of the Lord, transcendent wisdom and traditional wisdom to coexist. The coexistence requires rejecting the extreme aspects of the rigid dogmatized system as the understanding of the reality.

## **Chapter 6 Conclusion**

### **6.1 Summary of previous chapters**

This research dealt with the trends of current scholars on analysing the concept of wisdom in Job 28. Is it possible to discern any common trends? If possible, what could these trends entail? In replying to this question, the researcher proceeded from the point of view that different trends could be identified according to the literary, historical, and theological methodological perspectives. In addition, despite the diversity of these trends, he presumed that one could discern a certain common understanding that the concept of wisdom depends on the relationship among the concepts of wisdom: the fear of the Lord, transcendent wisdom as divine order, and traditional wisdom as the doctrine of retribution.

In chapter 2, the opinions of the scholars were discussed who proceed from the literary perspective. According to their methodology, the scholars resist fragmenting the book of Job and try to provide an integrated interpretation of the book as a whole. Most scholars consider Job 28 as a wisdom poem (Clark 1982, Hartley 1985) or song (Andersen 1976, Hoffman 1996), even though some scholars regard Job 28 as a soliloquy or monologue of Job (Wolfers 1995, Van Wolde 1997).

Job 28 itself has a reasonable internal structure as a poem. When Clark (1982:402) analysed the first part of chapter 28 (28:1-11), it repeated some ideas and themes. He listed these repetitions as A (1-2), B (3), C (4), A (5-6), C (7-8), B (9), A (10-11). Paragraph breaks appear at the beginning of verse 12, verse 20, and verse 28. Verse 12 and 20 both ask where wisdom may be found and they use almost identical wording.



The verses following them could be in some way parallel with each other. Verse 13-14 and 21-22 both attempt to answer the question where truth may be found. At the very least they provide a partial answer and state where wisdom cannot be found. Verses 15-19 compare the value of wisdom with that of gold and other precious objects. Verses 23-27 state that God only knows the location and the true value of wisdom.

The last verse is not part of either pattern, and stands on its own as the climax of the whole poem. Andersen (1976:228) regards the sudden twist of verse 28 as a general phenomenon at the end of a wisdom poem. Wisdom turns from reflection to action. This wisdom is to be realised by the fear of God which is quite accessible to all men but is nevertheless most difficult for them. Therefore, wisdom is something observable in the universe that could be realised in the fear of God.

As a wisdom poem or song, Job 28 functions as the climax of the dialogue (chs 3-27), the bridge between the previous and following chapters (chs 29-31), or anticipates the speeches of Yahweh (chs 38-41). According to scholars, such as Andersen (1976:71), Janzen (1985:189) and Hartley (1988:431), at the end of the dialogue the poet composed this poem about wisdom and appropriately placed it at the end of the dialogue, allowing them to ponder the preceding discussion, and also to prepare them for God's speeches. The tranquillity of this meditation contrasts with the turbulence before and after it, and provides some needed relief for the reader. By a similar device Job's final challenge (chs 29-31) and Yahweh's reply (chs 39-41) are kept apart by the speeches of Elihu (chs 32-37), whose slowness of movement creates an interval of suspense against which the words of the Lord become all the more majestic (Andersen

1976:19).

Chapter 3 dealt with current scholars working from the historical perspective, interpreting Job 28 and the concept of wisdom in Job 28. Most historical scholars consider the author of Job 28 as the author of the dialogue (Crenshaw 1976:24, Westermann 1995:107, Murphy 1996:41) or the editor of different hand in a later period (Fohrer 1968:310, Rowley 1970:18). However, reflecting on the scholars who work from the literary perspective, some scholars, such as Strauss (2000:157), attempt to attribute Job 28 to the mouth of Job, rather than to the author of the dialogue.

Regarding the date and location where the book was written, generally Yehud in the post-exilic period is accepted by most scholars (Blenkinsopp 1995, Clements 1998). However, some scholars attribute the date or location to northern Israel or southern Judah in the pre-exilic period (Kaufmann 1972, Pope 1965, Crenshaw 1998), while others acknowledge the continuous development of the book throughout history (Fohrer, 1965, Von Rad 1972, Perdue 1991).

Regarding the purpose of writing of Job 28, there are three different opinions. According to one opinion, Job 28 was written by the author for the purpose of criticising traditional wisdom that was supported by Job's friends. According to Westermann (1995:129), the author of the book of Job intended to criticise the later wisdom and to show the importance of the early wisdom in the book of Job. The early wisdom is found in the wisdom poem (chapter 28) and also in the author's polemic against a dogmatic antithesis of the righteous and the wicked.

According to another opinion, Job 28 attempts to restore traditional wisdom against the radical search for wisdom in the dialogue (Fohrer 1968, Perdue 1991). Lastly, some scholars hold that Job 28 rejects the extreme aspects of traditional wisdom, while it retains the principle of traditional wisdom, and suggests a tense relationship or coexistence of transcendent wisdom and traditional wisdom (Von Rad 1972, Murphy 1996). Murphy (1996:34) denies that the book of Job is seen as an attack on the traditional ideas of divine justice and retribution.

In chapter 4, the scholars who approach their work from the theological perspective discussed several concepts of wisdom according to their theological background. Most scholars who work from the theological perspective hold that the book of Job exhibits Job's faith, while wisdom refers to the fear of the Lord (Childs 1979:536, Smick 1988:589, Van Selms 1985:105, Wilcox 1989:179, Alden 1993:41, Wharton 2000).

When such scholars interpret the concept of wisdom as the fear of the Lord in Job 28:28, it is considered the repetition of the fear of the Lord in the Prologue (chs 1-2). Job was a righteous person and feared God (chs 1:1-2). In his desperate disaster, he still praised God and continued to fear the Lord. This fear of the Lord is the canonical teaching of the Bible. In Job 28 Job repeats the fear of the Lord and in the confrontation with God Job fulfils the fear of the Lord.

While most scholars consider the fear of the Lord in Job 28:28 as the practical conclusion of transcendent wisdom, most scholars hold one of two different opinions about the relationship between traditional wisdom and the fear of the Lord. According

to one opinion, the book of Job criticises traditional wisdom which entails the doctrine of retribution, but equates transcendent wisdom with the fear of the Lord. In this case, the fear of the Lord as the concept of wisdom becomes the replacement of traditional wisdom in the book of Job.

Against the scholars who criticise traditional wisdom, there are many scholars who interpret the book of Job as an exceptional case of the general principle, which is called the doctrine of retribution. For them, the book of Job does not deny the efficiency of the doctrine of retribution, but they rather suggest that the book of Job and the Ecclesiastes complement the general principle of Proverbs, which deals with the doctrine of retribution. However, some scholars attempt to reject the extreme traditional wisdom and reveal a tension between transcendent wisdom and the fear of the Lord on the one hand and traditional wisdom on the other. They reject the extreme systematised dogma and attempt to reconcile the coexistence between transcendent wisdom and traditional wisdom.

## **6.2 Additional discussion of previous chapters**

In chapter 5, the researcher dealt with the comparison between the conclusions which had already been described. One can discern the different understandings of the scholars working from three different perspectives on the concept of wisdom in Job 28. The main interpretation of each perspective is different. However, in each perspective, one can find some different interpretations which are also found in other perspectives.

The first interpretation is the main explanation of the scholars working from a literary

perspective. The theme of Job 28 is criticism of traditional wisdom, which entails the doctrine of retribution and vindicating God (Janzen 1985, Hartley 1988, Van Wolde 1996). God acquires eternal wisdom by immediate personal discovery deep in the primordial past. However, human beings acquire wisdom indirectly through submission to the revealed path and Lord of wisdom. The fear of the Lord is the practical conclusion of transcendent wisdom as mysterious order. This notion may also be found in the works of different scholars from the literary and theological perspectives (Watts 1971, Crenshaw 1976).

The second view is one of main interpretations of the scholars working from the historical perspective. Wisdom was identified with the fear of the Lord as the *first stage of theologisation* in the monarchic period (Blenkinsopp 1995:27) or in the post-exilic period (Westermann 1995:129). After that, as *the second stage of theologisation*, the concept of wisdom became personified as mysterious order implanted in the creation by God. This new concept of wisdom challenged the previous traditional wisdom, which entailed the fear of the Lord and doctrine of retribution (Zerapa 1978:184, Perdue 1991:247).

According to this theory, Job 28 and God's speeches in the book of Job challenge this traditional wisdom which refers to practical religion and the doctrine of retribution and they suggest the wisdom of a higher order which is accessible only to God (Perdue 1991, Westermann 1995). According to this theory, the later wisdom replaced the earlier wisdom. In Job 28, wisdom became personified as mysterious order in the later period. This historical view of point also appears in the scholars working from the literary and

theological perspectives (Habel 1985, Alter 1992, Van der Lugt 1995). Therefore, this interpretation is that the concept of wisdom in Job 28 represents mysterious order or transcendent wisdom and it cannot be equated with either the fear of the Lord or the doctrine of retribution.

The third interpretation may be found amongst the scholars working from the theological perspective (Childs 1979:536; Smick 1988:858; Alden 1993:41). For them, the theme of the book of Job cannot criticise traditional wisdom which entails the doctrine of retribution and the fear of the Lord. For Alden (1993), the purpose of the book is to address the exception to the general principle of just rewards, like the lament Psalms and Ecclesiastes (1993:41). This interpretation also meets support from diverse scholars working from literary and historical perspectives (Von Rad 1972, Andersen 1976).

According to Von Rad (1972:310), in the early monarchy man had to learn to become competent with regard to the realities of life, through a knowledge of Yahweh. All objects of human knowledge were on the one hand knowable and, on the other, subject to a divine mystery to which God could at any time recall them, thus concealing them from man. Even in the later period the ambivalence between the fear of the Lord and the search for order continued. In their efforts to give expression to their knowledge of experience, they became increasingly involved in specifically theological problems. Therefore, it is wise to abstain from any attempt to control wisdom in abstract terms. It is much wiser to let things retain their constantly puzzling nature. The understanding of wisdom includes transcendent wisdom, the fear of the Lord, and the arguments of Job's

friends.

### **6.3 Is the hypothesis correct?**

When one observes the results of the research, one could state that the hypothesis of this thesis has been proved correct as a whole. Modern scholars' research on wisdom in Job 28 exhibited literary, historical and theological trends, even though some overlap between them can be found. One could discern several different trends on wisdom in Job 28 according to each methodological perspective. The choice of the methodology could influence the understanding of the concept of wisdom in Job 28. However, the choice of the methodology did not provide the same result of the concept of wisdom in Job 28 completely. Irrespective of the relevant perspective, we are able to discern different interpretations on the concept of wisdom.

When confronted by the different trends in the modern interpretation of wisdom in Job 28, one could nevertheless understand that they shared a certain common understanding. This lay in the concept of wisdom depending on the relationship among the relevant concepts of wisdom: the fear of the Lord, transcendent wisdom, and traditional wisdom.

1. The concept of wisdom in Job 28 is the fear of the Lord and transcendent wisdom as divine order, but it is not traditional wisdom as in the doctrine of retribution.
2. It is transcendent wisdom and cannot be equated with either the fear of the Lord or traditional wisdom.
3. It represents both transcendent wisdom and the fear of Lord, including the principle of traditional wisdom, even if they reject the extreme aspects of traditional wisdom.

The researcher on this theme would not like to deny any perspective on the concept of wisdom wholly nor affirm it completely. Rather he would like to encourage a dialogue between the various opinions with the help of the conclusions brought about by this study. Nevertheless, the researcher feels that the latter interpretation is more persuasive than other explanations. Considering the nature of ancient Israel, the concept of wisdom can be integrated as both transcendent wisdom which leads to the fear of the Lord and traditional wisdom in which Job's friends stood steadfast.

#### **6.4 Retrospect and prospect**

Through this comparison from the vantage point of three perspectives on the concept of wisdom in Job 28, this research provided the researcher with many insights and prospects with regard to the debates on the concept of wisdom amongst the current scholarship. These debates on Job 28 – as well as the book of Job – reflect two aspects on the concept of wisdom. One aspect of debate on the concept of wisdom is the question about the limitation of the search for wisdom on the basis of human imagination. In the book of *Job 28 Cognition in Context*, Van Wolde (2003) revealed the negative aspect of human imagination and emphasised the importance of acknowledging the limitation of human imagination.

The researcher agrees with Van Wolde (2003) on the understanding of wisdom in a sense of the limitation of human imagination. Nevertheless, the researcher does not adhere to the limitation of human imagination, but would rather proceed towards the coexistence and balance between the possibility and limitation of human imagination. The possibility of the human imagination includes the concept of wisdom in traditional



wisdom, since the latter could certainly also be a part of the search for wisdom in the sphere of human imagination.

The other aspect of the current debate is the deconstructive interpretation of the concept of wisdom. Clines (1990; 2006) attempts to deconstruct the interpretation of the current scholarship on the concept of wisdom. According to him, the book of Job has no intention to contradict or confirm traditional wisdom, which entails the doctrine of retribution. Following the lead of Clines, Newsom (2003) also attempts to prompt a dialogue between monologic truth and dialogic truth. The researcher is also on this side in relationship with traditional wisdom, but does not proceed with a deconstructive interpretation.

In retrospect, this thesis provided the researcher with new insights on the concept of wisdom in the book of Job. Firstly, through this thesis, the researcher ensured that one needs look at the text from various perspectives in order to discern the various voices of the text. By comparison from several perspectives, one could broaden one's narrow understanding of the reality and the text. For the researcher, the fact that the theological perspective on the understanding on the concept of wisdom in Job 28 is more persuasive, furnishes the researcher with the importance of the theological perspective, even though every other perspective is also crucial in the understanding the Bible, including the book of Job

Secondly, no scholars from each perspective (literary, historical, and theological) denied that the concept of wisdom in Job 28 represents transcendent wisdom as divine order.

For most scholars, except many historical and some literary scholars, transcendent wisdom leads to the fear of the Lord. This perspective on the concept of wisdom makes us recognise the importance of the fear of the Lord in the understanding of wisdom and it prevents us from rejecting the fear of the Lord, as many historical critical scholars attack the fear of the Lord as merely an indication of the later wisdom.

Lastly, the researcher found it important to recognise the theological perspective regarding the relationship between the fear of the Lord and traditional wisdom. Even though many theological scholars in the present and in the past have attempted to describe these as a form of coexistence, current scholars, ever since the times of historical criticism, displayed a tendency to insist that the book of Job, including Job 28, assails traditional wisdom as the doctrine of retribution. Fortunately, very recent scholars, such as Clines (1989) and Newsom (2003), are venturing to hear various voices in the book of Job and began a dialogue on these. The researcher agrees with them, but he feels that the study of coexistence between the fear of the Lord and traditional wisdom is more needed. However, at the same time, caution should be exercised against the extreme aspects of traditional wisdom, as Van Wolde (2003) suggests that one should recognise the limitation of human imagination.

Even though there are some elements that may well be rejected, the principle of traditional wisdom on the whole should not be ignored. Eliphaz notes that suffering will not last forever for the innocent (Hunt 1991:800). Bildad notes that Job's punishment is not as bad as it could have been. Being alive means that Job's sin is not unforgivable and his suffering can be endured. Eliphaz pleaded for Job to listen to God's word in the

experience, for his suffering should become a means of seeing God's will and God's way in the situation. This should lead Job to confess his sin and praise God. Elihu recognises that there are more important theological truths than the strict doctrine of retribution (Clines 1989:xlii).

Recognising that the different interpretations on the concept of wisdom in Job 28 coexist provides us with a crucial example of how to approach the final text of the book of Job. In spite of many scholars' efforts to seek the concept of wisdom, the researcher has a notion that the theological perspective on the concept of wisdom in Job 28 was not explained in comparison with the Prologue (chs 1-2) and the Epilogue (ch 42). A further study in the theological relationship among the Prologue, Job 28 and the Epilogue would hopefully provide the crucial key to understand the literary structure and the voices of the entire book of Job. In this relationship, how are transcendent wisdom and traditional wisdom explained? That is the next question that the researcher should continue to discuss.

At last, this consideration on the concept of wisdom in Job 28 can also provide conservative Korean church and its scholars with new insights into the wisdom literature which has been neglected. Furthermore, they can learn a lesson that the coexistence between traditional wisdom in Korea and transcendent wisdom in the Bible helps the Korean reader to appreciate the context of Korean society and culture. This would suggest a new way to dialogue and coexistence in the complex 21<sup>st</sup> century. .

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