

Recognizing a singular knowledge and wisdom

Literary strategies of section Jb 38,1– 42,6

I. INTRODUCTION

After having presented the study of the composition of the main parts of the section Jb 38,1 – 42,6, establishing some proposals of composition and meaning,¹ we still have to do the study of the composition of two significant moments: Jb 41,1-5 and 42,1-6 placing them in the entire composition. Our proposal is to do the study of these two moments and then to present an overall reading the entire section of the book of Job. In this reading, we would like to apply the several contributions of meaning, collected in the different steps that define the process of rhetorical biblical analysis (the composition, biblical context and interpretation), to a new understanding of the literary and thematic strategy developed by the biblical author. The study already done gives us a strong perception about an enquiring movement that starts in God's initial challenging questions, turning from the cosmological universe to the animal kingdom (38,1 – 39,30). The focus on the animal kingdom, is signed by a new start with two explicit statements concerning two animal metaphors: Behemoth and Leviathan (40,6 – 41,26). We would like to study inside the literary strategies build upon different moments the hints of a progressive thinking in God's words to Job. It is inside the intelligibility of this progressiveness, that we can consider how the author states the absolute difference of God, achieving his main goal: to bring Job to another truth and knowledge of God's ways.

The rhetoric biblical analysis has shaped the composition of the entire section (38,1 – 42,6) in four main sequences (38,4-38; 38,39–39,30; 40,15-24; 40,25–41,26), with an introduction (38,1-3) and a conclusion (42,1-6). At the center, we find a part (40,1-5), where the biblical author places a question, that sustains the dynamism of the entire question.

¹ Cf. The presentations done in the past *Conferences of the International Society for the Study of Biblical and Semitic Rhetoric* all published in the *Conferences Proceedings*: L. ALMENDRA, "Some remarks of Composition and meaning in Jb 38,39–39,30", in R. MEYNET – J. ONISZCZUK, ed., *Retorica Biblica e Semitica 2. Atti del secondo convegno RBS, Bologna 2011*, 19-43; "'You know! For you were born then'. Remarks of Composition and meaning in Jb 38,1-38", in R. MEYNET – J. ONISZCZUK, ed., *Studi del terzo convegno RBS. International Studies on Biblical & Semitic Rhetoric, Retorica Biblica e Semitica 2, Roma 2013*, 41-64; "Reaching the full meaning of God's Words (Part I). Remarks on the composition and meaning of Job 40,6-24", in R. MEYNET – J. ONISZCZUK, ed., *Studi del quinto convegno RBS. International Studies on Biblical & Semitic Rhetoric, Retorica Biblica e Semitica, Roma 2017*, 35-48; "Reaching the full meaning of God's Words (Part II). Remarks on the composition and meaning of Job 40,25–41,26 ", in FRANCESCO GRAZIANO – R. MEYNET, ed., *Studi del sesto convegno RBS. International Studies on Biblical & Semitic Rhetoric, Retorica Biblica e Semitica, Roma 2019*, 43-56.

GOD ANSWERED JOB... I will ask YOU and YOU will let me KNOW!	38,1-3
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DO YOU KNOW the laws of heavens or place its rule on earth? YOU KNOW! For you were born...	38,4-38
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DO YOU KNOW the time of giving birth of the mountain-goats? Is it from your <i>understanding</i> soars the falcon?	38,39–39,30
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Who <i>argues(with)GOD (must) answer!</i>	40,1-5
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I will ask YOU and YOU will let me KNOW! Behold! The <i>Behemot</i> , that I made as YOU	40,6-24
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Can YOU draw out <i>Leviathan</i> ...? he is king over all that are proud.	40,25–41,26
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JOB ANSWERED GOD... I know that you can do all things!	42,1-6
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II. THREE DISTINCTIVE MOMENTS

The section 38,1–42,6 presents three distinctive moments (38,1-3; 40,1-5; 42,1-6) that are not included in the main sequences. They seem to play in the whole composition the role of an introduction (38,1-3) and conclusion (42,1-6), with a significant question at the center (40,1-5).

I. AN INTRODUCTION: GOD ANSWERED JOB...! (38,1-3)

^{38,1} Then <i>answered</i> and <i>said</i> :	Yhwh	Job	(out) of the tempest
:: ² Who is this : by words	who darknes without- knowledge ?	counsel	
:: ³ Gird : and I will ask you,	like a strong man and you will let me know!	your loins	

The first moment plays the role of an introduction and constitutes a piece composed of three segments (1-3). The first segment (1) begins both members with the two synonym verbs *wayya* 'an (answered) and *wayyō* 'mar (saying) whose subject is *yhwh*. This literary strategy emphasizes the aim to affirming God as the subject of the whole speech and his determination to answer Job. The explicit use here of the name *yhwh* contrasts with the whole interior part of the book, where are found the other names for describing the deity ('*ēl*'; '*ēl-šadday*'; '*ēlo^ah*'). The verb '*ny* (to answer) appears in parallel with the verb '*mr* (to say), reaching the double purpose expressed with the verb *š'l* (to ask) and the verb *yd'* (to know), used in the subsequent segments (3-4). This parallelism does not only underline God as the subject of the verbs *to answer* and *to speak*, but it sets up an unexpected opposition with the interior part of the book, where Job has constantly spoken and answered.

The second segment (2) is introduced with the interrogative pronoun *mī*, moving now from the introductory words to the project of answering Job. With this interrogative pronoun the reader is surprised with the fact that it is Job who must answer and speak, not God. The third segment (3) begins with the imperative form of the verb '*zr* (to gird) announcing the direct debate about to happen between God and Job. The use of the word *geber* (strong man, warrior) suggests that God considers Job as a man able for this dispute. The use of the root *yd'* (to know) links the two segments (2-3) in an opposition of understanding: though God assumes that Job has no words of knowledge (2) he challenges Job to show his knowledge to him (3).

In synthesis, this introduction constitutes an important moment, through which the reader is informed about God's direct intervention, claiming his right to speak now and to raise his own questions. Job is only the man challenged to behave like a warrior that should show his knowledge to God despite words without knowledge.

2. A CONCLUSION: JOB ANSWERED GOD (42,1-6)

The section (38,1–42,6) ends with a part of three pieces (42,1-2; 3-4; 5-6), establishing a conclusion to the entire section. The first piece (1-2) is composed of two segments. The first segment (1) repeats the same words and structure of the first segment of the Introduction (38,1) and of the center (40,1-5). However, the subject of the verbs '*nh* (to answer) and '*mr* (to say) is no more Yhwh, but Job. This fact underlines the achievement of the challenge raised by the words of God, both in the beginning and at the very center of the section: to reach a final answer from Job. The second (2) segment also recovers the verb *yd'* (to know) that is used in the introduction a throughout the all section. Though, here it is used not to challenge Job in what he can or not know, but to allow Job to affirm the power of God, clearly assumed in his words.

The second piece (3-4) is composed of three segments. The first segment (3a) is composed of single member introduced with the interrogative form *mī zeh* setting a general rhetorical question. The use of the two key words counsel *'ēṣāh* (counsel) and *dā'at* (knowledge), used by God in the introduction (38,2), place an abrupt change of the subject from Job to God. The segment interrupts Job's words and establishes an echo, that retrieves the initial challenge of God's words to Job. He, in fact, up to the moment, has been the one who through all his words risked hiding counsel and pronounced words without knowledge.

. ^{42,1} Then answered and said:	JOB	Yhwh			
:: ² “ <i>I know</i> nothing will be thwarted	(that) all of yours	you can do, (with) purpose.			
+ ³ Who is this	(that) hides	counsel <i>without-Knowledge?</i>			
<table> <tr> <td>: Thus, : wonders</td> <td>I have uttered for me</td> <td>what I did <i>not understand</i>, which <i>I did not know</i>.</td> </tr> </table>			: Thus, : wonders	I have uttered for me	what I did <i>not understand</i> , which <i>I did not know</i> .
: Thus, : wonders	I have uttered for me	what I did <i>not understand</i> , which <i>I did not know</i> .			
+ ⁴ Hear, : I will ask you,	and I and <i>you will let me know</i> .	will speak			
:: ⁵ A hearing : but now	-of the ear my eye	I have heard of you sees you!			
:: ⁶ Therefore : upon dust	I despise myself and ashes.”	and repent			

The second segment (3b) is composed of two members and returns to Job's words. The form of question gives place to a declaration introduced by a particle *lākēn* (thus).² The verb *ngd* (to utter) in *hiphil* perfect first common singular) followed by the two verbs *byn* (to understand) and *yd'* (to know) preceded by the negative particle *lō'* permits to envision this declaration as an immediate answer

² *lākēn* is often translated as *according to such conditions, that being so, therefore* (cf. Nb 16,11, 1S 27,6; Ps 16,9; 73,6; 73,10). Often introduces, after statement of the grounds, a divine declaration or command (cf. Jg 10,13; 2Kg 1,6; Am 4,12; Is 5,13; 5,14; 5,24; 7,14; 10,16; 16,7; 27,9; Jr 6,15; 8,10 etc). It can be used as an idiomatic expression, in conversation, in reply to an objection, to state the ground upon which the answer is made (cf. Gn 4,15; 30,15; Jg 8,7; 11,8; 1S 28,2; 1K 22,19; Jb 20,2). But also as an expression that inferring the cause from the effect, develops what is logically involved in a statement (cf. Is 26:14b) or what is implicit in it (cf. Jb 42,3 and 34:25) [cf. F. BROWN - S.R. DRIVER - CH. BRIGGS, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament: with an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic*, Oxford 1955,].

from Job. The piece (3-4) ends with a segment (4) that opens and closes with two verbs in the imperative: the verb *š^ema* 'nā (hear) and the verb *hōdīēnī* (let me know). These imperatives seem to ignore Job's previous declaration and returning to God's challenge set in the beginning of the piece (3). The one who risks hiding counsel (in words) without knowledge, should hear what God has to say and answer him.

The third piece (5-6) is composed of two segments. The first (5) establishes a parallel with the two words 'ōzen (hear) and 'ēnī (eye) associating the two main wits through which comes understanding. Inside them we find the verbs, *šm* ' (to hear) and *r'h* (to see), both stressing the suffix of the second masculine singular *š^ema* 'tīkā and *rā* 'ā^e kā, that leaves no doubt that the speech returns to Job, finishing his answer to God. The adverb 'attā (now) signs a radical difference between the hearing-of the ear that Job have heard about God and what his eyes have seen, through all the words and the mysteries of the creation that God have passed through his eyes. The last segment (6) introduced with the hebrew expression 'al-kēn (therefore)³ assuming the tune of conclusion of Job's words, well confirmed by the first person of the singular of the followed verbs *m*'s (to despise) and *nḥm* (to repent). The second member opens with the preposition 'al (upon) and is followed by the words 'āpār (dust) and 'ēper (ashes), expressing self-abasement (cf. 18,27; Lm 3,29).⁴

3. A CENTRAL QUESTION: WHO ARGUES WITH GOD MUST ANSWER! (40,1-5)

The part 40,1-5 is placed at the center of the section (38,1–42,6) and is composed of two pieces (1-2; 3-5). The first piece (1-2) is formed of two segments each of two members. The first segment (1) starts immediately with the verb 'nh (to answer) highlighted by the verb 'mr (to say) in the second member, both having God as the subject and Job as the direct object. This segment is exactly the same already used in the beginning of the section (38,1), retrieving the challenge God still doing to Job, now to answer him after having considered all the wonder things of the creation of creation whose origin he does not know neither control. The

³ 'al-kēn is usually translated as *forasmuch as* (cf. Gn 18:5, 19:8, 33:10, 38:26, Nu 10:31, 14:43, Ju 6:22); lit. *for therefore*, emphasizing the ground pleonastically. The original force of the phrase is traceable in some of the passages in which it occurs (cf. Gn 18:5) *for therefore*, but in process of time the distinct sense of its component parts was no doubt gradually obscured, and it thus came to be used conventionally, as a *mere* particle of causation, even where there was no preceding statement to which על כן *therefore* could be explicitly referred (cf. Jb 42,6; also 34,27) [cf. F. BROWN - S.R. DRIVER - CH. BRIGGS, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament: with an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic*, Oxford 1955,].

⁴ Cf. F. BROWN - S.R. DRIVER - CH. BRIGGS, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament: with an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic*, Oxford 1955, where the basic meaning of the two words – dust and ashes – together can assume the figurative sense of self-abasement (cf. וְנָחַתִּי עַל-יַדַּי וְנָאֲפָר Jb 42,6).

second segment (2) opens with the particle interrogative *hă* setting a direct question. This specific form of question permits that the *qal infinitive absolute rōb* (contender), with which Job is called together with the name *yissôr* (reprover), could be taken as a suggestion, more than a declaration. However, the participle masculine singular that opens the second member *môkî'h* (the one who argues) as the subject of the verb *'nh* (to answer) in the imperfect third masculine singular with a jussive meaning, does not leave doubt that despite not being declared a contender or a reprover, Job must answer God and in his answer consider all the words he said.

. ^{40,1} Then answered . and said:	YHWH	to JOB
:: ² “Shall a <i>contender</i> : Who <i>argues</i> (with)	of the ALMIGHTY GOD	faultfinder? (<i>must</i>) answer.”
. ³ Then answered . and said:	JOB	to YHWH
:: ⁴ “See, : My hand	I am of small account I put	what shall I return to you? on my mouth.
:: ⁵ Once : twice	I have spoken but I will not do again.”	and <i>I will not answer</i> ,

The second piece (3-5) is composed of three segments. The first (3) repeats the same words and structure of the first segment of the first piece (1), but now the subject of the verbs *'nh* (to answer) and *'mr* (to say) is Job. As an immediately reaction to God’s challenge in the previous piece (1-2), Job answers to God. This answer is given in the two following two segments (4-5). The first (4) begins with the interjection *hēn* (behold! or see!)⁵ followed by the verb *qll* (to be on small account) and an interrogative *māh*, associated to the verb *'šwb* (to return), through which Job linked his awareness of his human reality to a call to God’s sympathy. The followed segment (5) intends to complete Job’s answer. The construction of the segment forms a parallel with the two words *'aḥat* (once) and *š'taîm* (twice), and with the two verbs *dbr* (to speak) and *ysp* (to do again).⁶ Job recognize that have spoken once but will not do it again, at least in the same way he has done. This determination is accentuated by the negative *lō* associated to the verb *'nh* (to answer) well placed at the centre of the segment.

⁵ This interjection less widely used than הִנֵּה, and in prose mostly confined to calling attention to some fact upon which action is to be taken, or a conclusion based (cf. Jb 13:15, 36:30, 40,4; 41:1) [cf. F. BROWN - S.R. DRIVER – CH. BRIGGS, A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament: with an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic, Oxford 1955].

⁶ Cf. Jb 20,9, 34,32 (Elihu); 38,11; 40,5; 40,32.

4. RELEVANT LITERARY STRATEGIES

The three moments (38,1-3; 40,1-5; 42,1-6) although distinct in its function have strong literary connections, demonstrating a thematic consistency within the section (38,1-42,6) and pointing the columns upon which God's words to Job are build upon.

38, ¹ Then YHWH answered JOB	(out) of the tempest and <i>said</i> :
² Who is this that darkens counsel	by words without-<i>knowledge</i> ?
³ Gird like a strong man your loins	and I will ask you, and <i>you will let me know!</i>

40, ¹ <i>Then YHWH answered JOB and said:</i>
² “Shall a contender of the ALMIGHTY be a reprover? Who <i>argues(with)</i> GOD (<i>must</i>) answer.”
³ <i>Then JOB answered YHWH, and said:</i>
⁴ “See, I am of small account what shall I return to you? My hand I put on my mouth.
⁵ Once I have spoken, and I will not answer , twice but I will not do again.”

42, ¹ Then JOB answered YHWH and <i>said</i> :	
² “ <i>I know</i> that you can do all (things), and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.	
³ Who is this (that) hides counsel without-<i>Knowledge</i> ?	
Thus, I have uttered what I did <i>not understand</i> , wonders for me which <i>I did not know</i> .	
⁴ Hear, and I will speak	I will ask you, and <i>you will let me know</i> .
⁵ A hearing of the ear I have heard of you but now my eye sees you!	
⁶ Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.”	

In between challenges and the answers

Each of three moments (38,1-3; 40,1-5; 42,1-6) begins with this specific challenge to answer. However, in the introduction (38,1-3) God is the subject but, in the conclusion (42,1-6), the subject changes to Job. This variation signs a dynamic movement, assuring that God's words were listen and received a reaction from the person to whom were directed. This movement is well project in the center (40,1-5), where the text recovers the double schema of God's challenge to Job to answer and Job's answer to God. This literary feature turns this center the core of the section, where is assured that God's challenges to Job, includes a dialogic energy where God and the human being are called to speak to one another. God's words to Job where intended to reveal a Job God as Creator and inside this creation, the human being is the only one that is called to interact with his Creator, although recognizing the difference between Creator and creature. This particular recognition is well expressed at the end of center (40,5) when Job considers the possibility to interrupt the dialogue not speaking again, sustaining precisely that he *will not answer*.

Experience to know what do not know

Different from the previous dialogic dynamism that comprehends the three moments (38,1-3; 40,1-5; 42,1-6), the theme of the knowledge is only present in the introduction (38,1-3) and in the conclusion (42,1-6), featuring both God and Job's words. In God's words (38,1-3) the reference to the knowledge emerges inside a question that hides inside an accusation. God calls to the scene the one who darkens counsel with words without knowledge. The expression *without knowledge* in itself is quite neutral, but here it acquires a strong negative connotation in its association with the expression *darkens counsel*. The one who darkens counsel do it not through evil actions, but by words without knowledge. The knowledge becomes an instrument to obscure counsel and guidance. The dimensions of the danger require an action similar to the one of the warriors: to gird the loins for a battle. Here the battle is through a dialogue where God will be the one *who asks*, and Job will be the one who will *let God to know*.

At the conclusion (42,1-6) this literary structure returns, however with an important change. The author places inside it Job's recognition that he has spoken what I *did not understand* and wonders that he *did not know* anything about, establishing a strong link with the beginning of God's first words. Job has in fact answer God and recognized that he does not know, not the wonders about creation, where he belongs too. The intensity of this recognition is underlined in the opposition: *hearing of the ear I have heard of you but now my eye sees you* (5). Job's knowledge was built on a hearing of the ear, now after hearing God, his knowledge turns into an inner vision, able to welcome God's difference and inscrutable knowledge.

II. THE SECTION: YOU WILL LET ME KNOW!

I. COMPOSITION OF THE SECTION

A previous study of the composition of the entire section (38,1–42,6) defined four sequences (38,3-38; 38,30–39,30; 40,6-24; 40,25–41,26),⁷ built upon three distinctive moments: an introduction (31,1-3); a centre (40,1-5) and a conclusion (42,1-6). A synopsis of this entire section reveals some particular literary features upon which the biblical author builds this singular moment of the book and of the entire biblical wisdom literature. In order to reach the genuine content and

⁷ Cf. note 1, about the articles already published with the Rhetorical Biblical Analysis of these four sequences.

contribute of this section, we have to point some of the most literary features patent in between the sequences.

1.1 Symmetries between the sequences

The two extreme sequences: Can you...?

<p>...</p> <p>38³¹ Can you fasten the chains of the Pleiades, or the Orion's bands untie?</p> <p>32 Can you guide the constellations in their seasons, or guide the Great Bear with her sons?</p> <p>33 DO YOU KNOW the laws of heavens? Could you place it rule on earth?</p> <p>34 Can you raise your voice to the dark clouds, and the abundance of water to cover you?</p> <p>35 Will you send flashes and they will go, or they will answer, 'Here we are'?</p> <p>36 Who endowed (them) with inner <i>wisdom</i> and gave to the phenomenon <i>understanding</i>?</p> <p>37 Who related every cloud with <i>wisdom</i> and the bottles of heaven, who tilts, 38 until the dust solidifies and clods of earth close up?</p>	<p>40²⁵ CAN YOU draw out Leviathan with a fishhook, or his tongue with a cord?</p> <p>26 CAN YOU put a rope in his nose, or pierce his jaw with a hook?</p> <p>27 Will he make many supplications to y Will he speak soft words to you?</p> <p>28 Will he make with you a covenant and be taken as your servant forever?</p> <p>29 Will you play with him as with a bird, or will you put him on leash for your girls?</p> <p>30 Will traders' bargains over it? Will they divide him up among the merchants?</p> <p>31 CAN YOU fill his skin with harpoons, or his head with fishing spears?</p> <p>32 Lay hands on him; think of the battle; you will not do it again!</p> <p>41, ¹Any hope of capturing him will be disappointed, even the gods overwhelmed at the sight of him?</p> <p>² Is him not ferocious when roused? Who can stand before him?</p> <p>³ Who can confront him and be safe? under the whole heaven, who?</p>
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Both, the first (38,3-38) and the fourth sequence (40,25 –41,26) presents a curious parallel in one of their passages. In the first sequence, this parallel is very clear in the second passage (38,22-38), more precisely in the second piece of this passage (38,31-38). There we notice that a significant number of the segments begin with a verb in the second masculine of the singular, preceded by the interrogative particle *hã* and the interrogative pronoun *mî*, translated as *can you...?* and *who...?*. In this first sequence, these features form a literary strategy, through which God challenges Job about the eternal order of God's cosmic design. The sequence emerges constructed under a pattern of a supreme and exclusive knowledge: the knowledge God has as the Creator. Job is challenged not only to recognize God as the Creator, but also is difference as a human creature, that although created in God's image (Gn 1:28) can participate in this knowledge, only as gift and not as an appropriate power.

Similar features appear in the first passage of the fourth sequence (40,25–41,3), repeating the literary strategy this time to challenge Job's capability to hunt

Leviathan (40,25-30), and to face him or lay his hands upon him (40,31 – 41,3). The descriptions of Leviathan's body – tongue, jaw, nose (25-26) and skin, head (41,1) – emphasise his terrifying strength, suggesting that even if by some extraordinary feat Job did capture Leviathan and control him, he could never domesticate him to the point where he was a trusted servant (25-30).

The interrogative particle *hã* and the interrogative pronoun *mî*, maintain the rhetorical inquiring, mainly in the contrast and in the irony that he establishes between the strength of Leviathan and the possibilities of relating with Job (25-30 and 31-32). This strategy creates a sense of the absurd also suggested in the picture of a violent sea monster being fondled as a pet like the tiny birds (29-30). For Job to transform this chaos monster into a pet with which children may play exceeds the bounds of credibility. This very same absurd is well suggested in 40,31-41,3, extending Job's incapability to the whole creature.

In synthesis, this specific inquiring signs vividly God's answer to Job (40,25–41,26). Without creating any space for answer, as God seems only to be interested in defying Job and not listening what he has to say. We must include the centre (40,1-5) and the conclusion (42,1-6) to be aware that the biblical writer offered some little space for a Job's answer. That although very short is tremendously meaningful: Job recognizes God's difference as Creator and his human condition as creature; what God as the Creator knows and is able to and what he as a creature will never know or be able to.

The two sequences at the centre: Do you know...?

<p>...</p> <p>39,¹ Do you know the time of giving birth of the mountain-goats? the writhe of the deer, have you observed? ²Have you counted the months of their pregnancy? Do you know the time of their giving birth? ³When they crouch, their young to deliver, their pain they get rid of. ⁴ Are healthy their young, grow strong with com go out and never come back to them... ²⁶ <i>Is it from your understanding</i> soars the falcon spreading his wings to the south? ²⁷ if you open your mouth, does move-higher the eagle when raise his nest? ²⁸ (On) a rock dwell and abide upon the tooth of a rock and stronghold. ²⁹ From there he searches food; from afar his eyes detect (it). ³⁰ Even his young drink-blood; where the dead are, there is he.</p>	<p>40:⁶ Then YHWH answered Job, from the tempest he said: ⁷Gird like a man, your loins. I will ask you, and you will let me know! ⁸ Do you want to pervert my judgment, condemn, in order you might be just? ⁹ Do you have an arm like God, and with a voice like his, can you thunder? ¹⁰ Adorn yourself with grandeur and dignity, with glory and majesty clothe yourself. ¹¹ Let burst forth the fury of your anger, look upon all proud and abase them. ¹² Look upon all-proud and humble it, cast down the wicked where they stand. ¹³ Hide them in the dust together, their faces bind in the hidden place! ¹⁴ Then, also I will pay you homage, or the victory (is) for you at your right hand.</p>
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The two sequences at the centre (38,30–39,30; 40,6-24) sowed a vibrant link in the use of the verb *to know*. The first sequence (38,30–39,30) continues the rhetorical inquiring, however, now the theme of the knowledge is related with two important aspects of God's governance of wild creatures: the unique capacity God has to know the times of the natural cycles, even the most hidden and concealed realities (1-4), and the extraordinary way God provided free life to the whole world (5-12). Repeating twice the question *do you know...?* (1.2b), God denounces Job incapability to know and challenges Job to face him as a God of knowledge and powerful freedom, completely unreachable to Job. These two dimensions reveal themselves very pertinent as an answer to some words Job has spoken.⁸ To his previous questions, Job receives, as an answer, the certainty of the divine providence even for the wild animals. This certainty is supposed to assure that his peculiar knowledge implies a very special care for life. In the most disconcerting way, God challenges Job to reveal his wisdom and his capacity to exercise it. What is too wonderful for human beings and beyond their insight and power of command is nevertheless part of God's design and knowledge. Job is called to look to his own battle, not from the human perspective of victory or punishment, liberation or oppression, but with the eyes of an Eagle who is able to find nourishment in the battle (26-30).

The second sequence (40,6-24) recalls the verb *to know* in the context of rhetorical inquiring to Job, however now the literary context is the human environment. The theme of knowledge moves to the concrete dispute about two ways of understanding justice (7-8),⁹ and to Job's capacity to exhibit the same capacities of God by unleashing his wrath, abasing the proud and crushing the wicked.¹⁰ The author identifies a clear difference between Job and God. God does not simply ask Job about the strength of his arm or voice but if they can be equal to his (9). God goes further defying Job's power to adorn or cloth himself, in grandeur and dignity, glory and majesty as God does (10). The paradox of this defy in the clear implied incapability Job has, defies Job in his implied incapability to humble it or cast down the wicked, domineering and punishing them (11-13). The passage (40,7-14) ends with a rhetoric admission that if Job can prove to have the same strength, dignity and power of God, he will be the first to pay him homage and consider the justice of his judgement (14).

⁸ In fact, Job has accused God of relentlessly hunting (*šwd*) him down like a lion (10:16). He had complained bitterly that God did not even acknowledge his cry (*šw'*) for litigation (19:7). Job had objected that God not only fixes the life span of mortals but fills that brief period with excessive hardship (7:1-3).

⁹ The two verbs «to pervert» and «to condemn», both in the hiphil, stress this tension as a distortion of Job's position in the confrontation.

¹⁰ This literary strategy seems to suggest an interesting association between the proud and the wicked, whom Job is defied to judge together, as an act of retributive justice, as God will do in the day of his judgement.

<p>^{38,1}Then YHWH answered JOB (out) of the tempest and <i>said</i>: ²Who is this that darkens counsel by words without-knowledge? ³Gird like a strong man your loins and I will ask you, and you will let me know!</p>	
<p>^{38,4}Where were you when I founded the earth? Tell me if you know understanding? ⁵Who set its dimensions, do you know or who stretched a line over it?... ²¹You know! For you were born then, and the number of your days was great!.. ³³Do you know the laws of heavens? Could you place its rule on earth? ³⁴Can you raise your voice to the dark clouds, for the abundance of water to cover you? ³⁵Will you send flashes and they will go, or they will answer, 'Here we are'? ³⁶Who endowed (them) with inner WISDOM and gave to the phenomenon understanding? ³⁷Who related every cloud with WISDOM and the bottles of heaven, who tilts, ³⁸until the dust solidifies and clods of earth close up?...</p>	<p>...^{39,1} Do you know the time of giving birth of the mountain-goats? The writhe of the deer, have you observed? ²Have you counted the months of their pregnancy? Do you know the time of their giving birth? ³When they crouch, their young to deliver, their pain they get rid of. ⁴Are healthy their young, grow strong with corn go out and never come back to them. ...²⁶ Is it from your understanding soars the falcon spreading his wings to the south? ²⁷If you open your mouth, does move-higher the eagle when raise his nest? ²⁸(On) a rock dwell and abide upon the tooth of a rock and stronghold. ²⁹From there he searches food; from afar his eyes detect (it)...</p>
<p>^{40,1}Then YHWH answered JOB and <i>said</i>: ²“Shall a faultfinder contend with the Almighty? Who <i>argues</i>(with)GOD (must) answer”! ³Then JOB answered YHWH, and <i>said</i>: ⁴“See, I am of small account what shall I return to you? My hand I put on my mouth. ⁵Once I have spoken, and I will not answer, twice but I will not do again.”</p>	
<p>^{40,6}Then YHWH answered job, from the tempest he said: ⁷gird like a geber, your loins. I will ask you, and you will let me know! ⁸Do you want to pervert my judgment, condemn, in order you might be just? ⁹Do you have an <i>arm</i> like God, and with a <i>voice</i> like his, can you thunder? ¹⁰Adorn yourself with grandeur and dignity, with glory and majesty clothe yourself... ¹²Look upon all-proud and humble it, cast down the wicked where they stand. ¹³Hide them in the dust together, their faces bind in the hidden place! ...</p>	<p>^{40,25} Can you draw out Leviathan with a fishhook, or his tongue with a cord? ²⁶Can you put a rope in his nose, or pierce his jaw with a hook? ²⁷Will he makes many supplications to you? Will he speak soft words to you? ²⁸Will he makes a covenant with you to be taken as your servant forever. ²⁹Will you play with him as with a bird, or will you put him on leash for your girls? ³⁰Will traders' bargain over it? Will they divide him up among the merchants? ³¹Can you fill his skin with harpoons, or his head with fishing spears? ...</p>
<p>^{42,1}Then JOB answered YHWH and <i>said</i>: ²I know that you can do all (things), and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted. ³Who is this (that) hides counsel without-Knowledge? Thus, I have uttered what I did <i>not understand</i>, wonders for me which I did not know. ⁴Hear, and I will speak I will ask you, and you will let me know. ⁵A hearing of the ear I have heard of you but now my eye sees you! ⁶Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.”</p>	

In synthesis, the repetition of the verb *to know* manifests the determination on clarifying a crucial difference between God and human beings, as exemplified in

Job.¹¹ Job's questions and request for a direct dispute with God had insisted on a common ground unachievable and, in a certain sense intolerable. As the wild creatures, it is proper to human beings to be creatures not the Creator. However, even if these numerous questions may imply that God can know and Job does not, the emphasis seems to be on the divine creativity more than on Job or God's knowledge. This is well confirmed by the very discrete direct references to God or to Job in the entire sequence (38:41; 39:17). God's enigmatic design will throw Job back into a bewildering world of wonder. In fact, at the end, remarkably in that world Job reluctantly forgoes his demand for litigation and accepts God's design, difference and knowledge (42:1-6).

1.2 The peculiarities of the entire section

The strong concentration on the verbs to answer

The composition of the section (38,1–42,6) demonstrates a strong concentration on two verbs: *'nh* (to answer). This verb is present in the introduction (38,1-3) and conclusion (42,1-6), and in three of the four sequences (38,3-38; 38,30–39,30; 40,6-24). The centre (40,1-5) repeats three times the verb *'nh* (to answer), underlining the primacy of this feature inside the dynamism of God's words to Job. The biblical author moves us through a literary strategy very subtil towards a deep challenge: the human ability in times of great distress to answer and to establish a dialogue with God.

A - GOD answered JOB (38,1-3)	<i>Introduction</i>
A' - GOD answered JOB (40,1-2) Who argues with GOD must answer!	
B - JOB answered GOD (40,3-5) Once I have spoken, and I will not answer	<i>Centre</i>
B'- JOB answered GOD (42,1-6)	<i>Conclusion</i>

This dialogic dynamism keeps inside an arduous tension. In fact, if the God's challenge to Job to answer leads the section since the beginning (38,1-3), when

¹¹ See N. HABEL, *The Book of Job*; C. NEWSOM, «The Book of Job», 608: «First, as 38,4-38, all but one of the individual sections in 38,39–39,30 are introduced by the familiar rhetorical questions that serve to point out the limits of Job's knowledge and ability, while underscoring God's power and wisdom».

returns in first part of the center (40,1-2) acquires an awareness of duty (41,2b).¹² In fact, the second part of the center (40,2-3) expresses perfectly this tension. For the first time, we have the declaration that Job answers God (40,3). However, now, right before God Creator and inside God's creation, Job became aware of his human littleness; a little drop inside the creation. Therefore, although he has already spoken and direct many words to God,¹³ now that he must answer God openly, he realizes how thoughtless and impulsive he was. He refuses the idea of answer God as wish of not repeating the same words of superficiality (41,5).

The energetic use of the verb to know

Placed inside the dynamism created by the verb *'nh* (to answer), the verb *yd'* (to know) offers a specific content to the section. The Hebrew root *yd'* appears as a verb and a noun to emphasize what God's challenge to answer is about. The substantive *dā'at* (knowledge) and the verb *yd'* comes right at the beginning of the section, in the introduction (38,2-3), as an accusation and a challenge to Job. God seems to reproach Job to have darken counsel, the design God has hidden inside creation, and expresses his allegation saying that he had done it through words without knowledge. Job has pronounced many words, but they didn't communicated knowledge; they were only words. Therefore, God challenges him to prepare himself as a warrior to a fight (*gird like a strong man your loins*) and asks Job to let him know (2-3). The key of what Job must let God know must be learned through the many questions that confront Job with God's knowledge about all creation. The two first sequences (38,3-38; 38,30–39,30) demonstrate this repeating the expression *Do you know...?* twice each other (38,5.33; 39,1.2b). The context is the knowledge of the cosmic creation and of the wild animal realm. At the center of the first sequence (38,3-38), the author places the expression: *You know! For you were born then, and the number of your days was great!* (38,21). In fact, Job doesn't know, precisely because he was not yet born when God created heavens and earth. He is not a partner in the work of creation neither in God's knowledge.

The third sequence (40,6-24) repeats the same expression already mentioned in the introduction (*I will ask you, and you will let me know* 38,3), maintaining the focus of the dialogue in the theme of knowledge. However, the context changes abruptly. The Knowledge that Job must show, now is related to justice (40,8-10). Job's awareness of having done nothing wrong to deserve his circumstances of great loss and suffering, throw him to a knowledge of traditional retribution. At light of this knowledge he finds himself just and innocent. He never says explicitly

¹² This sense is given by the verb 𐤎𐤃𐤁𐤀 in the Imperfect third masculine singular with jussive meaning of the verb

¹³ See the main moments of the book when Job while is spoken with the friends is really directing words to God: 7,7-21; 10,2-22; 14,13-22)

that God is unjust, however his many words may insinuate it. Now, in front of God, as he has asked so often, he must answer about God's judgment. Not in a theoretic debate but realizing God's power over the proud and the wicked (40,12-13).

The conclusion (42,1-6) recuperates all the expressions used throughout the section. However, an unexpected change occurs: *Then Job answered God* (42,1). Strategically, the author keeps the same structure of the phrase already used in 38,1 and 40,1 (*Then God answered Job*) to declare God's the decision to answer Job. This change of the subject already occurred in 40,3 but was followed by a clear decision of not answering God (41,5). But this is not the unique textual surprise. The first thing Job says is *I know...* (42,2). Job, the one we learned have hidden counsel with words without knowledge (38,1) having listen God's words, learned a different knowledge and recognizes that he had uttered what he did not understand spoken about wonders he did not know (42,3b.4a). Reaching the highest moment, this recognition demonstrates that Job is no more the same. His has now accomplish a different knowledge, the one that comes directly from the word of God, through its evidence in creation. The literary peculiarity of these changes offers an unquestionable key to the function and content of the section.

A - You will let me know!	<i>Introduction</i>
B - Do you know?	<i>First sequence Second sequence</i>
A' - You will let me know!	<i>Third sequence Conclusion</i>
B'- I know...	<i>Conclusion</i>

2. INTERPRETATION

The wisdom dynamism of God's revelation

God's personal appearance is what Job both desired and feared (9,16-17). Ironically, God does appear answers *from the tempest* (38:1), overwhelming Job

with a series of challenges.¹⁴ Although, Job had expressed his fear if God would appear in court, saying that he would be prevented from having a fair trial (9,34; 13,21), his great passion was to confront God face to face (13,15.20.24). For Job to expect God to appear in person, however, was oddly presumptuous. According to Israelite tradition, no mortal could see God and live (*But, he said: 'You cannot see my face; for no one shall see me and live!'* Ex. 33,20; cf. Ex 19,21; Lv 16,2; Nm 4,20).¹⁵ Therefore, a direct and private revelation for a reprobate individual was unthinkable. Despite this, the biblical author ventures to give us an unexpected end, picturing a narrative where God appears to Job as he did to heroic figures like Noah (Gn 6,13–7,17) and Abraham (Gn 12,1-3; 15,1-21; 17,1-22; 22,1-2...). The long silence that have persisted during the constant Job's supplications, breaks up and God does appear and speaks, confounding Job not with terror but with a battle of questions. The explicit use here of the name *Yhwh*, rather than other names used in the book (*'ēl šadday; 'ēlohîm; 'ēloh*) integrates God's words, and this specific section (38,1–42,6), with other narrative elements of the book where the name of *Yhwh* is used: the God who appeared to Job still be the one who have appeared to Israel in later theophanies.¹⁶

Surprisingly, despite this strong integration in Israel tradition, the study of the composition (the rhetorical biblical analysis) revealed some new features, that we would like to consider as specific of wisdom thinking. One of these features is the dialogic dimension of this singular theophany. If God's words are in fact not a simple answer but as a self-revelation from God (38,1–39,30 and 40,6–41,26), that shows to Job God's absolute difference as Creator, they comprise a time to the human word (40,3-5 and 42,1-6), strategically inserted inside of God's words. The newness of this feature permits to envision an advanced thinking in wisdom understanding of God's revelation; something that some recent studies have not yet noticed or given enough attention.¹⁷

¹⁴ The pattern still the one of a theophany used to anticipate God's self-revelation to his people Israel (cf. Ex 19:9-20; Jg 5:4-5; Hb 3:5-6; Ps 18:8-16). The images of storms and lightnings occurs in Ez 1,4 to indicate a revelation from heavens and a vision of God that assures to the exiled that God is not a prisoner of the Temple and is able to be where his people are; and in Zc 9:14 the same images occur to describe God's revelation and coming to Israel for his reestablishment.

¹⁵ This tradition explains why Moses (Ex 3,6), Elijah (1Kg 19,13) and the Seraphim (Is 6,2) cover the face before *Yhwh*. The fact to remain alive after having seen God receives great recognition (cf. Gn 32,1; Dt 5,24) and is considered as a great favor from God (cf. Ex 24,10-11; Dt 5,4), particularly with Moses (cf. Ex 33,11; Nm 12,7-8; Dt 34,10) and Elijah (cf. 1Kg 19,11). Here, in the book of Job this tradition comes directly from Elihu's words (*It is not for a mortal to set a time, to come before El in litigation* 34,11) mainly when he proclaimed the absolute transcendence of God. (Jb 35,1-16).

¹⁶ Cf. N. HABEL, *The Book of Job. A Commentary*, London 1985, 528: "... Thus when the Creator God El moves from behind the scenes of his creation to establish a direct personal relationship with Job we are confronted with a veiled allusion to *Yhwh*, the covenant God. Job's heroic faith has provoked the *deus absconditus* into becoming the *deus revelatus*, even before the Sinai".

¹⁷ As far as we know just one author have tried to approach this featured, focusing the dimension of the dialogue in God's ethical behaviour: K. DELL, "Does God Behave Unethically in the Book of Job?" in *Ethical and Unethical in the Old Testament: God and Humans in Dialogue*, (Ed. K. DELL)

Wisdom strategies of an unfathomable knowledge

The study of the composition of the section (38,1–42,6) strongly demonstrates a construction based upon a specific knowledge. In his answer to Job, God does not challenge him to prove his innocence or the integrity of his arguments, rather he calls Job to demonstrate his knowledge, *let him know* about the all mysteries of creation, that he as Creator knows, oversees and reigns (38,3; 40,7; 42,4). The focus on knowledge is stressed on the intensity of the repetition of the interrogation *do you know* (38,5.33; 39,1.2). Inside this inquiring, apparently normal and reasonable, the biblical author sets two affirmations, one from God (*You know!* 38,21) and other from Job (*I Know!* 42,2). Both are positive affirmations, in what respects Job's knowledge. However, the one coming from God surprises for its strong irony. Declaring *you know*, God considers the possibility of Job having a God's similar knowledge about how creation comes to existence because as God he already existed. Instead of simply denying Job's entire ignorance (no-knowledge) and God's knowledge the supremacy, the text subtly makes us to enter in a literary strategy proper to a wisdom thinking. A strategy that continues in Job's affirmation *I know*, that not refers to Job's knowledge about the mysteries of creation, but to Job's knowledge concerning to God, that he learned from God's challenges: God's power as Creator and the wonders of creation.

The entire dialogue between God and Job emerges rooted upon wisdom literary strategies able to conduct the reader to a confront between two different knowledges, the one of God (divine) and the one of Job (human). Two different knowledges that should not be taken in simply opposition, but as an important reality that comes through a creative dialogue, proper to a context of revelation. As all the mysteries of creation, this knowledge about God it's a gift that do not erases a personal human commitment. Rather implies it strongly. Something suggested in Job's words (*A hearing of the ear I have heard of you but now my eye sees you!* 42,5).¹⁸

New York; London 2010, 170-186; For the studies that still lack this approach cf. M.V. FOX, "God's Answer and Job's Response", *Biblica* 94.1 (2013) 1-23; D.C. TIMMER, "God's Speeches +, Job's responses, and the problem of Coherence in the Book of Job: Sapiential Pedagogy Revisited", *CBQ* 71 (2009) 286-305; S.A. GELLER, "Nature's Answer: The meaning of the Book of Job in its Intellectual Context", in *Judaism and Ecology: Created World and Revealed Word* (Ed. H. TIROSH-SAMUELSON), Cambridge, MA 2002, 109-132; J.B. CURTIS, "On Job's Response to Yahweh" *JBL* 98 (1979) 510; Boloje, B.O. & Groenwald, A., 2016, "I know you can do all things" (Job 42:2): A literary and theological analysis of Job's testimony about Yahweh's sovereignty', *HTS Teologiese Studies/ Theological Studies* 72 (1), a3356. 1-17 (<http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v72i1.3356>); K. DELL, "Creation in the Whirlwind Speeches and Job's Response: 38,1–42,6", in *Now my Eyes have seen you. Images of Creation and Evil in the Book of Job* (Ed. R.S. Fyall) Leicester 2002, 117-135; W. MORRISTON, "God's answer to Job", *Rel.Stud.* 32 (1996) 339-356.

¹⁸Cf. K. DELL, *Job. Where shall Wisdom be Found?*, Sheffield Phoenix Press, Sheffield 2013. One of the most recent and relevant studies about wisdom dimension of the book of Job.

The wisdom achievement of God's singularity

Despite all the controversy attested throughout decades by the exegesis studies about God in the book of Job, the study done on the composition of the entire section (38,1–42,6) allows us to affirm an achievement of God's singularity. It is true that the whole book raises in a particular acute way the problem of acceptable behaviour in relation to God. God's words to Job are a celebration of God's creation of a strange world of wild animals about which human beings know very little and of which they only have a glimpse. These words are about a very singular power, particularly attested in the third (40,5-24) and forth sequence (40,25–41, 26), with its emphasis on God's power over the greater monsters (Behemot and Leviathan). But they are also about the sheer wonder, beauty, and non-conformity of the created world. The order that God has set up does not correspond exactly to human ideas of order; his wisdom and behaviour cannot be contained by human expectations. At the end, the otherness of God is strongly stressed and became the key to a new knowledge and wisdom.

Assumed as a unique narrative moment in the entire Old Testament, by the narrative length and time of God's direct intervention, God's words to Job show that there are no assurances and indeed that to expect such certainties is to seek to control and demean God in his infinite greatness and wisdom. Through a form of challenges, God's words raise the issue of divine freedom. Through them Job understood that it is simply because God does not react automatically to human conduct that God is free. In all of this, the biblical author gives voice to a wisdom achievement of God's difference. A difference affirmed fundamentally on his being the Creator, whose mysteries are possession of his singular knowledge.¹⁹

RIASSUNTO

Questo articolo presenta una lettura complessiva dell'intera sezione del libro di Giobbe (38,1–42,6), utilizzando alcuni contributi di significato, raccolti in studi di anteprime sulla composizione di questa sezione. Inseguendo il processo di analisi biblica retorica (composizione, contesto biblico e interpretazione), in questa tappa finale, siamo stati in grado di enfatizzare alcune strategie letterarie e tematiche di base, ottenendo alcune nuove intuizioni di comprensione. In primo luogo, i due pilastri che sostengono letteralmente la narrazione: le sfide e le risposte e al loro interno l'esperienza di sapere ciò che non si conosce. In secondo luogo, siamo riusciti a giustificare che queste caratteristiche letterarie

¹⁹ Two important contributions on this subject are the articles written by K. DELL, "Creation in the Whirlwind Speeches and Job's Response: 38,1–42,6", in *Now my Eyes have seen you. Images of Creation and Evil in the Book of Job* (Ed. R.S. Fyall) Leicester 2002, 117-135; and M.V. FOX, "God's Answer and Job's Response", *Biblica* 94.1 (2013) 1-23.

conducano ad una comprensione dell'intervento di Dio come espressione di uno singolare dinamismo sapienziale su la rivelazione di Dio. Un dinamismo che si sviluppa attraverso le strategie di una conoscenza insondabile, che si torna in grado di svelare una comprensione sapienziale della singolarità di Dio.

Parole chiave: conoscenza, saggezza, sfide, risposte, rivelazione.

ABSTRACT

This article presents an overall reading of the entire section of the book of Job (38.1–42.6), using some meaningful contributions, gathered in previous studies of the composition of this section. By pursuing the process of biblical rhetorical analysis (composition, biblical context and interpretation) we were able in this final stage to emphasize some basic literary and thematic strategies, obtaining some new insights of understanding. First, the two pillars that literally support the narrative: the challenges and the answers and within them the experience of knowing what is unknown. Secondly, we achieved to justify that these literary characteristics lead to an understanding of God's intervention as an expression of a singular wisdom dynamism on God's revelation. A dynamism that develops through the strategies of unfathomable knowledge, that turns able to point some traces of a wisdom understanding of the singularity of God.

Keywords: knowledge, wisdom, challenges, answers, revelation.