

THE THEOPHANIC GLORY OF GOD: REFLECTIONS ON JOB 38–42

Abstract

This paper offers a theological reflection on the theophanic manifestation of divine glory in Job 38–42, focusing on the interrelated themes of divine presence ('glory'), creation, suffering, and human knowledge. Although *kavod* is not explicitly attributed to God in the divine speeches, the article argues that glory is manifested through God's appearance from the *se'arah*, the disclosure of creation, and the transformation of Job's epistemological position. The divine speeches provide no causal explanation for Job's suffering; instead, their rhetorical questions displace an anthropocentric perspective by revealing a created order that exceeds human knowledge, utility, and control. Job's movement from 'hearing' to 'seeing' (42:5) expresses the relational and epistemological consequence of the encounter. Divine glory thus emerges through transformative encounter with divine presence within mystery.



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Introduction

The book of Job, which also belongs to sceptical literature (Dell 1991), has seen many ancient versions and received numerous theological interpretations throughout the history, which witnesses to its attractive and relevant content^[1], and a specific legacy (Harkins 2017). Job 38–42 records the unique direct response God gives to human suffering in the entire book, offers a model for human action that upholds empathy and compassion (Hildebrand 2006). As such, it is unique in the Bible. Here, God does not offer justification for Job's anguish, but confronts him through a theophany from

the whirlwind (מִן־הַסְּעָרָה) (38:1; 40:6), with the tone of compassion and comfort (Ham 2013), revealing divine glory via creation's vastness and mystery rather than explanatory discourse. God's speech throughout the chapters 38-42 can also be explained as the transformation of Job through the renewal of his mind (Lockwood, 2010) where Job's words are both a capitulation and a reiteration of his complaint. Clines describes Job as *wisdom in extremis*, testing whether theological order stands under traumatic conditions (Clines 2016, 35). This encounter raises the central theological tension: Is divine glory found in rational answer, or in relational encounter?

Unlike Proverbs (predictability of wisdom) or Ecclesiastes (wisdom's limits), Job enters the realms of protest and divine encounter. Job becomes a case study in whether theological order survives trauma, and instead of passive acceptance, Job cries out against God, demanding justice. In this respect, such an approach transforms wisdom to existential struggle. Job does not abandon faith; instead, he wrestles with God while still addressing God, which can also be understood as an act of wisdom. Also, the book of Job challenges simplified theology of cause and effect. It gives theological legitimacy to lament and unresolved tension. It opens space for divine encounter beyond rational explanation, i.e., in the whirlwind. Finally, it demonstrates that true wisdom may include challenging God faithfully.

Furthermore, many rhetorical questions dismantle anthropocentric vision: "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?" (Job 38:4). Rhetorical questioning functions here not to humiliate Job, but to decenter humanity as the primary interpretive lens of reality. God invites Job to contemplate a world that thrives independent of human purpose (e.g., the lion, raven, mountain goat, wild donkey). These creatures are portrayed not for their utility, but for their existence before and beyond humanity's concerns (38:39 – 39:30). The questions thus lead Job into theological displacement, revealing that divine wisdom orders a universe where justice is not contingent upon human expectation but grounded in God's sovereign delight.

One can say that the theophanic speeches of Job 38–42 manifest divine glory not through a rational explanation of suffering but through divine presence, the disclosure of creation, and the transformation of Job's epistemological position. The absence of explicit *kavod* terminology is not incidental: glory is manifested rather than defined. The divine response moves Job from an anthropocentric demand for comprehensible justice toward an encounter with a created order that exceeds human mastery and culminates in the movement from hearing to seeing. Hence, the paper discusses three

related questions: How does the theophanic manifestation of God in Job 38–42 reframe the perception of divine glory? What do the divine speeches contribute to the theological problem of suffering when they provide no causal explanation for it? How does Job's transformation reshape his knowledge of and relationship with God?

Textual, Structural, and Semantic Features

The Hebrew text of Job is composed predominantly in poetry, although the book also contains prose sections, particularly in 1:1–2:13, 32:1–5, and 42:7–17^[2]. Job 38–42 may be divided into several major units. The first divine speech (38:1–40:2) concentrates primarily on the created order and on dimensions of creation inaccessible to human knowledge and control. Job responds briefly in 40:3–5. A second divine speech begins in 40:6 and leads into the extended descriptions of Behemoth (40:15–24) and Leviathan (40:25–41:26). Job's final response follows in 42:1–6. The poetic dialogue gives way to the prose epilogue (42:7–17), in which God rebukes Job's companions and subsequently restores Job^[3]. Greenstein (2020) similarly distinguishes the texts as the Deity's First Discourse (38:1–39:30), Job's response (40:1–5), the Deity's Second Discourse (40:6–41:26), Job's second response (42:1–6), and the epilogue (42:7–17). Both divine speeches begin with God answering Job from the tempest (38:1; 40:6). The *se'arah* does not function just as the setting of the first divine appearance. It frames the divine discourse itself. The structure also reveals a development in Job's position. His trajectory moves from lament (Job 3), through increasingly explicit demands for justice and an encounter with God (cf. 31:35–37), toward his brief response in 40:3–5 and finally the language of hearing and seeing in 42:5. This movement establishes the literary framework within which Job's transformation can be evaluated: crisis leads to divine encounter, and divine encounter produces a change in Job's manner of speaking and perceiving.

Semantic Fields: Glory, Theophany, Knowledge, and Justice

Several terms and expressions are particularly relevant for understanding the theological and semantic framework of Job 38–42: **כָּבוֹד** (*kavod*, 'glory, honour'), **סְעָרָה** (*se'arah*, 'tempest, storm, whirlwind'), the language of knowledge and perception in Job 42:5, and **מִשְׁפָּט** (*mishpat*, 'justice, judgment, decision')^[4].

The term **כָּבוֹד** (*kavod*) occurs two hundred times in the Hebrew Bible, but only twice in the book of Job, in 19:9 and 29:20. In both instances the term refers to Job rather

than to God. In 19:9 Job complains that God “has stripped me of my glory” (כְּבוֹדִי). In 29:20, recalling his former condition, Job declares: “My glory was fresh with me, and my bow was renewed in my hand.” Thus, the term *kavod* itself is not used for God in the divine speeches. This lexical absence is important, and requires a distinction between the explicit terminology of glory and the manifestation of glory through theophany, divine speech, and creation. Furthermore, the term סָעָרָה (*se‘arah*) occurs sixteen times in the Hebrew Bible (2 Kgs 2:1, 11; Is 29:6; 40:24; 41:16; Jr 23:19; 30:23; Ez 1:4; 13:11, 13; Zh 9:14; Ps 107:25, 29; 148:8; Job 38:1; 40:6). Its two occurrences in Job introduce both divine speeches. In 38:1 and again in 40:6, God answers Job מִן־הַסָּעָרָה, “from the tempest.” The repetition gives the *se‘arah* a structural function within the narrative, while its use elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible places Job’s encounter within a broader semantic field associated with divine power, manifestation, judgment, and cosmic disturbance.

The epistemological dimension of the encounter is expressed most clearly in Job 42:5: לְשִׁמְע־אָזְן שָׁמַעְתִּידָּ וְעַתָּה עֵינִי רָאִיתָךְ, “By the hearing of the ear I had heard of you, but now my eye sees you.” The expression is distinctive in the Hebrew Bible, although the combination of אָזְן (‘ozen, ‘ear’) with the verb שָׁמַע (*shm‘*, ‘to hear’) also occurs elsewhere (e.g., 1 Sam 15:22; Is 6:10). The contrast in Job 42:5, however, is not between ignorance and knowledge, but between two modes of perception: hearing and seeing. The Septuagint preserves this contrast: ἀκοήν μὲν ὡτὸς ἤκουόν σου τὸ πρότερον, νυνὶ δὲ ὁ ὀφθαλμός μου ἑώρακέ σε (“Formerly I heard you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye has seen you”)^[5]. Furthermore, the term מִשְׁפָּט (*mishpat*) occurs more than four hundred times in the Hebrew Bible and appears repeatedly throughout Job (8:3; 9:19, 32; 13:18; 14:3; 19:7; 22:4; 27:2; 29:14; 31:13; 32:9; 34:4–6, 12, 17, 23; 35:2; 36:6, 17; 37:23; 40:8). Its frequency reflects the centrality of justice and judgment to the dispute developed throughout the book. Particularly significant for the divine speeches is Job 40:8, where God asks: הֲאֵפֶּה תַפְּסֵנִי לְמַעַן תַּצְדִּיק, “Would you indeed annul my judgment? Would you condemn me so that you may be justified?” The question brings *mishpat* directly into the second divine speech and places Job’s demand for justice in relation to divine judgment.

The Tempest (*Se'arah*) and the Theophanic Appearance

The divine speeches are introduced by the statement that God answered Job מִן־הַסְעָרָה (*min-hasse'arah*, “from the tempest”; 38:1), a formula repeated at the beginning of the second divine speech in 40:6. The tempest is not an atmospheric detail accompanying God’s first appearance but forms the setting of the divine address as a whole. The expression places God’s response to Job within the wider biblical language of theophany, while at the same time giving the manifestation in Job its distinctive character. The book of Job itself employs related storm terminology. In 37:9, for example, סוּפָה (*suphah*) describes the tempest that comes from its chamber. The Septuagint makes the transition even more explicit. At the beginning of 38:1 it adds the statement, “And after Elihu had ceased speaking,”^[6] thereby directly connecting the end of Elihu’s discourse with the beginning of God’s response. It also expands the description of the divine manifestation: the Lord speaks to Job διὰ λαίλαπος καὶ νεφῶν, “through a whirlwind and clouds.”^[7] The addition of ‘clouds’ strengthens the conventional theophanic character of the scene. The *se'arah* also evokes other biblical accounts of divine manifestation. Particularly Ezek 1:4, where the prophet’s vision begins with ‘a stormy wind’ coming from the north, accompanied by a great cloud, fire, and brightness. The vision subsequently culminates in the appearance of “the likeness of the glory of God” (Ezek 1:28). Isa 29:6 similarly associates divine visitation with thunder, earthquake, great noise, tempest, storm, and consuming fire.

The relationship between God and the tempest is not uniform throughout the Hebrew Bible. For instance, in 1 Kgs 19:11 God is explicitly said not to be ‘in’ the wind that breaks the mountains before Elijah, whereas in 2 Kgs 2:1 and 2:11 Elijah is taken up in the *se'arah*. Elsewhere, particularly in Jr 23:19 and 30:23, the tempest becomes an image of divine wrath. The semantic field of *se'arah* therefore does not possess a single fixed theological meaning. It can accompany divine manifestation, divine action, or divine judgment, but its precise significance depends upon its literary context. This distinction is visible in Job. The tempest from which God speaks is not explicitly identified as an expression of wrath. Nor does the text describe the elaborate visual manifestation associated with the divine glory in Ezekiel. There is no throne vision, no detailed description of God’s appearance, and no explicit declaration that Job sees the *kavod* of God. What the narrative emphasizes instead is the divine voice: God ‘answered Job from the tempest.’ The theophany is therefore simultaneously revelatory and

concealing. God becomes directly present to Job, yet the divine presence is mediated through the tempest and, above all, through speech.

This restrained form of manifestation is particularly suggestive for the question of divine glory. In Ez 1:4, the stormy wind forms part of a spectacular vision that culminates in an explicit identification of divine *kavod*. In Job, by contrast, the tempest remains while the visual splendour associated elsewhere with glory is largely absent. One may therefore speak of a form of glory that is manifested without being explicitly named: divine majesty is disclosed through God's presence, voice, and sovereignty over the created world rather than through a description of divine splendour. The *se'arah* consequently functions as more than the dramatic setting of the speeches. It marks the transition from discourse about God to encounter with God. Throughout the dialogues, Job and his companions have debated divine justice, wisdom, and action. From 38:1 onward, God becomes the speaker. Yet the divine presence does not abolish mystery. This combination of presence and concealment provides the appropriate theological setting for the speeches that follow: Job receives an answer, but not an explanation; a manifestation, but not a comprehensive vision of God.

Behemoth & Leviathan

The first speech directs Job's attention toward a created world whose processes and creatures exceed human knowledge and control. In the second speech this theme reaches an intensified form in the descriptions of Behemoth (40:15 – 24) and Leviathan (40:25 – 41:26). These creatures represent dimensions of creation that cannot be domesticated or subordinated to human purposes^[8]. Behemoth is introduced with the command, "Look at Behemoth, which I made with you" (40:15). Whatever zoological or symbolic identification is assigned to the creature^[9], the text explicitly places it within the created order. Its extraordinary strength is described through its body: power resides in its loins and belly, its bones are compared to tubes of bronze, and its limbs to bars of iron (40:16-18). Yet this formidable creature is not presented as a rival creator or as an independent power opposed to God. It is God's creature, indeed "the first of the works of God" (40:19). Its strength therefore belongs within, rather than outside, the world governed by its Creator. The description of Leviathan intensifies this confrontation with the limits of human power. The rhetorical questions directed to Job emphasize repeatedly what he cannot do: "Can you draw out Leviathan with a fishhook?" (40:25). The creature cannot be captured, domesticated, or converted into an object of ordinary

human exchange and utility. Human beings retreat before it, and weapons prove ineffective against it. Leviathan thus represents a form of created existence that resists human possession and control.

The theological significance of these descriptions lies precisely in the contrast between human inability and divine sovereignty. What appears terrifying and uncontrollable from the human perspective does not constitute a threat to God. Behemoth and Leviathan expose the limits of an anthropocentric understanding of creation: not everything that exists has been made available for human use, comprehension, or domination. Creation contains forms of life whose power, freedom, and even danger remain outside the boundaries of human mastery. For this reason, Behemoth and Leviathan need not be reduced either to zoological curiosities or simply to personifications of evil. Their imagery may evoke traditions associated with chaos and threatening cosmic powers, but within the divine speeches they are presented as belonging to the world over which God exercises sovereignty. The text places that character within a theological vision in which even what human beings experience as untamable is neither autonomous from God nor excluded from creation.

We have seen that glory in Job 38–42 is manifested through creation rather than explicitly named as *kavod*. Behemoth and Leviathan extend that manifestation beyond the ordered, harmonious, or immediately beautiful aspects of the world. Divine majesty is disclosed also through what is excessive, powerful, dangerous, and resistant to human control. The wildness of creation does not stand outside divine sovereignty. On the contrary, God's ability to address such creatures as part of the created world reveals a relation to them fundamentally different from Job's. There is therefore a certain irony in the culmination of the divine speeches. The creatures before which human power reaches its limits become objects of extended divine description. What Job cannot master, God demonstrates as part of creation. The speeches thus shift the theological question from whether creation conforms to human expectations to whether human beings can recognize a divine order whose scope exceeds those expectations. Behemoth and Leviathan become extreme examples of the larger movement already present in chapters 38–39: creation is not anthropocentric, and divine wisdom cannot be measured by the degree to which the world is intelligible, useful, or controllable from the human point of view. In this sense, Behemoth and Leviathan contribute directly to the transformation of Job's theological horizon. They radicalize the displacement initiated by the earlier questions concerning creation.

Job's Response: From Hearing to Seeing (42:1-6)

Job's final response in 42:1-6 marks the culmination of the encounter initiated by God's appearance from the tempest. The brevity of Job's words contrasts sharply with the length of his earlier speeches and with the extensive divine discourses of chapters 38 – 41. Yet this brevity should not be understood simply as Job's defeat or capitulation. Job begins by acknowledging the scope of divine power: "I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted" (42:2). He then takes up the language of the divine challenge from 38:2: "Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?" (42:3). Job thus responds to God by repeating the very question with which the divine speech had begun. He acknowledges that he has spoken concerning realities that exceeded his understanding: "Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know" (42:3). The statement concerns the limits of Job's knowledge, but it does not by itself amount to an admission that the moral claims of the friends were correct or that Job's suffering resulted from previously concealed wrongdoing. The decisive statement follows in 42:5: **לְשִׁמְעָאֲזִן שָׁמַעְתִּיךָ וְעַתָּה עֵינַי רָאִיתִיךָ**, "By the hearing of the ear I had heard of you, but now my eye sees you." The contrast between hearing and seeing provides one of the clearest indications of Job's transformation. Before the divine encounter, Job possessed knowledge of God through "the hearing of the ear"; after the theophany, he can speak of seeing. The contrast does not necessarily imply that Job previously lacked knowledge of God. Rather, the form of that knowledge has changed.

The language of seeing is crucial because the narrative itself provides no description of God's visible form. God speaks from the *se'arah*, but the text does not describe a divine body or an object that Job literally sees. Job's statement creates a tension between concealment and revelation. God who remains concealed within the tempest can nevertheless be described by Job as having been 'seen.' Seeing here expresses the immediacy of the encounter and the transformation of Job's relation to the God whom he had previously known through hearing. Job does not emerge from the encounter knowing why the events of chapters 1–2 occurred. Nevertheless, he claims a new mode of perception. In fact, the theophany changes the position from which Job knows and speaks about God.

The interpretation of Job 42:6, however, requires particular caution. The verse is frequently translated along the lines of "Therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes," and on such a reading Job's response appears to culminate in repentance and

submission^[10]. Yet the Hebrew here is complex, and the precise objects and meanings of אֲמָאס ('em'as) and וְנִחַמְתִּי (wenihamti) can be disputed. Consequently, the verse should not be made to carry more interpretive weight than its ambiguity permits. Depending on how the syntax and vocabulary are understood, Job may be expressing rejection, retraction, or a changed disposition concerning 'dust and ashes,' rather than confessing a previously hidden moral transgression.

In 42:7-8, immediately after Job's response, God rebukes the three friends because they have not spoken rightly concerning God 'as my servant Job has.' Whatever transformation occurs in 42:1-6, therefore, it cannot simply mean that the friends were correct and Job was wrong throughout the dispute. The divine verdict preserves a fundamental distinction between Job's speech and that of his companions. Job's protest, questioning, and demands for justice are not retrospectively reduced to the false theology condemned in the friends^[11]. Job's response is therefore best understood, as an epistemological and relational reorientation rather than simply as a confession of moral guilt. His earlier speech gives way to acknowledgment of the limits of his understanding, while 'hearing' gives way to 'seeing.' The transformation does not consist in receiving an explanation of suffering but in encountering God differently. Job's questions have not all been answered conceptually; rather, the questioner himself has been repositioned through the encounter. This distinction is essential for understanding the theological function of the theophany. Job moves from demanding that God become intelligible within the framework of his dispute to recognizing a divine reality that exceeds that framework. Yet the movement should not be construed as the destruction of Job's protest or as a simple triumph of divine power over human questioning. The epilogue's affirmation of Job prevents such a conclusion. Instead, Job 42:1-6 presents a more complex transformation: Job remains the one who has spoken rightly, but his encounter with God has changed the way in which he perceives both God and the limits of his own knowledge.

Theophany and Divine Glory

The theophany does not eliminate divine mystery. God speaks from the tempest, but no description of the divine form is provided. In this respect, the *se'arah* simultaneously reveals and conceals. Job encounters God directly, yet God remains beyond comprehensive human perception. The divine speeches thus resist the assumption that revelation necessarily entails exhaustive explanation. God is revealed

without becoming fully comprehensible. As noted above, the term *kavod* is not used for God in Job 38–42. Nevertheless, the absence of the term does not entail the absence of the theological reality associated with divine glory. The narrative presents God as the one who speaks from the tempest, establishes and governs the created world, attends to creatures beyond human observation, and exercises sovereignty over realities that remain inaccessible to human control. Divine glory is therefore manifested narratively and theophanically.

Creation is central to this manifestation. Beginning with the question “Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?” (38:4), the speeches progressively displace Job from the centre of the created order. The questions concerning the earth, sea, stars, weather, and animals disclose a world whose existence and flourishing are not determined by human needs. Rain falls even on land “where no one lives” (38:26); wild animals receive divine attention independently of human management; Behemoth and Leviathan remain beyond human mastery. The world presented to Job is therefore creation-centered rather than anthropocentric: its meaning cannot be reduced to its usefulness or intelligibility to humanity. This displacement does not mean that Job’s concern for justice is declared irrelevant. Indeed, *mishpat* appears explicitly in the second divine speech when God asks whether Job would annul divine judgment in order to justify himself (40:8). The speeches place the question of justice within a wider theological horizon. Job has approached his suffering through the question of whether divine governance can be reconciled with his experience of undeserved suffering. God’s response situates that question within a creation whose order is vastly more extensive than Job’s individual experience and whose governance exceeds his capacity to perceive it in its entirety. The result is an epistemological displacement. Before the theophany, Job repeatedly speaks, argues, challenges, and demands an encounter with God. After the divine speeches, his words become markedly fewer. The contrast can therefore be expressed as a series of related movements: from demanding justice to receiving an encounter; from an anthropocentric perspective to contemplation of a creation that exceeds human purposes; from sustained theological argument to acknowledgment of epistemological limits; and, finally, from hearing to seeing. These movements should not be understood as absolute oppositions. Job does not cease to matter within creation, nor is justice replaced by arbitrary divine power. Likewise, seeing does not abolish knowledge gained through hearing. Rather, each movement represents an expansion of Job’s theological horizon.

In this sense, the divine speeches transform the meaning of glory (*kavod*). Glory emerges through the relation between divine presence and the created world. The God who remains concealed in the tempest nevertheless makes divine sovereignty perceptible through creation. Glory is encountered in the excess of creation over human knowledge and mastery: in what Job did not create, cannot govern, and cannot fully comprehend. This interpretation also clarifies the relation between glory and wisdom. The speeches display a wisdom embodied in the governance of a world whose complexity exceeds human categories of utility and control. Divine wisdom is therefore encountered through the created order, while divine glory becomes perceptible in the freedom and sovereignty with which that order exists before God. The two themes converge without becoming identical: wisdom concerns the divine ordering and governance of creation, whereas glory becomes manifest through the encounter with the God whose wisdom exceeds Job’s epistemological horizon. The theophany consequently does not resolve Job’s theological crisis by supplying the missing premise in an argument. It changes the horizon within which the crisis is perceived. Job’s suffering remains real, his earlier protest is not invalidated, and the epilogue affirms him over against his companions. Nevertheless, after the *se‘arah*, creation, Behemoth and Leviathan, and the movement from hearing to seeing, Job can no longer approach God from precisely the same epistemological position. The theophanic character of Job 38 – 42 may therefore be summarized as a paradox of presence and transcendence.

Before theophany	After theophany
Demands an account of justice	Receives divine encounter
Human suffering as primary horizon	Suffering situated within creation
Extended theological argument	Recognition of epistemological limits
Speaks and challenges	Hears and sees

Theological Reflections

The interpretation developed above has several implications for the theological problem of suffering and for the relationship between divine sovereignty, human knowledge, and revelation. The divine speeches do not answer Job by disclosing the hidden cause of his suffering. Nothing in Job 38–41 explains the events narrated in the prologue, nor is Job given access to the heavenly scene of chapters 1–2. From

Job's perspective, therefore, the question of why he has suffered remains unresolved. Nevertheless, the absence of a causal explanation does not amount to the absence of a divine response. God answers Job, but the answer takes the form of theophanic presence and a reorientation of Job's perception of creation.

Suffering without theoretical explanation

One of the most striking features of the divine speeches is the distance between the questions Job has raised and the subjects God addresses. Job has repeatedly spoken about his innocence, suffering, and desire for justice. God responds with questions concerning the foundations of the earth, the boundaries of the sea, the movements of the heavens, the weather, wild animals, Behemoth, and Leviathan. At first sight, the response may appear to evade Job's central concern. God does not tell Job why he has suffered or identify a moral or causal principle that would make his experience comprehensible. Yet this apparent lack of correspondence is itself theologically significant. The speeches resist reducing the problem of suffering to a theoretical problem for which sufficient knowledge would provide a satisfactory solution. Job's suffering is not explained by restoring the retributive logic defended by his companions. Indeed, the epilogue prevents such a reading when God rebukes the friends and distinguishes Job's speech from theirs (42:7-8). The divine response therefore does not vindicate a simple correlation between suffering and guilt. Instead, Job's suffering is placed within a much broader horizon. The world disclosed to Job cannot be reduced to a moral mechanism organized solely around the immediate correspondence between human conduct and human experience. This does not solve the problem of suffering. Rather, it changes the theological framework within which the problem is considered. The speeches expose the inadequacy of any theological system that claims to comprehend divine governance entirely from the perspective of individual human experience.

Divine Sovereignty and the Limits of Human Knowledge

The divine speeches also establish a close relationship between sovereignty and epistemological limitation. God's sovereignty is not presented primarily through abstract assertions of omnipotence but through the sustained description of divine involvement with creation. Job's limitation is a condition of creaturely existence. The repeated questions addressed to Job such as 'Do you know?', 'Can you?', 'Have you?', 'Where were you?' establish a distinction between divine and human perspectives.

Job inhabits creation from within, and cannot occupy the standpoint of its Creator. The divine speeches challenge the assumption that human beings possess a sufficiently comprehensive perspective from which the totality of divine governance can be judged. This distinction is important because an appeal to divine sovereignty can otherwise become a theological means of silencing suffering. Job 38–42 is more complex. Job has been permitted to lament, accuse, challenge, and demand an answer, and the epilogue does not condemn him for having done so. Divine transcendence and presence, as seen with Job, does not invalidate human protest.

Presence rather than Explanation

God's presence establishes a new relation between Job and the one whom he has addressed throughout his suffering. Job's transformation is expressed most clearly in 42:5: "By the hearing of the ear I had heard of you, but now my eye sees you." The outcome of the divine speeches is not primarily that Job knows more *about* the cause of his suffering. In this respect, he knows no more than before. What has changed is the mode of his knowledge of God. The movement from hearing to seeing indicates that the encounter itself has become epistemologically significant. The distinction can therefore be expressed paradoxically: Job receives no explanation of why he suffered, yet he does not leave the encounter unchanged. The divine response provides neither a conventional theodicy nor a justification of suffering. It provides presence which does not remove mystery but transforms Job's relation to it.

Glory as Relational Manifestation

God's glory is disclosed through presence in the tempest, through the divine relation to creation, and through the transformation produced by the encounter. Such glory is relational. The theophany holds together revelation and concealment. Job encounters God without gaining comprehensive knowledge of God and of divine governance. The created world participates in this manifestation. Divine glory is not manifested only in those aspects of creation that appear harmonious or beneficial from the human perspective. Behemoth and Leviathan demonstrate that what exceeds human control may nevertheless belong within God's relation to creation. Glory is consequently manifested through a divine sovereignty capacious enough to encompass what human beings experience as ordered and wild, familiar and strange, intelligible and mysterious. The theological movement of Job 38–42 is therefore not from suffering

to explanation but from suffering and protest to encounter. Nor is it simply a movement from ignorance to information. It is a movement from one mode of knowing to another. The problem of suffering remains unresolved at the level of causal explanation, but the sufferer's relation to God has changed. It is precisely here that theophany and glory converge: divine glory is manifested through a presence that transforms the horizon within which Job encounters God, creation, and his own limits.

Conclusion

The divine speeches of Job 38–42 do not resolve the problem of suffering by explaining its cause. Instead, God answers Job through theophanic presence, speaking from the *se'arah* and directing his attention toward a created order that exceeds human knowledge, utility, and control. The encounter shifts the theological horizon from the demand for comprehensive explanation toward recognition of human creaturely limits before divine wisdom. Within this movement, divine glory is manifested rather than explicitly named. Although *kavod* is not attributed to God in these chapters, the theophany discloses divine majesty through God's presence, sovereignty over creation, and relation to realities beyond human mastery, culminating in Behemoth and Leviathan. Glory emerges through the paradox of revelation and concealment: God becomes present and speaks, yet remains beyond comprehensive human understanding. Job's final words express the consequence of this encounter: "By the hearing of the ear I had heard of you, but now my eye sees you" (42:5). His transformation is fundamentally epistemological and relational rather than the result of receiving an explanation for his suffering. Job leaves the encounter without knowing why he suffered, but no longer knowing God in the same way.

Notes

[1] For instance, the Old Greek text differs from the presumed Hebrew Vorlage, and brings idiosyncratic readings. See Häberlein 2024.

[2] The Greek textual tradition presents the material differently: the distinction between prose and poetry characteristic of the Hebrew text is less evident. According to Claude Cox, in the LXX "the entire book is in prose, even though arranged stichometrically, in the manuscript tradition." (See *A New English Translation of the Septuagint. 28 Job*)

[3] The divisions are based on my reading of the text.

[4] This article uses the Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (BHS). To check the occurrences, I used a linguistic database of the Old Testament, known as BHSA (Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia Amstelodamensis) and available via the SHEBANQ interface (<https://shebanq.ancient-data.org>). Concerning the Septuagint (LXX), the edition Rahlfs-Hanhart (2006) is used. For the English translation of the Septuagint, I consulted NETS (New English Translation of the Septuagint: *NETS: Electronic Edition*). Unless otherwise stated, all translations from the original languages are my own. For an understanding of Hebrew terminology in general usage, see Clines (1993-).

[5] NETS translates: “Whereas before I would hear an aural report of you, now, however, my eye has seen you.”

[6] NETS: “Now after Elious stopped his speech”

[7] NETS

[8] More recently, it has been argued that they recapitulate the trauma experienced by Job and, by extension, that of post-exilic Israel. See Wu 2026.

[9] Behemoth is commonly identified with the hippopotamus, while Leviathan has traditionally been interpreted as either the crocodile or a mythological dragon. however, argues that the Leviathan depicted in the theophany of Job, as also in Psalm 104:26, is based on the whale. For discussion, see Fox 2012.

[10] For discussion see Prideaux 2011.

[11] God praises Job for speaking in honesty, unlike his friends. See Greenstein 2019, XXV.

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