

Speeches of Elihu

THE BOOK OF JOB

Interlude on Wisdom – Chapter 28

- Job 28 is an interlude — a pause for reflection — between the end of the dialogues and the remaining speeches.
- The author of Job is the voice of the chapter rather than Job or one of his friends. The tone is calm & contemplative, neither agitated like Job nor angry like his friends.
- The author has two primary purposes: 1) he judges the effort of the friends to teach Job wisdom a failure; 2) he prepares the reader for God's appearance.
- The chapter is a "hymn" to wisdom, extolling its value but also pondering its hiddenness.

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Interlude on Wisdom – Chapter 28

- The hymn to wisdom has four parts:
 - Man cannot "mine" wisdom (vv. 1-11).
 - Wisdom is priceless; it cannot be bought (vv. 12-19).
 - Wisdom cannot be found within creation (vv. 20-22).
 - Wisdom is found only with God (vv. 23-28).

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III. The Story

Job's Final Complaint – chapters 29 -31

- With the end of the dialogues with his friends “Job is left with the brute facts of his unmerited sufferings, his friends’ reproaches, and the world’s intolerable wrongs” (Kidner).
- Throughout his suffering, Job has maintained his innocence & integrity before his friends (27:1 -6). Now he directs his complaint to God, seeking justice in a legal judgment from God.
- In this section, Job’s monologue resembles a legal argument, with the author drawing on the legal customs & traditions of his time.

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Job's Final Complaint – chapters 29 -31

- Job’s “case” before God is presented in three parts:
 - Remembrance (ch. 29) - Job remembers the blessedness, abundance, & happiness of his former life.
 - Lament (ch. 30) - Job laments his suffering, anguish, & shame, which he attributes directly to God (30:16-23).
 - Oath of Innocence (ch. 31) – Job recites a long list of sins that he has *not* committed. He then makes self-maledictory oaths, calling curses on himself should any of his words be proven false (31:8, 10, 22, 40). In the legal customs of the day, “after such a statement ... the burden of proof fell on the court” (Smick); the accused had to be proven guilty or declared innocent.

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The speeches of Elihu – chapters 32-37

- After “the words of Job are ended” (31:40), the friends are silent. They are rendered speechless by Job’s claim of righteousness and his direct & daring challenge to God.
- A young man, Elihu, has been present all along, holding his peace, but now he begs permission to speak.
- Elihu makes four speeches which go unanswered.
 - 1. He emphasizes God’s use of suffering for discipline (32:6– 33:33).
 - 2. He defends God’s just rule in the world(34:1 - 37).
 - 3. He argues that neither human sin nor righteousness affect God & God is under obligation to no one (35:1 - 16).
 - 4. He reiterates that suffering is disciplinary & prepares Job for God’s appearance (36:1– 37:24).

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The speeches of Elihu – chapters 32-37

- Elihu will be bombastic & overbearing, but he is not a caricature. His character plays an essential role in the story:
 - He delays the climax —God’s answer to Job—so that it will not look like Job has forced God’s hand.
 - His warning to Job about his declarations of his own righteousness & his charges against God (chaps. 34 – 35) “prepares Job for the possibility that he might have to surrender his avowal of innocence when God addresses him” (Hartley).
 - His emphasis on God’s glory in nature (36:22 – 37:24) prepares Job (and the reader) for God’s appearance in the storm.

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