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THEOPHANY AND THE DIVINE DISCOURSES OF JOB

by

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Dissertation submitted to fulfil the requirements for the degree  
MAGISTER ARTIUM  
in the Faculty of Humanities, Department of Near Eastern Studies  
of the University of the Free State

Date Submitted : 31 May 2002

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Universiteit van die  
Oranje-Vrystaat  
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# THEOPHANY AND THE DIVINE DISCOURSES OF JOB

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I hereby declare this dissertation, handed in by me for the purposes of the degree MAGISTER ARTIUM at the University of the Free State, to be my own substantive work, which has not been handed in before to fulfil the requirements for a degree at any other university or faculty. I relinquish the copyright on this dissertation in favour of the University of the Free State

The financial assistance provided by the National Research Foundation (NRF) towards this research is hereby acknowledged with gratitude. Opinions expressed and conclusions arrived at, are those of the author and should in no way be attributed to the National Research Foundation

## PREFACE

I thank the following people whose input and perceptions made this study feasible:

Prof. P.J. Nel

He, together with Proff. F. du T. Laubscher and J.A. Naudé, taught me to love the language of the Semites and the world of the Ancient Near East.

Prof. Nel has been my guide and role model throughout a decade of academic study.

Dr. A.F. van der Merwe and Prof. R.M. Britz

Both theologians, working from different schools of the Reformation, showed me the value of a true quest for God as an inherent part and parcel of the pilgrimage of the Christian faith.

Prof. H.A. Wessels

For the revision of the text and his suggestions concerning the use of English.

The Dutch Reformed Church of Dealesville

Believers with whom I share all the dimensions of life to its full. A word of thanks to Ms. M.M. Zietsman whom assisted as far as the linguistic aspects of the text are concerned.

Japie and Linda Schmidt

The devotion, time and effort of my parents provide me with a substantial base of living.

Carlé and Linke

My wife and daughter who supported my studies in uncountable ways.

I dedicate this study to Carlé, my soul mate.

The Heavenly Father of our Lord Jesus Christ

God's Holy Spirit enabled me to experience this academic study as a spiritual journey (Genesis 32:31 and Job 42:5-6):

וַיִּקְרָא יַעֲקֹב שֵׁם הַמָּקוֹם בְּנֵיאֵל כִּי־רָאִיתִי אֱלֹהִים בְּפָנִים אֶל־פָּנִים וַתִּנְצַל נַפְשִׁי:

לְשִׁמְע־אֶזְנִי שְׁמַעְתִּיד וְעַתָּה עֵינֵי רְאִיתְךָ: עַל־כֵּן אֲמַאֵס וְנַחֲמֹתִי עַל־עַפְרָא וְאֶפְרָא:

DRC Rectory  
Dealesville  
May 2002

## ABBREVIATIONS

### Bible Texts and Translations:

AB	Amplified Bible	NAV	Nuwe Afrikaanse Vertaling
ASV	American Standard Version	NEB	New English Bible
BHS	<i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i>	NIV	New International Version
CEV	Contemporary English Version	NJB	New Jerusalem Bible
DB	Die Boek	NLT	New Living Translation
JB	Jerusalem Bible	NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
KJV	King James Version	OAV	Ou Afrikaanse Vertaling
LT	Luthertext mit Apokryphen	RSV	Revised Standard Version
LXX	Septuagint	TEV	Today's English Version
		VUL	Vulgate

### Journals and Series:

<i>Bib.</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
<i>CTJ</i>	<i>Calvin Theological Journal</i>
<i>ExpTim.</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
<i>HUCA</i>	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
<i>Int.</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JNES</i>	<i>Journal for Near Eastern Studies</i>
<i>JNSL</i>	<i>Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages</i>
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
<i>HTS</i>	<i>Hervormde Teologiese Studies</i>
<i>KAT</i>	Kommentar zum Alten Testament
<i>KV</i>	Korte Verklaring der heilige Schrift
<i>NCBC</i>	The New Century Bible Commentary
<i>NICOT</i>	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
<i>OTE</i>	<i>Old Testament Essays</i>
<i>OTL</i>	Old Testament Library
<i>OTWSA</i>	<i>Ou Testamentiese Werkgemeenskap van Suid-Afrika</i>
<i>POT</i>	De Prediking van het Oude Testament
<i>SJT</i>	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
<i>ZA</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und verwandte Gebiete</i>
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

*Those who do not remember the past are condemned to relive it* (Santayana)<sup>1</sup>

### 1.1 The Text and Interpretation of the Book of Job.

For centuries of scholarship the book of *Job*<sup>2</sup> has often been identified as one of the most difficult texts of the Old Testament in terms of language, interpretation and theological contribution. The fact that the conversations between human characters are concluded by divine discourses (chapters 38-42) in the text, serve to make the interpretation of the Yahweh speeches one of the greatest hermeneutic challenges of biblical science. To a certain extent most scholars regard the answer or the meaning of the Yahweh speeches as pivotal to the final interpretation of the whole text.

The divine discourses of *Job* are targeted as the specific problem area of this study. By interpreting this section of the text from a specific perspective (see later), its contribution to the interpretation of the text in its entirety, as well as to human suffering as the central theme of *Job*, is shown. The divine discourses are submitted to an analysis in terms of the theophany as both a religious phenomenon and a literary technique in texts of the Old Testament. The consequences of this analysis will assist our effort to interpret the book of *Job* in an innovative manner.

For the sake of clarification provision is made for a short survey of the different methods of interpretation applied to the divine discourses of *Job*. This venture will simultaneously illustrate the complexity of the investigation. In doing so the problem is identified and described, as well as more results, which hopefully, may be achieved.

---

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Shirer (1964:8).

<sup>2</sup> In the text of this study the book of Job is distinguished with italics (*Job*) from the character (Job), but not in the headings which constantly refer only to the book and not to the character.

## 1.2 The Book of Job and the Winds of Change.

*Job* illustrates the extremely complex relation between God and the sufferings of the righteous<sup>3</sup>. Job accuses God of being callous and indifferent towards his situation of pain and rejection:

“If I summoned him and he answered me, I would not believe that he was listening to my voice. For he crushes me with a tempest, and multiplies my wounds without cause; he will not let me get my breath, but fills me with bitterness. If it is a contest of strength, behold him! If it is a matter of justice, who can summon him?” (9:16-9 RSV)<sup>4</sup>.

The question arises whether an answer is indeed provided to the suffering of Job in the climax of the book, the divine discourses of *Job* 38-42. There is little or no unanimity between scholars on this point. A twofold reason may be supplied for the diverse opinions emanating from the perception that *Job* offers as solution to the problem of human suffering: Firstly, the complexity of the poetics of *Job* renders a variety of interpretations possible. Many of the Hebrew words and idioms feature only once in this text as *hapax legomena*, which engenders debate about their meaning and gives way to divergent interpretations of the text itself<sup>5</sup>. Secondly, it is extremely difficult to find a niche for the message of *Job* within the “theology” of the rest of the corpus of Old Testament texts<sup>6</sup>. The reception history of the book of *Job* reflects an adequate testimony to the fact that *Job* has thus far resisted stubbornly to yield a conventional biblical message.

---

<sup>3</sup> The various themes of *Job* identified so far are theodicy (Gutiérrez 1987:xviii), divine nature (Mettinger 1992:48), Job’s integrity (Steinmann 1996:100), and evil (Good 1992:50). Yet, we think that the issue of God and human suffering remains a basic concern of the entire text.

<sup>4</sup> Theodicy is a natural outcome when a religious meaning system is faced with a crisis and solutions within the system are sought. As such *Job* offers a perspective on human suffering, which “have not changed very much over the last five thousand years of history. We still seek reasons for personal and corporate suffering and wonder what logic can suffice to defend its seeming arbitrariness” (Hill and Walton 1990:263). The character of Job is an archetype and spokesman “not of his personal experience alone but of the experience of all humankind” (Gutiérrez 1987:1).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Habel (1985:22), Greenberg (1987:303), Whybray (1998:7). Dahood exaggerates this dilemma by stating that 30% of *Job* remains without a faithful translation (cf. Wolfers 1995:21).

<sup>6</sup> Jobian texts survived in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek versions, as well as Targum and Qumran fragments. All these texts differ in length, content and theology, e.g. the LXX version is about a sixth of the length of the Masoretic text. The present study is limited to the text of the *BHS*.

Since the earliest scholarly efforts the message of *Job* has been regarded sometimes as a fascination, often also as a problem, and occasionally as a scandal or danger to religion and faith (Perdue & Gilpin 1992:11). The diversity of interpretation on the text in general and of the divine discourses in particular, is explained by Gordis (1978:557) in terms of the many *double entendres* in *Job*, "so that the traditionalists would believe that God's power is being reaffirmed while the sceptical readers would penetrate more deeply into the text and derive the correct conclusion that man's suffering is a riddle that has no solution". Perhaps the traditionalists and sceptics should shoulder more of the blame for their lack of unanimity than the text of *Job* itself<sup>7</sup>. Be that as it may, this has led to the many interpretations of the message of *Job*'s divine discourses<sup>8</sup>.

Most of the different opinions as to the way in which the suffering of a righteous and innocent man is to be resolved in *Job* 38-42, may be classified under one of Gordis's dual categories, mentioned above. This study proposes that a third opinion may be added<sup>9</sup>. The following summary constitutes the three categories of interpretation on the divine discourses as a key to human suffering:

- i. The traditionalists, according to which Job's situation is definitely and explicitly answered in the speeches of Yahweh<sup>10</sup>.
- ii. The sceptics, according to which Job's situation remains unresolved or is even worsened by the words of Yahweh<sup>11</sup>.

---

<sup>7</sup> Various interpretations of *Job* indicate that both the perspective of scholars on the book of Job and their methodology "have a strong bearing on the conclusions attained" (Williams 1978:59-60). According to Loader (1987:1) the different readings of *Job* are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

<sup>8</sup> For summaries on the major interpretations of the divine discourses, cf. Godet (1878:222-235), Sanders (1968), Van Oorschot (1987), Müller (1988:101-122), Pechansky (1990:68-9), Nel (1991:207-16), Perdue (1991:196-9), Mettinger (1992) and Viviers (1997:109-24).

<sup>9</sup> Alter (1985:86-7) previously divided interpretations on the divine discourses into three schools of thought: (1) A common objection that it gives no answer to Job's suffering. (2) A modern proposition that no real answer exists to the problem of suffering. (3) A third option that the solution lies in the divine discourses in the act of the revelation itself.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Davidson (1884), Bradley (1887), Dijk (1924), Calvin (1952), Lillie (1957), Delitzsch (1961), Kroeze (1960), Fohrer (1963), Pope (1965), Barth (1966), Dhorme (1967), Andersen (1977), Blei (1978), Eybers (1978), Rowley (1980), Van Selms (1983), Van der Zee (1985), Simundson (1986), Bijl (1988), Gibson (1989), Atkinson (1991), Terrien (1991), Stek (1997).

iii. A literary study of *Job*, according to which some resolution of Job's situation can be detected beneath the surface / form and in the intention / function of the divine discourses<sup>12</sup>. Consequently, Job's predicament is implicitly answered in the theophany of chapter 38-42.

An evaluation of these three categorical answers to the situation of *Job*'s suffering reveals similar interpretative patterns among scholars:

	Traditional category	Sceptic category	Literary category
Main theme	Innocent suffering	Various themes	Various themes
Divine discourses	Answer to theme	No answer	An implied answer
Job's responses (40:3-5,42:1-6)	Positive response (conversion & repentance)	Negative response (irony & sarcasm)	An implied response (fear & faith)

It may seem somewhat simplistic according to some scholars to categorise the various and divergent interpretations of the speeches of Yahweh into three categories. The following parts of this introductory chapter, as well as the analysis of the divine discourses in the fourth chapter, seek to persuade the critical reader of its legitimacy. We will henceforth revisit the three mentioned positions on *Job*'s divine discourses in more detail.

### 1.2.1 The Traditional Category.

These scholars dominated biblical hermeneutics since the time of the Reformation until the aftermath of the Second World War. The book of *Job* was interpreted in terms of exact guidelines taken from a more dogmatic investigation of the Bible. The first position of

<sup>11</sup> Jung (1965), Dillon (1973), Robertson (1977), Cox (1978), Tsevat (1980), Curtis (1979), Brenner (1981), Van Unen (1987), Dell (1991), Girard (1992), Clines (1989), Good (1990), Whedbee (1990), Williams (1971), Crenshaw (1992), Morrision (1996), Whybray (1998).

<sup>12</sup> Polzin (1977), Alter (1985), Loader (1984), Gordis (1978), Kubina (1979), Bezuidenhout (1986), Janzen (1985), Habel (1985), Van Oorschot (1987), Greenberg (1987), Perdue (1991), Murphy (1992), Mettinger (1997), Brown (1996), Dailey (1993b), Fox (2000).



these was the reformed statement of the *Sacra Scriptura sui ipsius interpres*, according to which Job's situation of suffering should be discussed primarily from a broader biblical context and not in terms of the text itself<sup>13</sup>. The suffering of Job would also be compared and related to that of Christ's crucifixion during which He suffered *pro nobis* sinners. This eventually led to a christological reading or understanding of the message of *Job*, in terms of which evidence from other biblical books were again used to explain Job's suffering, no longer as the innocent one but now as sinner, similar to the New Testament form of redemption<sup>14</sup>. Suffering was seen as a theme of *Job* but not as an issue, as it was "for the righteous man on his way to glory, and that his faith is the way to sight, ... to once more behold God, even if he should succumb to his afflictions" (Delitzsch 1961:385)<sup>15</sup>. Often in the past the confession of Job in 42:6 was regarded as the real climax of the book, which resulted in the minimising of the divine discourses and its content. Job's ritual covering of himself with ashes became a symbol of conversion of sin, accompanied by signs of *berouw*, *ellende* and *vernedering* (Blei 1978:151, Kroeze 1960:286).

A common objection to the traditional evaluation of the divine discourses is that it provides no real answers to the plight of Job<sup>16</sup>. The four friends of Job use the same type of arguments as this group of scholars, according to which God is portrayed as a tyrant who boasts in sarcastic and bullying terms, that Job should not even begin to think of playing in the same cosmic league (Alter 1985:86). While Job's friends utilise this view of the divine to uphold traditional wisdom, scholars from the traditional group do the same in defence of ecclesiastical doctrine. The arguments of both the friends of Job and this

---

<sup>13</sup> According to Van Selms (1982:180), "quod in Vetere Testamento latet, in Novo patet".

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Kroeze (1960:7): "Het is een dogmatische - maar daarom nog geen verwerplijke - consequentie, wanneer we beweren, dat hij [i.e. Job] deze vroomheid had als een genadegift door het geloof, ter wille van de toen nog niet gebracht, maar door God bestemde zoenofferande van Christus". Blei (1978:140) interprets the stormwind of 38:1 as a "windvlaag van Pinksteren".

<sup>15</sup> According to Davidson (1884:xxv) the purpose of the author of *Job* is to widen men's views of divine providence and to set before us a new view on suffering.

<sup>16</sup> Gibson (1988:409-13) shows how some scholars side-step the effect of the divine discourses by: (1) Ignoring the embarrassing message of Job's attack on God. (2) Falling back unto Christian piety of innocent suffering as being noble. (3) Providing a "Christian" twist to 42:1-6.

category of interpreters of the divine discourses are represented in a most extreme form by Bildad in *Job* 8:8-9:

"For inquire, I pray you, of bygone ages, and consider what the fathers have found; for we are but of yesterday, and know nothing, for our days on earth are a shadow" (RSV).

Some interpretations of this category disregard the uniqueness of the message of *Job* in relation to the rest of the Bible. Uncomfortable questions broached by Job about suffering are ignored in favour of straight-forward and systematic answers taken from others biblical books<sup>17</sup>. One's departure should rather be that, although *Job* is part of the canon, it has a unique contribution within the broader message of the Bible. Likewise, other biblical books may contribute to the understanding of Job's suffering, but not before the particular message of *Job* has been exhausted. The interpretation of *Job* cannot be subjected to a preconceived "biblical view" of suffering. This would pre-empt the possible alternative opinion of *Job*.

### 1.2.2 The Sceptic Category.

Many modern expositors of *Job* have sought to overcome the view of the traditional category on the divine discourses by advocating a sceptical view. They assume that the author / redactor of *Job* had enough wisdom to imply that no real explanation exists for human suffering, not from a human view nor from a divine perspective. Under pressure from his heavenly accuser, God is unable to dominate the creation, as it is testified to by Yahweh himself in *Job* 38-42<sup>18</sup>. Readers must be content with the sheer willingness of the divine as an expression of his concerns for his creatures (cf. Alter 1985:86).

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<sup>17</sup> Listening to sermons makes one aware that some scholars embrace general biblical answers, not in faith but because of laziness to search for the unique implication of a text. In this way some nearly blasphemous verses from *Job* are reinterpreted for devotional use, while the entire text of *Job* is misused as basis for exegetical reflections on Christian doctrine (Dell 1991:6).

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Brenner (1981). Some scholars went even further in their deconstruction of the divine: Jung (1965) describes God as having a dual personality, dimensions of good and evil are combined in his being. The Satan becomes a personification of his dark side in the unified divine realm.

While scholars from the traditional category tend to lean heavily on dogmatic doctrine to explain the divine discourses, those from the sceptic category revert to philosophic forms of argumentation. Usually their explanations are more philosophic than scriptural in nature. Good (1992:viii) wants the truth claims of the “scriptural dogmatism” on the interpretation of *Job* to be exposed and removed. According to him Yahweh does not answer Job’s questions, therefore Job is unable to learn anything about the divine nature, except that God “can also be arrogantly sarcastic” (1992:66,68). When Job eventually repents it was not on account of some sin, but of repentance itself and of religion. Consequently, *Job* 38-42 is interpreted in such a way as to make it insignificant or irrelevant for the rest of the text as well as to Job’s suffering. The theophany boils down to a defeat of the divine. Job’s questions are not answered, and a human victory over impotent divine power is achieved by means of human maturity and freedom. *Job* 38-42 is nothing but “poor theology”<sup>19</sup>.

While proponents of the traditional category tend to associate themselves with the arguments of Job’s friends, those of the sceptic category affiliate with some arguments of Job in chapters 29-31. Job previously retained some hope that God would save him from his suffering and friends (cf. 19:25-9), but he became sceptical in *Job* 29:19-23:

“God has cast me into the mire, and I have become like dust and ashes. I cry to thee and thou dost not answer me; I stand, and thou dost not heed me. Thou hast turned cruel to me; with the might of thy hand thou dost persecute me. Thou liftest me up on the wind, thou makest me ride on it, and thou tосsest me about in the roar of the storm. Yea, I know that thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living” (RSV).

Admittedly we find in the Old Testament authors who became sceptic about the “dogmatological doctors” of their day. This can be seen in the later sapiential books like

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<sup>19</sup> It is impossible to find in the God-speeches a response to Job’s predicament that is acceptable to modern or post-modern theological rationales (Williams 1992:222), as it remains a riddle (Williams 1971:241) or tragicomedy (Good 1981:13). Cf. also Cox (1978:159,176).

Ecclesiastes and some parts of *Job*<sup>20</sup>. However, modern sceptics should be sensitive not to superimpose their own views onto biblical texts. A sceptical interpretation of chapter 38-42 is possible only against the narrative movement of the whole text of *Job*. But then some scholars from the sceptic category have no qualms about tailoring the text of *Job* to fit their arguments. Contradictions in the text are solved by the simple process of elimination. This means that parts of the text which do not fit the argument (like the divine discourses) are regarded as glosses or interpolations (cf. Williams 1992:231,224)<sup>21</sup>. This process of scholastic cut-and-paste can be very creative but also most unscientific<sup>22</sup>. It is obviously more scientific to study the text of *Job* as it currently exists in the *BHS*, than to remould it to fit the preconceived arguments of any group of scholars lumped together in terms of their preconceptions to biblical texts.

### 1.2.3 The Literary Category.

This study stems from and endorses the third, literary category: The divine discourses actually answer questions hinging on the situation of suffering of an innocent man. However, this can only be conceptualised when Job 38-42 is read as a theophany. Interpretative studies on the book of *Job* have experienced a shift from the historical-critical paradigm to that of the literary during the past few decades (Newsom 1995:177). There are different literary approaches, but this study follows those analysing the divine

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<sup>20</sup> According to Dillon (1973:8,61-7) the sceptics of biblical times rejected the belief of retribution, eternal life, and the Messiah, as they wanted to expose the "notion of God" as nothing more than a mere metaphysical abstraction (1973:x-xi). But this is not an accurate understanding of even the author of Ecclesiastes, the most sceptical of all biblical writers (cf. 12:13-4). Dell (1991:3-4) has a more substantial understanding of scepticism in the whole of *Job* which can be studied in terms of its content, message, genre, form and structure. This genre is called a parody (1991:147,159).

<sup>21</sup> Williams (1992:229) acknowledges this flaw in his approach: "Yes, maybe I missed something in the theophany. Maybe I haven't done the poet justice. Well, the canon will still be there tomorrow for new questions and new comprehension".

<sup>22</sup> We should be careful not to manipulate texts to say what we want them to say: In the biblical historian's aim to discover "what really happened", all that obscures reality have been discharged as irrelevant (Savran 1987:146). This positivistic epistemology led to supernaturalism which explained away the problems of a text, as well as its primal Subject (Brueggemann 1997:103-5). Criticism became an end in itself, and because it was no longer in service of interpretation it divorced the form and content of texts (Alter & Kermode 1987:3).

discourses as a reflection of what has been called “theophany” in form-critical circles. The implication is that in the text of *Job*, pertaining to its whole as well as to its constituent parts, we find a definite arranging of materials according to the intention of the author as a literary artist (Habel 1985:24).

Robert Alter was a forerunner in the field of literary applications to the Bible and to the search for the connection between biblical poetics and revelation. According to him the relation between the divine discourses and *Job*'s central theme lies in the combination of the act of theophanic revelation and the role poetry plays in this process (1985:86-7). Both the form and content of *Job*'s theophany lead to an understanding of its situation. The literary approach to be followed does not imply a complete rejection of the relevant contributions of the other categories of approaches mentioned above. It offers an alternative approach, from a literary perspective, on the divine discourses of *Job*.

### 1.3 Discussion of the Problem and Aim.

The question arises whether the divine discourses provide an answer to the theme of suffering if *Job* 38-42 is studied as a theophany. An answer has not yet been given, primarily because no satisfactory definition of theophany exists. Studies on theophany of the Old Testament - and they are numerous - offer conflicting answers. Competing theories abound and confusion reigns. The role of theophany in biblical literature and its impact on the structure of texts have not been examined properly<sup>23</sup>, neither have *Job*'s divine discourses as yet been properly analysed from the perspective of theophany.

The problem therefore falls into two parts,

- i. regarding the theophany as a religious phenomenon and as a referential model within the context of the Old Testament, and

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<sup>23</sup> Few scholars “have actually set down in writing what they understood to be the character, structure, and language of the theophany in the Old Testament”, as “a thorough treatment of the Old Testament theophany is still lacking” (Kuntz 1967:24,26).

ii. regarding the theophany of *Job*'s divine discourses within the context of the book.

As the problem clearly states, the divine discourses of *Job* have not been examined properly in terms of its relation to the components of the theophany.

A study of the elements of the theophany in the Old Testament promises the possibility to interpret *Job* 38-42 in such a way that it could serve as a resolution to the situation of the book. Therefore, in this study the following hypothesis is maintained:

**The divine discourses of *Job* provide a substantial answer to the salient questions of the book only when it is understood and studied as a theophany.**

*Job*'s divine discourse should be studied as a theophany both in terms of its structure and content. Brenner (1981:131) realised this when she stated that the length of the response attributed to God should be regarded as indicative, thereby signifying that the contents are as important as the theophany itself. Both she and Perdue (1991:196) identified the content of the divine discourses as being theophanic in nature, without interpreting it in terms of its theophanic structure<sup>24</sup>. This is precisely what we propose doing: To investigate the divine discourses of *Job* as a theophany in both structure and content<sup>25</sup>.

#### 1.4 Method of Study.

This study seeks to transcend that which is directly observed on the textual surface of *Job*'s divine discourses (i.e. reading the content of the theophany on a stylistic-syntactic level) in order to investigate its deeper structure (analysing that theophany's content on a semantic-semiotic level). A similar approach of the unification of the literary and biblical disciplines in biblical texts used by Alter (1987:16-7), has been followed. Indeed the texts

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<sup>24</sup> To the best of our knowledge the only scholars who treated parts of the divine discourses in this way are Kuntz (1967), Sands (1975) and Niehaus (1995).

<sup>25</sup> Scholars ignoring a text's artistic form will likewise fail to clarify its meaning (Bar-Efrat 1989:9). The separation of a text's form and content must of necessity result in the alteration of its meaning (Perdue 1994:325-6), because the symbiotic relationship between its poetics (*how* texts mean) and interpretation (*what* texts mean) is disregarded (Berlin 1983:16-7).

themselves suggest that the literary impulse was as powerful as the religious impetus in Israel<sup>26</sup>.

The literary study is done according to two presuppositions:

i. It assumes the unity of the *BHS* text of *Job* in its final form<sup>27</sup>, with the theophanic divine discourses as the dramatic climax to the narrative art of the text and *Job*'s situation of human suffering<sup>28</sup>. The literary affinity between *Job* 1-37 and 38-42 already adumbrates to the fact that God answers the situation of *Job* in his speeches. In its final form the text of *Job* should be thought of as having a single story-line with many thematic facets<sup>29</sup>. Texts will only be interpreted properly if their constituent parts are analysed as well. The relation between texts' form and content is observed in this way.

ii. It also assumes literary and religious affinities between texts of the Old Testament in terms of the phenomenon of theophany<sup>30</sup>. Texts consisting of literary genres or the convention of literary types may be compared from an intertextual perspective. In turn it may provide a referential model for the theophany to be analysed from available data in Old Testament texts and then applied to *Job* 38-42. It is necessary to systematise information from relevant texts in order to construct a true picture of theophany.

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<sup>26</sup> Alter & Kermode (1987:4-5) call this the "interpretation of texts as they actually exist".

<sup>27</sup> Scholars agree on *Job*'s patriarchal *Sitz im Leben*. The debate surrounding the composition of the text's final form favours either an exilic or post-exilic date. Perdue & Gilpin (1992:12-3) reconstruct a possible literary history of *Job*: (1) Ch. 1-2, 42:7-17 (the traditional response to suffering in the Hebrew monarchy of 1000-587BC). (2) Ch. 3-27, 29-31, 38-42:6 (crisis during the Babylonian exile of 587-538BC). (3) Ch. 28, 32-7 (further responses during the Persian period of 538-332BC). The 1970's mark a shift away from the method of concentrating on isolated units of *Job* towards the various methods of the literary theory, which attempt rather to give a single reading of the present form of the text (Perdue & Gilpin 1992:16, cf. Good 1990:5).

<sup>28</sup> For different views on the divine discourses as climax and answer to *Job*, cf. Polzin (1977:121), Westermann (1977: 108ff), Gordis (1978:556), Loader (1987:2-3), Whedbee (1990:217-8), Brown (1996:90), Perdue (1991:196, 1994:168) and Greenstein (1996:241-2).

<sup>29</sup> *Job* is a poetic narrative in which the units of the plot are held together by a causal chain of events, cf. Polzin (1977:56-6). Bezuidenhout (1986:480) describes *Job* as a literary work of art.

<sup>30</sup> The affinity between books of the Old Testament exists on both literary (Berlin 1983:15, Alter 1985:12-3) and religious levels (Terrien 1978, Brueggemann 1997). Encounters with the divine during theophanies are an unifying biblical theme (Miskotte 1967:262). In the Bible narratives are linked to others so as to create larger comprehensive literary works (Bar-Efrat 1980:156).

A referential framework may be useful for the understanding of the structural components of the theophany and the way in which narrative material was strategically employed by authors.

Furthermore, this literary study is approached in terms of two methodological dimensions:

- i. The approach to theophany as a religious entity is primarily phenomenological and the description of its structure, nature and function is from the view point of this perspective. By studying the Old Testament theophany in general, a definition of it as a religious phenomenon among other revelatory phenomena can be ascertained. At the same time it may serve as a referential framework for the study of a particular theophany<sup>31</sup>.
- ii. The application of the theophanic model to the divine discourses of *Job* is text-analytical and rhetorical in nature. In this way the theophany is maintained as a referential model or framework for the structure of *Job*'s divine discourses.

A general phenomenological approach to theophany will provide an all encompassing picture of theophany in the Old Testament. Therefore, this study uses a selection of typical theophany texts which correlate in structure and narrative strategy to the theophany of *Job*. This method excludes any unnecessary complication of the issues on the table, because the selection is broad enough to isolate structural elements in these texts. The framework of the theophany may be applied to the theophany text of *Job*.

After carefully considering the so-called "theophanies" of the Old Testament, nine texts have been identified for the purpose of establishing a framework for the theophany. These texts are Genesis 3 (God is manifested to Adam, Eve and the snake), Exodus 3-4 (Moses encounters God in the burning bush), Exodus 19-34 (The theophany on Mount Sinai), Numbers 12 (Miriam, Aaron and Moses meet God in the Tent), Numbers 22-24 (The summoning and oracles of Balaam), Deuteronomy 31-32 (Moses and Joshua in the tent),

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<sup>31</sup> This approach is similar to Berlin's method, in terms of which she works from "specific manifestations towards general principles" (1983:16).



Joshua 5-6 (The commander of the heavenly armies and the fall of Jericho), Judges 6-7 (The calling of Gideon), and 1 Kings 19 (Elijah meeting God on Mount Horeb).

### 1.5 Outline and Significance.

The corpus of our study is divided into four chapters:

- i. Clarification of theophany as a religious phenomenon, thereby distinguishing it from other related phenomena in the Old Testament, such as revelation, epiphany; dreams and visions in the prophetic oracles and apocalyptic literature.
- ii. A comparative study of a selection of Old Testament theophanies to discern their structure, nature and function, thereby establishing a referential framework for the theophany.
- iii. An analysis of the divine discourses of *Job* in Hebrew in terms of the structural elements of theophany, by means of the identified referential framework.
- iv. Discussion of the implications and consequences pertaining to the validity of the model and the productivity of the analysis of the divine discourses, as well as the implications for the Old Testament exegesis and hermeneutics.

By applying a religious phenomenon (i.e. the theophany) to biblical texts, this study shows that religious phenomena might have determined the actual structure or the compositional structure of Bible passages, as in the case of *Job's* divine discourses. This study should contribute to the study of the book of *Job*, as well as to Old Testament hermeneutics in the following ways:

- i. By defining theophany as a religious phenomenon in biblical narrative, many random definitions of theophany will be put in perspective. A distinction will be made between the

theophany and other related religious phenomena such as revelation, epiphany, dreams and visions. The value of this contribution will be found in the discussion with scholars who have written on the topic.

ii. By establishing a referential framework of the different elements of theophany, texts from ten books of the Old Testament will be analysed and related, thus contributing to the study of the theology of the Old Testament.

iii. By applying the theophanic framework to the divine discourses of the book of *Job*, it is assumed that this application will contribute to the understanding of the whole book from the perspective of its central theme, i.e. the suffering of the innocent and righteous.

## CHAPTER 2

### THEOPHANY AS RELIGIOUS PHENOMENON

*“Among the hills, when you sit in the cool shade of the white poplars, sharing the peace and serenity of distant fields and meadows - then let your heart say in silence, ‘God rests in reason’. And when the storm comes, and thunder and lightning proclaim the majesty of the sky, - then let your heart say in awe, ‘God moves in passion’. And since you are a breath in God’s sphere, and a leaf in God’s forest, you too should rest in reason and move in passion” (Gibran 1979:45).*

#### 2.1 Introduction.

The aim of this chapter is to provide a descriptive definition of theophany as a religious phenomenon in the Old Testament. The findings compiled here will, in turn, provide evidence for identifying a substantial theophanic frame for the analysis of some Old Testament texts (chapter 3) and the divine discourses of *Job* (chapter 4).

#### 2.2 The Theophany Confusion.

The word “theophany” literally means “a manifestation of God”. The lexeme combines the Greek terms Θεός (“God”) and φανεία<sup>1</sup> (“manifestation / appearance”). While translating theophany is unproblematic, describing it as a religious phenomenon in the

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<sup>1</sup> Also φανεσθαι or φανηναί from the verb φαίνω - “to bring to light”, “make to appear”, “disclose” (Liddle & Scott 1974:315,750). “Theophany” is translated as *theophania* (Latin), *théophanie* (French) and *Theophanie* (German). The term was originally employed in the Greek festival of Delphi, during which the statues of Apollo and other gods were shown to the people. “Though the term is not a Hebrew one, and though divine images were not part of a Israelite ritual, ‘theophany’ and related terms - ‘epiphany’, ‘appearances’, and ‘hierophany’, ‘appearances of the sacred’ - have come to be used among scholars for descriptions of the appearances of God in the Hebrew Scriptures” (Hiebert 1992:505).

texts of the Old Testament is a difficult task<sup>2</sup>. In this process scholars contradict one another in many respects. It would seem that there are two causes for this “theophanic confusion”:

i. A terminological confusion besets the entire issue of the study of theophany.

On the one hand a large plethora of terms are used to indicate one and the same phenomenon, and on the other hand the same term is used to indicate different phenomena<sup>3</sup>.

ii. The history of study on theophany from different perspectives. Scholars tend to use and misuse the conclusions of their predecessors to suit their own arguments. This confusion resulted in wealth of theophany descriptions, while the comparative similarities of these arguments have as yet provided no satisfactory explanation<sup>4</sup>.

### 2.3. History of Study of Theophany in the Old Testament<sup>5</sup>.

Studies on theophany is as old as the Bible itself. Already in New Testament times we find reinterpretations of Old Testament theophanies, related and applied to the coming and *parousia* of Jesus Christ. In fact, writers of the New Testament channelled all interest in the theophanies of God to the divine manifestations of Christ<sup>6</sup>. This perspective greatly restricted the tradition of the Early Patristic Fathers with their apologetic methodology, in

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<sup>2</sup> Although many expositions have been done on the theophany, a careful and sustained study of relevant texts remains an exception to the rule, as “few attempts have been made to formulate lucidly a definition of theophany and to treat comprehensively its character in the light of representative examples drawn from Old Testament literature” (Kuntz 1967:24).

<sup>3</sup> Theophany is regarded as synonymous to the epiphany, apparition or self-revelation (cf. Pax 1978:224, Polak 1996:113), the dream or vision (cf. Broomall 1979, Kaiser 1979:85-6, Odendaal et al 1983:1141, Smith 1993:107-8, Landy 1999:70) or as an all embracing term to describe all modes of God’s direct impartation of his will (Cf. Kautzsch 1977:403, Mann 1977:18).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Von Rad (1989:366). Von Rad’s discussion of the Old Testament theophany as “undoubtedly the most central subject of an Old Testament aesthetic” does little to clarify the confusion.

<sup>5</sup> For other summaries on the history of study of the Old Testament theophany, cf. Kuntz (1967:24-8), Mann (1977:1-23), Terrien (1978:54-5), Beasley-Murray (1986:3-10), Van Seters (1994:254-70) and Niehaus (1995:30-1,43-80).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Fohrer (1959:1312), Pax (1978:224-5), Henry (1979:155), Smith (1993:25).

terms of which all manifestations of God in the Old Testament were interpreted in a christocentric way. The Old Testament theophanies were reduced to christophanies<sup>7</sup>. This method of interpretation of the Old Testament theophany was upheld during the Middle Ages and Reformation, and well into the 20th century by some<sup>8</sup>.

While the allegoric-dogmatic interpretations of Scripture dominated the study of the theophany until 1500AD, the rationalistic-dogmatic approach, with its dichotomy between reason and revelation brought more trouble to biblical revelation at the time of the *Aufklärung*. The first Old Testament Theology by GL Bauer (1796) rejected all revelations of God through theophanies, miracles and prophesies as being contrary to sound reason and easily paralleled among the myths of the Ancient Near East. Kant regarded the nature of the "God problem" to be unscientific, thereby doubting the existence of a supernatural realm as well as manifestations and actions of the divine in the natural realm. Also Schleiermacher (1768-1834) whose exposition of the Christian faith was based on the human experience of the divine, removed the theophany even further from its original intention in Old Testament texts<sup>9</sup>. *The Ten Theophanies* (1883) by W.M. Baker similarly constricted the Old Testament theophanies into christophanies<sup>10</sup>.

Thus, prior to Hermann Gunkel studies on the theophany seem either inadequate or bizarre. Gunkel set the agenda for the contemporary critical discussion of the Old Testament theophany. In *Schöpfung und Chaos* (1895) Gunkel derived biblical descriptions of the divine manifestation from two sources, i.e. the Sinai tradition and the Babylonian creation myth. Gunkel's *Book of Genesis* (1910) was an epoch-making

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<sup>7</sup> Tertullian described manifestations of the divine to the patriarchs as being in "actual flesh, not punitive flesh; real and solid human substance; just as Christ" (Davis 1978a:817). Justin Martyr identified the angel of the Lord with the Logos of Joh. 1:14 (Kautzsch 1977:403).

<sup>8</sup> MacDonald (1975:328), Kautzsch (1977:403).

<sup>9</sup> Cf. the criticism of Otto (1959) against Schleiermacher's dependence on human feelings and experience, as well as contemplation and intuitions as characterisations of faith in the divine.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Kuntz (1967:19-20), MacDonald (1975:328), Smith (1993:21,30-2).

commentary which took the patriarchal theophanies into account, while introducing relevant parallel Ancient Near Eastern phenomena<sup>11</sup>.

The first critic to issue an extensive treatment on the subject was Julian Morgenstern, who wrote two articles on Old Testament theophanies. The first was primarily a study on the *כבוד יהוה* (“glory of the Lord”) in the Hexateuch, which Morgenstern described as “the material form in which Jahwe was thought to reveal himself to mortal eyes [in] ... Jahwe’s earthly form or being” (1911:140). The second article offered a more general study of the theophany in the Hebrew Bible. Morgenstern (1913:53,60) sought to trace the development of the various and altogether divergent concepts of theophanies in the Bible from their crude beginnings to the lofty heights in later Old Testament texts. Lacking the insight of later form criticism, he was preoccupied with theophanies in the Pentateuch, thereby missing other important accounts and allusions<sup>12</sup>.

More recent studies on the Old Testament theophany may be summarised from the work of nine map-making scholars and their followers, who dominated the issues since 1950<sup>13</sup>. Although their definitions and conclusions on theophany overlap, these findings should be interpreted according to presuppositions regarding theophany from the approaches of the:

- i. Systematic theological school of the biblical theologians  
(Elpidius Pax, Samuel Terrien, Jeffrey Niehaus)
- ii. Salvation history school of the form- and tradition-critics  
(Jörg Jeremias, Kenneth Kuntz, Claus Westermann)
- iii. Myth-and-Ritual school of the historians of religion  
(Mircea Eliade, Frank Cross, Thomas Mann).

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. also Kuntz (1967:25) and Mann (1977:2).

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Kuntz (1967:25) and Beasley-Murray (1986:3).

<sup>13</sup> Significant studies on the Old Testament theophany since 1950 are those of Pax (1955), Eliade (1961), Westermann (1963), Jeremias (1965), Kuntz (1967), Cross (1973), Mann (1977), Terrien (1978) and Niehaus (1995). We disagree with Hunter (1987:1) that the study of Jeremias in 1965 was still the “only comprehensive study on theophany in the Old Testament”. Hunter (1987, 1989, 1998) himself has been the only scholar in Southern Africa who has done a substantial exposition of the theophany while concentrating on its literary dimension in the book of Psalms.

### 2.3.1 The Systematic Theological School.

**Elpidius Pax**, a Franciscan New Testament scholar, studied manifestations of the divine in the context of the ancient world and Old Testament, culminating in the New Testament in different types of epiphanies. Initially Pax failed to differentiate between epiphany, theophany, dream-visions and other forms of apparition (1955:20): “Unter ‘Epiphanie’ verstehen wir das plötzlich eintretende und ebenso rasch weichende Sichtbarwerden der Gottheit vor den Augen der Menschen unter gestalteten und ungestalteten Anschauungsformen, die natürlichen oder geheimnisvollen Character tragen. Sie ist ein komplexes Gebilde, das aus einer visio und auditio bzw. actio besteht”. Pax later still described the “apparition” or “epiphaneia” as the “intrusion of God into the world which is brought about unexpectedly before men’s eyes”, but from “the point of view of terminology, we read in the Old Testament of a *theophany*, in the New Testament of an *epiphany*” (1978:224).

While identifying the epiphany in Old Testament texts by verbs like *נִגְלָה*, *הִנֵּה* and *רָאָה*, Pax (1955:29ff) identified “total”, “partial”, “historical” and “eschatological” epiphanies, in which the coming of the Messiah is described in visually and visionary terms. These eschatological descriptions with the ambivalent elements of *tremendum und fascinosum*, *Heils und Unheilserwartung* of the epiphany, is not found in extra-biblical revelations (Pax 1955:145, 1978:225, cf. Crenshaw 1968:203).

The studies of Pax provide an example of the influences of the ecclesiastic movement, presuppositions of which dominated Old Testament exegesis. Theophany is regarded as a theological concept of revelation, reaching its aims in the epiphany of Jesus Christ<sup>14</sup>.

Pax’s conclusions are “marred by a method that approaches Old Testament epiphany by a series of characteristics, as well as by frequent psychologizing and reliance on contrasts

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<sup>14</sup> When searched for on the Internet a similar version of this point of view is to be seen under the categories ‘epiphany’ and ‘theophany’.

between Hebrew and Greek thought” (Mann 1977:19). A similar study to that of Pax is available in the monograph of Albrecht Scriba (1995) on the *Motivkomplexes* theophany in ancient Israelite and in early Judaistic and Christian literature. The Christian theophany is regarded as the climax which developed in these theophanic texts (1995:10). Theophany is understood in relation to eschatology and not primarily as a divine manifestation (cf. Fossum 1998:131-2). Many Old Testament texts containing theophanic elements are not discussed by Scriba.

**Samuel Terrien** wrote a biblical theology on the elusive presence of God in various settings - cultus and faith, epiphanic visitations to the patriarchs, the Sinai theophanies, the temple, the prophetic vision, the Psalms, the play of wisdom, the final Epiphany, the Word, and in the divine Name and Glory. This divine presence takes place to “inform the aesthetics of the mystical eye with the demands of the ethical ear. One cannot be divorced from the other. The mythical eye discerns the presence of God through the theological symbol of ‘glory’. The ethical ear responds to the same presence through the theological symbol of ‘name’” (1978:xxviii).

Terrien describes the divine appearances to Israel’s patriarchs as “epiphanic visitations” for a number of reasons: Greek myths portray the gods Apollo and Dionysius visibly as being “seen” by human eye, as their images were shown in public. Ancient scholars like Plutarch and Diodorus of Sicily describe these events as *epiphaneia* (visual appearances and the manifestation of divine power). The semantic etymological habits were inherited by the North-Western Semitic peoples in proto-Hebrew times, and the appearance to the patriarchs is closely related to the epiphanies first applied to the Greek deities<sup>15</sup>. Therefore, “epiphanic visitations” are more fitting than “theophany” to describe the patriarchal experiences, corresponding to the “concreteness, simplicity, and swiftness of the divine appearance” in the everyday life of people of the distant past (1978:63-8,98-9).

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<sup>15</sup> Terrien (1978:98) understands “why J. Jeremias did not include the patriarchal narratives in his study in *Theophany*, although one should add that he failed to distinguish between the genuinely theophanic form of the Sinai-Horeb type and the hymnic allusions to epiphanic intervention”.



Hebrew theophanies never portray the visual features of Yahweh as seen by man, as the Old Testament focuses more on the *hieroi logoi* (sacred words revealed) than on divine visibility. Concomitant signs of the divine presence can be noted in the outbursts of nature in earthquake, fire, cloud, whirlwind, thunder, storm and smoke. These phenomena are not present in the appearances of Genesis: "Quite clearly, these narratives do not belong to the same literary *Gattung* or *genre* as those of the Sinai-Horeb theophanies", as they form a *sui generis* type of divine manifestation (1978:69,70).

Although Terrien provides a partial development between the modes of divine presence in the Old Testament, he chooses not to distinguish between the modes of manifestation: It is not possible to ascertain in religious literature "whether a psychological mood, precisely on account of its concreteness, points to an inward emotion of a purely subjective character or to a suprasensorial perception" (1978:63). He makes the same mistake as Kuntz by identifying religious phenomena too vaguely<sup>16</sup>.

Jeffrey Niehaus described the relation between covenant and theophany in the Bible and Ancient Near East. The basis of biblical studies is self-disclosure of the divine in various ways called 'theophanies'. Using the theophany to Moses, Niehaus establishes a "Sinai theology" from which the "pre-Sinai" and "post-Sinai", as well as "Sinai-like" theophanies in both the Old and New Testaments are to be interpreted<sup>17</sup>. According to this evangelic study of the 'biblical glory theophany' (1995:12,15), and from conclusions made by Kuntz<sup>18</sup>, Niehaus concentrates on the description of a theology of self-revelation in the Old Testament. The Sinai theology identifies the "glory theophany" as the culmination of all divine self-revelation, and the relation between theophany and eschatology (1995:16):

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<sup>16</sup> "A genuinely 'biblical' theology... of presence... should neither be a theology of the Old Testament nor a theology of the New Testament" (Terrien 1978:6).

<sup>17</sup> Niehaus analyses texts from Genesis as "pre-Sinai theophanies", from Ex; Num. & Dt. as "Sinai theophanies", from Jos; Jdg; 1Ki; Isa & Ezek. as "post-Sinai theophanies", and from the Psalms and Prophets (e.g.: Ps.68, Jdg.5, Hab.3 & Dt.33) as "Sinai-like theophanies".

<sup>18</sup> Kuntz's characteristics and genre of theophany in the Old Testament is to a considerable extent adopted by Niehaus (1995:20,32).

“The Sinai theophany is taken as a touch-stone for prior and subsequent glory theophanies in the Bible because the Sinai event was constitutive in Israel’s history and crucial in salvation history. As God came to Sinai in the clouds to impart his law, so will he come again on the clouds of heaven to judge those who have broken that law. Until that day we are called to keep in step with God’s Spirit, since we live by that Spirit”.

As background to Old Testament theophanies and in the same way to Ancient Near Eastern themes, Niehaus (1995:83ff) provides four major theological themes - God as King, God’s Kingdom, Covenant(s), and Covenant Administration - thereby describing the context of the glory theophanies as being of a covenant nature. Divine appearances are interpreted as directed towards covenant administration in four ways. God appears (i) to initiate a covenant (Gen.15, Ex.3,19), (ii) to instruct, encourage, or corrects his covenant vassal (Jos.5, 1Ki.18), (iii) to commission or encourage a prophet in covenant lawsuit (1Ki.19, Isa.6, Ezek.1), (iv) to bring covenant judgement on rebellious vassals (Gen.3, Joel 2) (1995:108-9).

“All Old Testament ‘theophanies’ that are Sinaitic, yet not portray actual contemporary appearances of God, fall into three major categories: evocative recollections of the *magdalia Dei* of the Exodus and wilderness wanderings; imaginative portrayals of God’s Sinaitic judgement and salvation intrusions; and eschatological portrayals of God’s return to judge the nations and save his people.... They portray God’s contemporary action in terms evocative of the old theophanies” (Niehaus 1995:331-2). No distinction is made between the phenomena of theophany and epiphany (cf.1995:63). The various ways of divine self-manifestation are all seen as utterly real experiences, be it the modes of the theophany, the dream or the vision (1995:19-20)<sup>19</sup>. By forcing all theophanies to take place in covenant contexts, Niehaus (1995:142), like Pax and Terrien before him, concentrates more on a theology of self-revelation rather than on the theophany itself.

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. the description of the Old Testament “dream-vision theophany” in Niehaus (1995:35-8).

### 2.3.2 The Salvation History School.

Claus Westermann analysed the theophany as part of tradition-historical studies. He describes divine revelation in the Old Testament as a process, 'the coming of God', because he could find no "general, comprehensive concept of revelation to the Old Testament" (1982:25-6). God appears in order to help his people (1981:93,97). Westermann was the first to provide a fundamental distinction between the *Grundtypen der Göttererscheinung*, namely the epiphany and theophany<sup>20</sup> :

Epiphany	Theophany
1. God coming / going forth from	1. God appearing to mankind
2. Cosmic trembling and disturbances	2. To mediate / call / commission someone
3. Divine intervention for / against Israel	3. To establish a holy place of the cult

God's coming and appearance is described in both terms, but in different ways (1982:26). Epiphany emphasizes God's acting and theophany God's speaking. Theophany is an "überirdische Erscheinung", epiphany is an "Erscheinung als des Kommen Gottes, das sich nur in seinem Eingreifen in die Geschichte zeigt; in der alten Zeit einem Eingreifen, das Israel aus der Bedrängnis durch die Feinden rettet" (1974:275).

Westermann identifies the prototype of the epiphany in Israel's original experience at the Red Sea (Jdg.5:4), consisting of three features (1982:25-6,58-60,1981:98):

- i. The primary event - God's coming from or going forth from a sacred place.
- ii. The result - Accompanying cosmic trembling and disturbances as the *how* of God's coming in various ways - earlier contexts in nature, later as anticipation of the divine judgement of the cosmos, sometimes requested as intervention in the Lament Psalms.
- iii. The reason - Divine intervention for or against his people or an individual as object<sup>21</sup> .

<sup>20</sup> Westermann (1974,1977,1981,1982) identifies some verses in Ex.19; 1Ki.19; Isa.6; Ezek.1,2 as theophanies and Jdg.5; Ps.68; Dt.33, Hab.3 as epiphanies.

<sup>21</sup> Van der Woude (1985:29-30) criticises this feature: The aim of Yahweh's intervention does not form part of the description of the epiphany as it can be deduced from texts' contexts.

The theophany originated from the Sinai events (Ex.3,19-34) and has a twofold structure, as well as a twofold aim (1981:100-1):

- i. Primary aim - God appears to an individual.
- ii. Secondary aim - God appears in order to say something by means of mediation, calling or the commissioning of an individual. This aspect can be subdivided (1982:26),
  - a. as an act of speaking (cf. the Sinai theophany of Ex.19-34).
  - b. either establishing or occurring at holy places (cf. Ex.3:2 and Ex.19:10-1).

Consequently Westermann differentiates the epiphany and the theophany in four ways:

- i. Different processes - The epiphany describes God's acting in the lives of his people, the theophany relates God's speaking to that people.
- ii. Different linguistic functions - Both phenomena are portrayed linguistically distinct<sup>22</sup>.
- iii. Different traditions - The theophany and epiphany have different origins and feature differently in the Old Testament<sup>23</sup>.
- iv. Different goals - In the epiphany God emerges from some place to participate in the life of man. In the theophany God arrives at a locality to communicate with man<sup>24</sup>.

The conclusions of Westermann on the theophany have been criticised by some as artificial (cf. Hunter 1987:125), but was developed by others (Müller 1964:190-1, Vriezen 1966:190, Weiser 1996:38). Schnutenhaus (1964) followed Westermann by studying verbs describing Yahweh's advent and appearance in Old Testament texts. These descriptions depended on Israel's environment, and belong to a diversity of different

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<sup>22</sup> Westermann's literary distinction between the epiphany and theophany has been questioned by Ahlström: "the difference between theophany and epiphany seems rather to be a difference of acting than of literal forms" (in Van der Woude 1985:269, cf. Beasley-Murray 1986:4). The interpretation of Fischer (1989:116) of this as a *prinzipielle Unterscheidung* is incorrect, as Westermann (1981:99) made it on "practical grounds".

<sup>23</sup> Knierim (1995:148) cautions against this distinction: Both are visible manifestations of Yahweh, and Old Testament texts do not permit one tradition to be ignored in favour of another, "especially when the definitions of these traditions are as non-uniform as they are in the present situation".

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Westermann (1981:100-1,1982:25). Mann (1977:6) summarises Westermann's distinction as follow: "Epiphany has the purpose of divine aid in the context of historical events; theophany has as its purpose divine communication through a mediator to the cultic community. Epiphany emphasises the spatial *origin* of God's advent, theophany the *goal*; epiphany is primarily described by meteorological (storm) phenomena, theophany by volcanic phenomena. Thus such passages as Exodus 19 and Judges 5 are understood to present quite different forms of divine manifestation".

genres, settings and spheres (war, nature, Sinai, temple) and aspects (to go out, to come forth, to descend, to march, to raise oneself, to flash, to appear, to shine). The coming of God has the goal of seeking out the one who can see. "To come" and "to see" are verbs of epiphanic language, the former as an act of God, the latter from a discerning individual. Van der Woude (1985:28-9) uses Westermann's factual distinction by concluding that the epiphany cannot function as an independent literary genre, but only as a motif in the broader context of the theophany. Mann (1977:6) deems the theophany's emphasis on communication may reflect it as a more complex development of the epiphany. The two phenomena are from a single tradition with separate types of divine manifestation.

Jörg Jeremias follows a form-critical approach to biblical literature. His study on the Old Testament theophany has a two dimensional approach: The identification of a theophanic form in texts, while following its development in the Old Testament. Jeremias (1965:1-2) concentrates on descriptions in which God himself is not seen, only phenomena heralding the divine presence. In this way the divine appearances to the patriarchs, as well as texts portraying divine hypostases are excluded (cf. Mann 1977:6). The Old Testament theophany is described as a *Gattung* with its original form in Jdg.5:4-5: "... von einem Kommen Jahwes von einem bestimmten Ort und von dem Aufruhr des Natur, der bei seinem Nahen entsteht. Aus dieser Zweigliedrigen Form mit zweigliedrigem Inhalt ... lässt sich die Form aller anderen Theophanieschilderung erklären" (Jeremias 1965:15,158).

According to Jeremias (1965:50-97) this specific theophany genre consists of two parts:

- i. The coming of Yahweh from somewhere to a specific place  
(the *Ursache* which originated in the context of ancient Israel).
- ii. The tumult in nature because of God's coming  
(the *Wirkung* which was adopted from Israel's Ancient Near Eastern neighbours).

From this oldest form of theophanic depiction all others developed in the Old Testament. Whether these two parts were related to each other as the occasion of Yahweh's coming, as the consequence of nature's tumult, or as ways of expressing the same event; is not

explained by Jeremias (cf. Knierim 1995:148). Nevertheless, this definition was adopted by many scholars<sup>25</sup>.

The *Sitz im Leben* of this genre is the holy war hymns of Yahweh's *Siegeslied*, dating back to the premonarchic period (Jeremias 1965:7-9). During Israel's history and Yahweh's continuous struggle with chaos, this basic form was expanded by the addition of terms and content. Jeremias (1965:16-24,123) identifies four types of theophany texts:

- i. The Yahweh Hymn (Ps.68:9,Dt.33:2,Hab.3:3)
- ii. Prophetic preaching of judgement (Nah.1:2-6,Jer.25,Mi.1,Am.1,Isa.66)
- iii. Prophetic preaching of salvation
- iv. Prose narratives (Ezek.1,1Ki.19,Ex.19).

Although the Sinai theophany had an impact on the form of later theophanies, it could not have been the original theophany genre from which all other descriptions stemmed: Its origin stems from the Jerusalem *Festkultus*, it is of more recent origin and was only subsequently inserted into the narrative. It is therefore "unmöglich, in der Sinaitheophanie den Prototypen aller anderen Theophanieschilderungen zu sehen" (Jeremias 1965:164-5)<sup>26</sup>.

The conclusions made by Jeremias are in direct contrast to those of Westermann. What Westermann calls "epiphany", Jeremias (1965:2) identifies as "theophany". What Westermann describes as a tradition with Ex.19 as its original form, Jeremias (1965:119) prefers to think of in terms of a genre with Jdg.5 as prototype. Hanson (1973:52) identifies serious methodological flaws in Jeremias's treatment of the theophany in both biblical and Ancient Near Eastern texts: Jeremias's study seems to be an "irresistible urge to discover new genres", and in this process one element of a text (the theophany) is

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<sup>25</sup> Fohrer (1972:168), Long (1984:263), Van der Woude (1985:29-30), Beasley-Murray (1986:9), Hunter (1987:121-2, cf. 1998:258-9). Cf. Schnutenhaus (1964) for criticism against Jeremias.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Zimmerli (1978:70), Booij (1984:13), Van der Woude (1985:29). Fohrer (1972:168) questions Jeremias's view on the authenticity of the Sinai theophany according to the Zion theology. The *Sitz im Leben* of Jdg.5 is too narrow to form a basis for the Old Testament theophany. According to Crenshaw (1968:206) the Sinai theophany can be considered the basis for the accounts of other theophanies.

isolated from that textual pattern with two unfortunate results - unified compositions are fragmented and "the search for a bona fide instance of the genre results in a highly mechanical process of elimination until one is left with the one, primary example". But Judges 5 resists all attempts to excise the theophany in v.4-5 from the rest of the song. The theophany should not be separated from the other aspects of the text<sup>27</sup>.

According to Brueggemann (1997:569) we should move beyond genre to consider theophany as "a way in which Yahweh relates to Yahweh's partners" in completely original acts of sovereignty. It seems impossible to provide a theological critique on the theophany, as it is a primary theological datum itself and a premise of all that follows. Mann (1977:8-10) is frustrated by Jeremias's awkward line of argumentation - texts not willing to bend to rigorous standards of the theophanic genre are considered to have secondary accretions or deletions. The significance and relevance of Ancient Near Eastern material used as parallels have not been precisely determined. "In short, Jeremias's study is a classic case of overextended form-critical method" (1977:9).

**Kenneth Kuntz** (1967:24) notes that "one cannot engage in Old Testament study for long without encountering occasional references to passages that are described as theophanic in character, or to terminology that are explained as products of theophanic ideology or reflection". In contrast to Jeremias, Kuntz (1967:31,9) studied "theophany" in three related ways<sup>28</sup>: As *terminus technicus* for the appearance of God, as *Gattung* of the narrative theophany with its *locus classicus* in Gen.26:23-5, as well as a theology of

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<sup>27</sup> "The work of Jeremias makes one thing absolutely clear ... so long as one restricts oneself to such a partial perspective, one is still far from having gained a perspective of the Old Testament's understanding of revelation in its comprehensives" (Knierim 1995:148).

<sup>28</sup> Kuntz (1967:10-12) notes the following differences in comparing his study to that of Jeremias: While Jeremias's intention is with theophany as a genre, Kuntz has both a *Gattung* and a theology of revelation in mind. Jeremias makes more use of Ancient Near Eastern analogies. Jeremias studied more poetic texts and omitted the patriarchal manifestations, therefore identified a poetic theophany genre with its prototype in Jdg.5:4-5. Kuntz's narrative genre is identified in the patriarchal literature of Gen.26. Jeremias finds the *Sitz im Leben* of the theophany in the victory song of Yahweh's wars in the pre-monarchy period, Kuntz identified it in Israel's ongoing cult. Jeremias concentrates on the descriptions of theophany in the Old Testament, while Kuntz focuses on the actuality of divine speaking and the divine word as "basis to this theophany medium of revelation".

revelation of the God who acts through speaking and self-manifestation. Texts on theophanies at Sinai, to the patriarchs, prophets, Psalms and in the cult are utilised.

In his search for a definition of the theophany in the Old Testament, Kuntz (1967:28ff) notes the ten most dominant characteristics in theophanic depiction in texts<sup>29</sup>. The Old Testament theophany is identified as: “a temporal, partial, and intentionally allusive self-disclosure initiated by the sovereign deity at a particular place, the reality of which evokes the convulsions of nature and the fear and dread of man, and whose unfolding emphasises visual and audible aspects generally according to a recognised literary form” (Kuntz 1967:45). Israel’s theophanic genre was embedded variously into the two comprehensive categories of narrative accounts and poetic compositions. It was enmeshed with other motifs of the comprehensive sweep of God’s revelation in history, in which every theophany is merely a fraction of texts’ larger literary units (1967:26-7). As this *Gattung* was not rigid, Kuntz (1967:60) produced a possible pattern of it in Old Testament texts.

Kuntz (1967:9,12), following Wright, Terrien, as well as Rendtorff (cf. Mann 1977:21) in describing the Old Testament theophany as ‘the God who acts’, includes the dream, vision and prophetic call under the ‘how’ of the theophanic experience (1967:61,134). He offers no distinction between these religious phenomena, or between the theophany, epiphany and revelation. He knew of the distinctions made by Westermann (cf. 1967:48,214-6), but presented no argument for or against it. Because his description of the appearance of the divine has no consistent form (cf. Smith 1993:108), his study should be seen as primarily a theology of revelation, rather than a description of the Old Testament theophany<sup>30</sup>.

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<sup>29</sup> From Gen.12:6-7, 26:23-5, Ex.3:1-6, Isa.6:1-5 and Ezek.1:28-2:1. Kuntz (1967:45) characterises the Old Testament theophany as (1) appallingly real (2) initiated only by the deity himself (3) manifested as a temporary event (4) arranged so as to represent divine sovereignty and the corresponding convulsion in nature in reaction to the self-manifestation (5) designed to recount the deity’s manifestation in a fluid and intentionally allusive manner (6) limited to a partial disclosure of the deity (7) concerned with both visual and audible aspects of divine manifestation (8) related to a particular place (9) inclined to link the nearness of the deity to a response of fear and dread induced in the person attending it and (10) structured according to a definite literary pattern.

<sup>30</sup> “In short, Kuntz’s study is another that reveals the contemporary confusion surrounding terminology for theophany and form-critical methodology” (Mann 1977:21).



### 2.3.3 The Myth-and-Ritual School.

Mircea Eliade is a celebrated historian of comparative religion. His findings were built on the foundations laid by the rather infamous<sup>31</sup> religious philosopher, Rudolf Otto. In *An inquiry into the non-rational factor in the idea of the divine and its relation to the rational* (sub-title to *Das Heilige*), Otto (1959:21) characterised all religious experience as “numinous”, induced by “the revelation of an aspect of divine power”. Encounters with the divine remain largely a mystery, they can be alluded to by “ideograms” - analogies drawn from human experience that are in themselves anyway inadequate to describe the wholly other.

The dual root experience of religion is discussed by Otto (1959:29,37) as the<sup>32</sup>:

- i. *Mysterium Tremendum* - The experience of elements of awfulness and overpowering terror or wrath in the midst of the sacred, as something more than ordinary fear.
- ii. *Mysterium Fascinans* - The ineffable, transforming and liberating attraction in the divine encounter leading to analogies of love, mercy, grace, forgiveness, pity and comfort, bliss, rapture, peace, trust, perfect fullness in the meeting of the living God.

While Otto concentrates on the numinous in its rational and irrational dimensions, Eliade employs his descriptions of the holy more widely to describe all appearances in terms of sacred and profane events. Manifestation of the holy takes place when the sacred shows itself in the profane world. During this manifestation the profane becomes a vehicle of the sacred, remaining profane in nature, while becoming sacred only in so far as it embodies something other than itself (Eliade 1958:9-13). Every manifestation of the sacred takes place in historical situations (1958:2). Many ancient myths have been reinterpreted by later religious movements. In the history of religions some of these mysterious acts were elementary (the worship of nature, spirits, gods and demons), while others were of a more

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<sup>31</sup> The work of Otto in Old Testament and biblical studies has remained largely undisclosed, as “Otto’s influence can be seen in many works, often without acknowledgement” (Gowan 1994:27).

<sup>32</sup> For discussion, cf. Eliade (1961:9ff), Martin (1987:327-8) and Gowan (1994:31-5).

developed nature (the monotheistic God). These manifestations were prefigurations of the incarnation of Jesus Christ (1958:29-30).

Eliade (1958:10) clustered all manifestations of the divine under the inclusive term of "hierophanies". A hierophany is the act of manifestation of something sacred showing itself. A hierophany affects the situation of human existence in terms of:

i. Sacred space - The repetition of a hierophany in a specific area consecrates it as a chosen site of divine revelation, e.g. the sacred mountain (the centre of the world and point of junction between heaven and earth), and the sacred centre (temple, town).

Various enactments regulate the entrance to the sacred space (1958:367-75).

ii. Sacred time - Religious time coinciding with profane time, e.g. the church calendar or liturgical year (Eliade & Sullivan 1987:315).

In the history of religions three different types of hierophanies may be distinguished:

i. The kratophany as the manifestation of ambivalent power, both attracting and repelling by its brute force (e.g. the Mana).

ii. The epiphany of the Creator or sky gods manifested in meteorological phenomena, revealing their stormy presence in *maiestas* and *tremendum* (Eliade 1961:121).

iii. The theophany as the manifestation of the divine presence or the appearance of a god: "Something that does not belong to this world has manifested itself apodictically and in doing so has indicated an orientation or determined a cause of conduct" (1961:37). The Old Testament theophany relates Yahweh's personal interventions to his chosen people in history. Christianity valorised history with the incarnated God as sacred (1961:111-2).

**Frank Cross**, a historian of religion from the myth-and-ritual school, described the development of Israel's religion from an Ancient Near Eastern point of view. Early Israelite religion is regarded as a continuation of the Northwest Semitic Canaanite culture. In the epic form of Israel's religious expression the perennial and unresolved tension between the mythical and historical is characterised.

According to Cross (1973:147ff) Yahweh's manifestation as divine warrior in the earliest poetic sources of Israel, is portrayed in descriptions stemming from the Canaanite theophany of the storm god, Baal. The early Hebrew theophany has its origin in the march of the divine warrior to battle in Canaanite poetry. In Israel the mythical pattern of this Ugaritic *Gattung* was transformed into epic accounts of the Yahweh wars during the exodus and conquest, and the march from Egypt to Sinai (1973:163). The mythic pattern was never completely suppressed, as poetic descriptions of the storm theophany can be found in all of Israel's oldest hymns, cf. Ex.15, Jdg.5, Ps.68, Hab.3, etc. (1973:156ff).

By comparing Ugaritic and Hebraic texts,<sup>33</sup> Cross identifies two patterns or genres for the theophany of the Old Testament, to be observed in separate or mixed forms:

- i. The storm theophanies of Baal or the march of the divine warrior to battle, "bearing his terrible weapons, the thunderbolt and the winds. He drives his fiery cloud-chariot against his enemy. His wrath is reflected in all nature" (1973:155).
- ii. Theophanies in which El assumes the throne, or the coming of the divine warrior "from battle to his new temple on his newly-won mount" (1973:156).

The first pattern of the storm theophany did not germane to Israel, she borrowed it from Canaanite culture. In the prose epic of Exodus this traditional poetic description of the theophany is objectified and historicized (1973:86,169). The second pattern is compatible to the revelation at Sinai, which Cross (1973:163) describes as "the primary locus and normative form" of the classic theophany of Yahweh in the Old Testament.

This theophanic "patternism" of a pervasive Canaanite origin in the literature of the Old Testament, is questioned by Van Seters: "The fact that Baal has his abode on Mount Saphon, comparable to other deities, and that as storm god he also brings fertility to the land is hardly sufficient basis for Cross's reconstructed pattern" (Van Seters 1994:258).

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<sup>33</sup> Isa.34, Hab.3 and Ps.29.

**Thomas Mann** discusses the various literary motifs of divine presence and guidance in Israelite traditions as the “typology of exaltation”. After evaluating the attempts of the form-critical, the traditio-historical, as well as the history of religions approach to the Old Testament theophany, Mann (1977:16) concludes that the last provides the most fruitful ground for further research<sup>34</sup>. He proposes “a fresh study of the form and function of motifs of divine presence and guidance in ancient Near Eastern literature, followed by an attempt to delineate how this material illuminates the story of Israel’s Odyssey from the Reed Sea to the Jordan River and the Davidic empire” (1977:17).

Mann fails to distinguish between the various phenomena of divine manifestation. “Theophany”, “epiphany” and “appearances” are described as secondary terminology under the umbrella term of “divine presence”, for the “benefit of covering a wide range of phenomena without forcing them into rigid categories” (1977:18). Motifs of divine presence in the Old Testament provide a multicoloured picture of divine messengers, thunderstorms, fiery theophanies and silent evidence of the providence. The theophany is defined as a topos of the exaltation of God. Firstly, the typology of exaltation is discussed in Ancient Near Eastern contexts, especially the historical roots of the vanguard motif, which portrays the gods as involved in battles resulting in the political supremacy of human rulers. Secondly, parallels to this motif in the exaltation texts of the Old Testament are provided as evidence of the theophany as a type of divine exaltation, by means of “closely related literary images and an underlying conceptual framework” (1977:234-7).

The book of Exodus portrays motifs of divine presence in six different ways in:

- i. Literary contexts now detached from their particular historical background.
- ii. Folklore narratives in connection with an individual’s journey.
- iii. Archaic poetry relating to major battles.

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<sup>34</sup> The study of Mann is similar to that of Cross - he follows Cross in an early dating of many of the sources and sees the Davidic-Solomonic era as the appropriate political context for such a typology of exaltation in Israel (cf. Van Seters 1994:260).

- iv. Contexts reflecting a merging of both cultic and historical traditions.
- v. Connection with the vicissitudes of political power in Canaan.
- vi. The consecration of the cultic establishment of Israel (1977:233).

According to Niehaus (1995:75-6) Mann's usage of the Documentary Hypothesis burdens his discussion, as he employs the methods of source attribution "with a remarkable misuse of Ancient Near Eastern evidence". A simultaneous strength and weakness of Mann's work is his "focus on 'exaltation typology' as a paradigm for understanding Old Testament theophanies. Although it is relevant to a number of Old Testament passages, it fails to take into account many significant instances. This is because the typology is usually rooted in battles". Van Seters finds that Mann's limitation of the use of the vanguard motif to periods of dramatic political development hardly fits the evidence. The typology of exaltation cannot be limited in the Old Testament to early texts of the Davidic-Salomonic age. Many Mesopotamian hymns and prayers closest in form and content to the Israelite hymn traditions, are not included. Finally, in the theophany of Ex. 19-20 the vanguard motif is entirely lacking, and Mann must force the theme of the exaltation of Moses in order to make any connection with this text (Van Seters 1994:260-2).

#### **2.4. Development of the Phenomena of Divine Manifestation in the Old Testament.**

For more than a century the development of the divine manifestation in the Pentateuch and Old Testament has been explained according to the Documentary Hypothesis. This hypothesis is described in terms of its sources / redactors: The Yahwist (J), Elohist (E), Deuteronomist (D) and the Priestly (P). The following table is a summary of the general opinion concerning the elements by which the sources of the Documentary Hypothesis can be differentiated from one another<sup>35</sup>:

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. Morgenstern (1911,1913), Cassuto (1961), Anderson (1962:422-3), Eichrodt (1967:15-45), Kuntz (1967:108-115), Long (1972:496-7), Sitarz (1987:30), Hill & Walton (1990:78-80), Brueggemann (1997:670-3).

J	E	D	P
Setting: 9th century BC Judean author Epic style	Setting: 8th century BC Northern Israel Prophetic influences	Setting: 6th century BC Southern Israel Former Prophets	Setting: 5th century BC Judah Post-exilic priests
Divine name: Yahweh	Divine name: Elohim	Divine name: Yahweh	Divine name: Elohim
Manifestation: Antropomorphisms God walks / talks	Manifestation: Angel of Elohim Dream / Vision	Manifestation: Name Proclamation	Manifestation: Glory Shekinah
Cultic setting: Sinai	Cultic setting: Horeb	Cultic setting: Horeb / Jerusalem	Cultic setting: Sinai / Jerusalem

While constantly keeping the findings of the Documentary Hypothesis in mind, we will now proceed to define the nature and character of the theophany by comparing it to other religious phenomena from texts of the Old Testament. In this way the unique attributes and qualities of the theophany will be emphasised, which in turn will be used to enhance the identification of theophanies in some Old Testament texts. Only when a true description of the Old Testament theophany can be given, will we be able to identify theophanies from which to discern a structure that can be applied to the theophany in *Job*.

*Das Gottesverständnis* is the central theme of the Old Testament (Jeremias 1965:1), as the core testimony of Israel concerning what she has heard, seen and received from Yahweh (Brueggemann 1997:144). "Revelation is what God has revealed, the revelation is what is revealed" (Westermann 1982:25). Revelation in the Hebrew mind was known as a

process (phenomenon), and not as systematic terms (concepts)<sup>36</sup>. The aim is to identify the differences between the Old Testament phenomena of the divine self-manifestation which were developed in Israel's history<sup>37</sup>. For the sake of a scientific description of the theophany, it is necessary to differentiate it from other phenomena. A distinction between the various religious phenomena of manifestation can be found in three texts from different periods of the Old Testament:

#### **Numbers 12:6-8**

“And he said, “Hear my words: If there is a prophet among you, I the Lord make myself known to him in a vision, I speak with him in a dream. Not so with my servant Moses; he is entrusted with all my house. With him I speak mouth to mouth, clearly, and not in dark speech; and he beholds the form of the Lord. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?” (RSV).

#### **1 Samuel 28:6**

“And when Saul inquired of the Lord, the Lord did not answer him, either by dreams, or by Urim, or by prophets” (RSV).

#### **Joel 2:28-9 [Heb. 3:1-2]**

“And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even upon the menservants and maidservants in those days, I will pour out my spirit” (RSV).

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<sup>36</sup> One “cannot apply a general, comprehensive concept of revelation to the Old Testament” (Westermann 1982:26). For the Hebrew verbs and terminology of the divine manifestation in the Old Testament, cf. Smith (1993:94-9) and Mann (1977:252-61).

<sup>37</sup> For a distinction between the modes of divine manifestation, cf. Knight (1977:146), Lemke (1982:38), Hiebert (1992:505), Knierim (1995:148). The conclusions made by these scholars contradict popular opinion, which finds no distinction between the ways of divine self-revelation.

These texts date from the times of Moses (Numbers 12), the Monarchy (1 Samuel 28), and the Exile (Joel 2). A tabulated version of the different phenomena of divine manifestation shows a distinct pattern of the development of the phenomena:

Mosaic times	The Monarchy	The Exilic period
<p><i>... With [Moses] will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches</i></p>	<p><i>If there be a prophet among you, [I] the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, [and] will speak unto him in a dream., ..., in dark speeches.</i></p> <p><i>... when Saul enquired of the Lord, ..., by dreams, ... by Urim, ... by prophets</i></p>	<p><i>I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.</i></p>
<p>Direct communication (Theophany)</p>	<p>Indirect speech (Dreams &amp; Visions)</p>	<p>Indwelling Spirit of God (Prophetic inspiration)</p>

Num. 12 refers to the unique position of Moses before God, similar to Ex. 33. The role of Moses as mediator between the people and the divine was subsequently aligned to the function of the prophets in the *Successio Mosaica* (cf. Dt. 18:15-2, 34:10)<sup>38</sup>. But prior to the theological development of God's self-revelation<sup>39</sup>, Num. 12 identifies different phenomena: Firstly, the unique significance of Moses as direct ("mouth to mouth")

<sup>38</sup> Dt. 18 is the locus classicus for prophetic succession in Israel. Moses became the model for future prophets who were legitimated by their identification with this authentic prophet of Yahweh (Carroll 1969:400-2). Studies on the so-called Old Testament "call narratives" do not always take this theological development into account.

<sup>39</sup> "Self-manifestation" is not to be confused with the concept of "revelation". During the *revelatio specialis* (Weber 1981:179, Bavinck 1956:63) God reveals something of himself, more than the revelation of words. For discussions on revelation, cf. Rowley (1961:24-47), Fohrer (1972:168-9), Eicher (1977), Knight (1977:143-80), Pannenberg (1977:50-67), Henry (1979:80), Lemke (1982), Childs (1985:20-6), Smith (1993:107-116), Jeanrond (1998).



recipient of the divine word during theophanies. God meets Moses "face to face" in Ex.33:18-23 where he beholds the divine form. Secondly, the vision and dream are characterised as "dark speeches" or indirect ways of communication between God and prophets. The claims of Miriam (already called a prophetess in Ex.15:20) and Aaron are in sharp contrast to that of Moses (Noth 1980:93-6). In verses 6-8 the description of these different ways of divine communication is conveyed. As Yahweh's confidant, Moses is much more than an ecstatic prophet.

Phenomenologically, the difference between these means of manifestation is obvious<sup>40</sup>: The theophany, with its uniquely outward form of manifestation as an actual appearance<sup>41</sup>, has a different nature than the dream and the vision. During theophanic events the immediate presence of Yahweh is experienced as an awesome and physical form. Theophanies are utterly real and concrete manifestations or appearances of the divine<sup>42</sup>, while the presence of God in dreams and visions are more abstract and symbolic in nature<sup>43</sup>. Dreams only take place when somebody is asleep and is therefore a passive recipient during the divine encounter<sup>44</sup>. During visions the divine is indirectly revealed from a symbolic perspective to the recipient.

According to Westermann (1982:25) God's intervention in the life of his people (theophany and epiphany) should be distinguished "from God's speaking to an individual where nothing is said of an appearance of any sort" (dreams and visions). This is in

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<sup>40</sup> Cf. Pfeiffer (1965:103), Ostler (1986:88), Smith (1993:108).

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Vriezen (1966:243-6), Davis (1978a:816), Brueggemann (1997:596-70). Polak (1996:113) reserves 'theophany' as term for "that encounter between the human and the divine which implies some kind of concrete, outside perception. The divine address of a human agent as such is not considered theophanic, since it is related to the 'inner light'" (cf. Jer.1:9 & Ex.6:1-9).

<sup>42</sup> Lindblom (1961:106) and Fohrer (1972:107) saw theophanies as hallucinatory experiences, but Kuntz (1967:32) identified them nevertheless as utterly real. Theophanies are more concrete and real than just the psychological experience of it. They should be seen as historical events.

<sup>43</sup> The definition of the theophany as a "Godsverskyning in gesig en visioen" (Odendaal et al 1983:1141) is not phenomenological in order. Neither is the definition of Good (1990:435) of it as "a technical term for any perceptible appearance of a god to humans"; nor the identification given by Gnuse (1982:386-8, 1998:461) of the "dream theophany".

<sup>44</sup> The statement of Payne (1962:45) that dreams as a form of revelation is suitable only for the immature and heathen is partial correct, but cf. Gen.15:12 (Abraham) and 1Ki.3 (Salomon).

contrast to Pannenberg's revelation through history and Fohrer's revelation through the word<sup>45</sup>. Lekkerkerker (1956:691) is correct in placing the theophany historically prior to the vision and dream. In the following pages the development of the manifestation of the divine is described according to three phases in the Old Testament.

#### 2.4.1 Epiphany as Religious Phenomenon in Biblical Literature.

The epiphany is the oldest phenomenon of the divine manifestation. It continued to play a substantial role during the times of Israel's patriarchs, the exodus from Egypt and settlement in the holy land, the period of the kings, as well as during the exile.

Subsequently it was reinterpreted by the prophets in apocalyptic events. Elements of the epiphany are also found in the New Testament and in the ecclesiastical year of most Christian churches<sup>46</sup>.

Because the epiphany and theophany use the same elements and structures, some scholars choose to disregard their differences<sup>47</sup>. Yet, it is necessary to distinguish between them from a phenomenological point of view. For an initial distinction it seems logical to refer to those made by three of the scholars previously noted<sup>48</sup>.

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<sup>45</sup> Pannenberg (1977:52-7) rejects God's direct self-revelation in theophanies, in favour of an indirect self-demonstration of the divine by means of historical acts. Fohrer (1972:168) divides theophany into two forms (mythico-anthropomorphic manifestations and appearances in dreams) and concludes that theophanies are nothing but forms of visions during the waking state.

<sup>46</sup> The use of epiphany as a modernist term (i.e. the adaptation of the religious term for literary purposes as an important 20th century device, cf. Gillespie 1986) is not part of this study.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Pax (1955:20-1), Jeremias (1965:2), Kingsbury (1967), Fohrer (1972:270), Kuntz (1967), Eicher (1977:33-4), Wolff (1977:34), Kaiser (1979:85), Hofmann (1981), Schmidt (1983:163-6), Snijders (1985), Allen (1987:74), Beasley-Murray (1986), Hunter (1987:125), Schmidt (1987:507), Schökel (1988:132-3), Niehaus (1995), Polak (1996:113), Brueggemann (1997:568ff), Propp (1999:198).

<sup>48</sup> An interpretation of the distinctions made by Westermann, Eliade and Cross. Distinctions made by Terrien do not agree with the conclusions of these three scholars.

Epiphany	Theophany
Eliade: Manifestation of divine power	Eliade: Manifestation of divine presence
Westermann: 1. God coming / going forth from 2. Cosmic trembling and disturbances 3. Divine intervention for / against Israel	Westermann: 1. God appearing to mankind 2. To mediate / call / commission someone 3. To establish a holy place of the cult
Cross: March of the Divine Warrior to battle, bearing his terrible weapons of wrath.	Cross: Coming of the Divine Warrior from battle to his new temple on his newly-won mount.

Both the epiphany and theophany exist alongside each other in many Old Testament texts, as shown in the next chapter. However, in the oldest poetical texts - Jdg.5, Ps.68, Hab.3, Dt.33<sup>49</sup> and Ex.15 - the epiphany is not accompanied by a theophany. The theophany is therefore to be regarded as a later development of the epiphany. Biblical authors often choose to keep on using the epiphany, without adding the development of the theophany to their descriptions (cf. the later prophets).

The word Ἐπιφάνεια literally means “an appearance / manifestation”; while Θεοφάνεια is “the manifestation / appearance of God”. Deist (1984:54,72) describes the epiphany as a “bodily manifestation of a deity” and theophany as the “manifestation or appearance of God to a human being”. Note the spatial distinction: Epiphany is a much broader term as theophany, as the divine itself is not necessarily present in the religious event<sup>50</sup>. This we find in many Psalms in artful and dramatic allusions to the manifestation of the divine power, as a metaphorical description in the cult of Ancient Israel<sup>51</sup>. The Old Testament’s

<sup>49</sup> These four is the “classic epiphany texts”, frequently grouped together (Mann 1977:18).

<sup>50</sup> Fohrer (1959:1310-1) distinguishes between *Erscheinung* (epiphany) and *Gotteserscheinung* (theophany). Cf. Liddle & Scott (1974:264), Long (1984:263), Letellier (1995:89).

<sup>51</sup> These psalms developed from the narrative genre of epiphany (cf. Kuntz 1967:171, 214), which is reapplied as literary-theological devices - not as concrete and realistic depiction of the divine but as metaphors demonstrating divine power in every aspect of life. “A theophany is not present, but language usually associated with his appearances, is used” (Hunter 1987:121-2, cf. 1998:255-6).

epiphany is derived from an Ancient Near Eastern background<sup>52</sup>. The main difference, however, is that Ancient Near Eastern epiphanies have a cosmic-mythical background, while Old Testament epiphanies are of a historical nature. The prophetic literature also makes use of this metamorphoses of the epiphany<sup>53</sup>: The oldest epiphanies happened in the distant past, but in the Psalter God comes in the present, while the prophets looked forward to eschatologic-apocalyptic appearances of the divine in the future on the day of Yahweh, with the concept of a holy war in mind<sup>54</sup>.

New Testament writings also portray a radical transformation of the Hebrew epiphany and theophany, which are reapplied to the first and second comings of Jesus Christ<sup>55</sup>.

Westermann (1974:275-7) identifies elements of both in Lk.2:1-20. However, the incarnation of Christ should not be seen as neither an epiphany nor a theophany, but rather as the *sui generis* climax of the divine self-manifestation<sup>56</sup>. The Logos of Joh.1:1-14 engendered a new mode of communion between God and man<sup>57</sup>. The risen Christ still communicates with believers via his Word and Spirit<sup>58</sup>. The New Israel waits in anticipation for the final epiphany to take place with the *parousia* of the Lord. The celebration of this return of the Lord Jesus Christ is variously called The Epiphany (in the western Latin churches) or The Theophany (in the eastern Greek churches)<sup>59</sup>. This is a

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<sup>52</sup> Opinions differ whether this influences are from Mesopotamian, Sumerian, Assyro-Babylonian, Egyptian, Hittite or Canaanite texts (cf. Jeremias 1965:88-90, Westermann 1981:93, Cross 1974).

<sup>53</sup> Fohrer (1972:270, Eicher (1977:26,33-4), Pannenberg (1977:55), Wolff (1977:34), Hofmann (1981:42-4), Westermann (1981:96-8, 1982:59-60), Schmidt (1983:165), Laubscher (1994).

<sup>54</sup> Hill & Walton (1990:313), Brueggemann (1997:643). Cf. Zec.9-14, Isa.24-7,59,63, Dan.7-12.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Davis (1978a:817), Terrien (1978:5-6), Suter (1985:1063).

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Otto (1959:186), Davies (1962:620), Pfeiffer (1965:103, Miller & Miller (1973:752), Pannenberg (1977:53,57), Henry (1979:11), Pax (1978:224), Huey (1980:28), Niehaus (1995:334, 354). The systematic-theological distinction of Pax (1955:20-1,171ff) between manifestations in the Old Testament as theophanies and in the New Testament as epiphanies is not acceptable.

<sup>57</sup> John's theology "virtually eliminates the *tremendum* from Jesus' presence on earth" (Gowan 1994:48). This statement does not take Joh.18:4-6 into account. Pax (1978:226-7) correctly views the whole earthly life of Christ in John's theology as one broad *theophania* (cf. Terrien 1978:421).

<sup>58</sup> In contrast to the early Church Fathers who viewed the manifestation of the angel of Yahweh / God in the Old Testament as "Christophanies" (cf. MacDonald 1975:334-5), Terrien (1978:428-34) introduced a new literary expression of the "Christophany" as the manifestation of the risen Christ to people in the New Testament, cf. Mt.28, Mk.16, Lk.24, Joh.20-1 and Acts 1,9.

<sup>59</sup> "The ancient Hebrews anticipated the *Day of Yahweh*. The early Christians celebrated the *Day of the Lord*" (Terrien 1978:xxviii).

liturgical reinterpretation of these phenomena: Since the fourth century the Feast of Τα Επιφάνια became a recollection of the manifestation of Christ in divine acts and wonders<sup>60</sup>: The east accentuates the baptism of Christ (with rituals of water), the west emphasizes Jesus' nativity (with rituals of light). Many motifs of the Old Testament's epiphany and theophany were used as basis for this early Christian festival. The original meaning of the επιφανεια and θεοφανια is today blurred in favour of such definitions.

It is therefore possible and necessary to distinguish between the epiphany and the theophany: Epiphany is the manifestation of divine power, theophany is the manifestation of divine presence. The purpose of epiphany is the saving or punishing of human beings, theophany is directed towards communication between the divine and mankind. While the recipient of an epiphany *experiences* divine power, those of the theophany *see* the divine appearance. Theophany is a later development from the epiphany and contains elements of the epiphany; while the epiphany excludes elements of the theophany.

#### 2.4.2 Different Types of Theophanies in Texts of the Old Testament.

When the theophany originated from the epiphany, its primary purpose was the appearance of the deity in order to communicate with mankind. As time went by, the manifestation of the divine for this purpose was theologically reworked by biblical authors. The result of this process was that the way in which the theophany took place, was gradually changed, as the divine distanced itself from the earthly realm, leading to the development of four types of theophanies during the history of the Old Testament<sup>61</sup>, i.e. (i) anthropomorphic theophanies, (ii) the theophany of the angel of Yahweh / Elohim (iii) storm theophanies and (iv) the cultic glory theophanies.

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<sup>60</sup> Bertholet & Von Camphausen (1970:132), Smalley (1978:346), Kollar (1979:1219).

<sup>61</sup> For discussion on the development of the theophany in the Old Testament, cf. Davies (1962:619), Vriezen (1966:246), Eichrodt (1967:15-45), Gehman (1970:939), Jeremias (1976:896-8), Davis (1978a:817), Dillon (1979:3505), Schmidt (1983:38), Hiebert (1992:508ff), Smith (1993:317-20), De Moor (1997:370-6), Brueggemann (1997:570-2), Propp (1999:222).

### **i. Anthropomorphic theophanies.**

The earliest theophanies are found in the book of Genesis. In these theophanies to the patriarchs, God is portrayed in a manifestation in the figure of a man. The divine appears as a human being to interact with mankind in daily events free from embarrassment - God visits, dines, speaks, travels, even wrestles with the forefathers of Israel<sup>62</sup>. These narrative encounters provide God with "human habits and almost human shape" (Sands 1975:46). In the appearance of the deity in human form, the Hebrew for "form" and "appearing" is correlative. God chose to let himself be seen in the form of a man. The encounters are of a personal, transient, temporary and concrete character: "God and man do not linger in a hypothetical spiritual embrace" (Kuntz 1967:105). They took place at specific localities, which were identified by the previous Canaanite inhabitants of the land as cultic sites.

Only the encounters where God chose to reveal himself to mankind in the form of a man are seen as real anthropomorphic theophanies<sup>63</sup>. This limits anthropomorphic theophanies to two events which took place when God visited Abraham in the guise of three men at Mamre (Gen. 18-9<sup>64</sup>), and when the divine wrestled as a man with Jacob at the Jabbok ford (Gen. 32<sup>65</sup>). These two anthropomorphic theophanies are the only instances thereof in the Old Testament. Evidence from Genesis testifies that even then a more obscure manifestation of the divine was promoted by biblical authors, who obviously sought ways to dissociate themselves from their Ancient Near Eastern neighbours. In contrast to these polytheistic cultures, the Israelites had no theriomorphic images of Yahweh<sup>66</sup>, while they

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<sup>62</sup> Cf. Barr (1960), Payne (1962:45), Gehman (1970:939), Knight (1977:156-7), Davis (1978a:817), Martens (1981:33), Letellier (1995:90). The distinction of Hill & Walton (1990:100-1) between "Yahweh" and "El Shadday" theophanies in Genesis are not followed. There is but little reason to accept Fohrer's description of these theophanies as "mythico-anthropomorphic appearances" (1972:168). Jeremias (1965) and Weiser (1950:515) choose to disregard the patriarchal theophanies, but cf. Kuntz (1967:108).

<sup>63</sup> Smith (1993:107-8), cf. the approach of Schökel (1988:128-33) to "anthropomorphism". Only 2 of the 18 theophanies identified by Kuntz (1967:105) in Genesis qualify as being anthropomorphic.

<sup>64</sup> The men visiting Abraham were used by early Christian writers as evidence for the Trinity in the Old Testament. This interpretation is rejected by recent scholarship (White 1999:301).

<sup>65</sup> Gunkel (1987:83-5) interprets Gen. 32:23-32 as a rewritten ancient goblin folktale of an unknown river demon. There is no reason to relate this text to Ancient Near Eastern folktale.

<sup>66</sup> Wright (1962:25), Anderson (1962:423), Eichrodt (1967:15-23), Huey (1980:28).

gradually moved away from similar anthropomorphic depictions of Yahweh<sup>67</sup>. The personal relation between the deity and the believer of the Yahwistic faith became unique in the Ancient Near East. In later Old Testament texts there is a marked preference to send a messenger in the place of Yahweh (Meier 1995:97). It is to this second type that we now turn our attention.

## ii. Theophanies of the Angel of Yahweh / Elohim.

The angel of Yahweh / Elohim is an advanced form of the theological development of the theophany in Ancient Israel<sup>68</sup>. The angel as manifestation of the divine had a twofold purpose - to combat primitive divine anthropomorphism of Israel's neighbours, and to sustain an ambiguity between the deity's identity and mystery (Letellier 1995:91). The stage was set for a tension between divine presence and absence, between the *deus revelatus* and the *deus absconditus*. Because of God's holiness "humans cannot speak with the transcendent God and God will not deign to speak directly with humans" (White 1999:303-4). An intermediary was identified in the angel.

The relation between Yahweh / Elohim and the angel is problematic. Michl (1978:21) summarised the different opinions in four categories<sup>69</sup>:

- a. The Logos-theory: The angel seen as revelation of the Logos in Christophanies<sup>70</sup>.
- b. The Representation-theory: The angel as representation, acting on divine authority<sup>71</sup>.
- c. The Interpolation-theory: The angel as a later inclusion in older appearances of God<sup>72</sup>.
- d. The Identity-theory: The angel is the visible manifestation of the invisible God<sup>73</sup>.

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<sup>67</sup> Human-like appearances of the divine are also found in later biblical texts (Barr 1960:36-7), cf. the visions of Ezek. 40-8 and Dan. 7:13. These texts are reinterpreted in the New Testament as anticipation of the supreme anthropomorphism, wherein God reveals himself in the actual form of a human being (Joh. 1 & Phil. 2) (Anderson 1962:424).

<sup>68</sup> Cf. Meier (1995:106-7). The angel appears 69 times in the Old Testament (Hamilton 1990:450-1). Jeremias (1965:2) does not see the angel as a theophany, but Kuntz (1967:129) does.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. also Grossouw (1968:394), MacDonald (1975:325-8), Meier (1995:105), White (1999:304).

<sup>70</sup> Origenes and the early Christian writers, also Grosheide et al (1929:418), Payne (1962:167), Tenney (1967:847), Miskotte (1967:131-2), Henry (1979:157), Broomall (1979).

<sup>71</sup> Hieronymus, Augustine, also Fohrer (1959:1310), Davis (1978b:37), Kaiser (1979:85), Huey (1980:27), Gray (1986:242-3), Hamilton (1990:450-1).

<sup>72</sup> Kuntz (1967:130), Gunkel (1987:90-4).

How should these theories on the relation between Yahweh / Elohim and the angel be evaluated? To view the angel as a Christophany is no longer acceptable. Old Testament literature does not testify to a divine plurality, it definitely emphasizes the unity of God. New Testament literature, like Heb. 1-2, rejects this “superangel view” of Jesus Christ. The representation-theory is inconsistent in Old Testament narratives where the angel “stands in” for God. The interpolation-theory has also lost ground - it neither explains why the angel was not added in other passages where Yahweh appears, nor provides evidence to regard celestial beings as a later biblical concept<sup>74</sup>.

From a phenomenological perspective, the unity between God and the angel of Yahweh / Elohim is stressed. The angel is a visible manifestation of the divine in specific situations, as a sign of the presence of God and a “direct entry of Yahweh into the field of human vision, and to make divine speech in the first person audible (Eichrodt 1967:24,28). In this type of theophany, the angel is the temporary visible revelation of Yahweh, either as a synecdoche (Polak 1996:118-9, Niehaus 1995:191) or an euphemism emphasizing God’s transcendence and immanence (White 1999:305). The angel functions as a literary device in the sense that it creates tension in the narrative, while simultaneously concentrating on distance and intimacy with the divine in the manifestation of Yahweh / Elohim.

### **iii. The storm theophanies of the Old Testament.**

Divine manifestations in storm imagery is a third type of theophany, emphasizing divine majesty and holiness as a threat to man’s ordinary world (cf. Propp 1999:222). These descriptions are less Israelitic in origin, in view of the fact that divine appearances in natural phenomena are also found in many Ancient Near Eastern cultures; in scenes of the gods of fertility and weather (Sumerian Ishtar, Hittite Teshub, Babilonian Marduk, Canaanite Baal-Hadad) appearing in storms, clouds, lightning, thunder, rain, fire and

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<sup>73</sup> Anderson (1962:422), Habel (1965:298), Van Imschoot (1968:1737), Cundall & Morris (1974:104), Von Rad (1989:287), Niehaus (1995:236), Propp (1999:198).

<sup>74</sup> Cf. MacDonald (1975), Michl (1978:21), White (1999:304). After the period of Israel’s monarchy the close relationship between God and his angel disappears. Later on in the Bible we read of many other divine intermediaries (Eichrodt 1967:25).



earthquakes<sup>75</sup>. While these ancient Near Eastern myths of manifestation happened in a recurrent and predictable cycle according to the change of nature's seasons in Palestine, Old Testament literature applied storm theophanies to specific events. These descriptions "do not depend on a feeling for a universal presence of God in nature" (Schmidt 1983:166). Never is Yahweh identified with nature. The phenomena are seen as consequences of the presence of God. Both Israel and her neighbours could easily relate to the natural upheaval of nature in the climate of Palestine (Eaton 1964:160-1): The experience of the dry, warm *sirocco* storm from the southern or eastern deserts, as well as the imagery of westerly storms bringing rain, destruction, disease and devastation were common knowledge (cf. Hab.3).

The first storm theophany in the Old Testament is described in Gen.3:8-24, after man and his wife disobeyed Yahweh. Niehaus (1995:150-5) calls this type the "judgement theophanies", following in the wake of the manifestation of God's Spirit in Gen.1:2. According to Niehaus the storm theophany brought a drastic change of dreadful fear which became the standard form of theophany, until the reappearance of the Holy Spirit during Pentecost took place under the new covenant (cf. Acts 2)<sup>76</sup>.

#### iv. Glory theophanies of Yahweh in the cult.

A fourth type of the theophany developed in the descendance of the glory of Yahweh in Israel's cultic sphere. It is significant to notice that the כְּבוֹד of Yahweh is predominantly recorded in texts of the Old Testament which are ascribed to the Priestly redactor or source. This glory of the divine served as a visible representation of God, which could only be experienced by believers in a cultic sphere. It represents a final stage in the development of the theophany, a way of coping with the manifestation of the divine which no longer happened only to select and isolate people in the past, but also to large numbers

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<sup>75</sup> By comparing Ancient Near Eastern deities we do not agree with Morgenstern (1913:25) that Yahweh was originally a storm-god. Cf. also Schmidt (1983:64) and Von Rad (1989:240-1).

<sup>76</sup> Niehaus (1995) describes the development of the Old Testament theophany from an eschatologic-covenantal perspective as the "glory" theophanies in the form of the Spirit, the storm, the divine glory and the Holy Spirit of the Old and New Testaments.

of people in present and repeated situations (Barr 1960:34). Meteorological connections of the storm theophany were gradually abandoned for a more permanent and lasting form of manifestation of Yahweh's glory in a cultic context<sup>77</sup>.

Exodus.33 portrays an advanced stage in the development of theophanies, legitimizing the framework of the cultic festival. This tabernacle presence of God included all the terms associated with the theophany - the מַלְאָךְ (messenger), the פָּנִים (face), the קְבוֹד (glory), and the שֵׁם (name) of Yahweh. The glory theophany was reworked during Israel's cultic history: The קְבוֹד which led Israel through the wilderness in the form of the pillar of cloud and fire, later descended onto Sinai. It was then perpetuated in the tent of meeting and the tabernacle, on the ark in the temple of Solomon, as well as into the Rabbinical *Shekinah* (cf. Ex.19-34)<sup>78</sup>. These cultic places and objects were not the dwelling spaces of Yahweh on earth, but merely the rendezvous between the heavenly God and earthly man<sup>79</sup>. The ark, originally a symbol of divine presence in holy war, provided a link of three centuries standing between Moses and the temple of Solomon. It was seen as the throne of Yahweh. The tent of meeting was the venue where Moses consulted God. The tabernacle was a sign of the divine dwelling together with his people.

The glory theophanies became a sign of the divine presence in two ways: Firstly, it manifested God's presence in a more personal, abiding and visible form than in the storm theophanies. Yahweh's glory was even transferred onto the face of Moses (Ex.34). Secondly, it limited and concealed divine transcendence in a spiritualization of the theophany. Eichrodt (1967:23-45) shows how the other terms in Ex.33 were also employed as means to sublimate Yahweh's theophany: The פָּנִים, once used as a concrete form of the face of God in popular tales of ancient Israel (cf. Gen.32:30, Jdg.6:22) became the metaphorical seeing of Yahweh's face in an endurable and safe way, closely associated

<sup>77</sup> Jeremias (1976:897), Von Rad (1989:240-1), Letellier (1995:89).

<sup>78</sup> Cf. Miller & Miller (1973:752), Eichrodt (1967:31,34), Davis (1978a:817).

<sup>79</sup> Cf. Terrien (1978:162-3,176), Von Rad (1989:236-7), Niehaus (1995:118,200-2).

with the ark. The  $\square\psi$  of God became a sign of divine freedom and sovereignty (cf. 1Ki.8:27-9). The  $\square\text{בֹּרֵךְ}$  sought to mitigate the perception of God into a mere symbol of divine presence (Letellier 1995:91), providing a link between theophany and vision (cf. Isa.6, Ezek.1).

### 2.4.3 Dreams and Visions as Phenomena of the Divine Manifestation.

Dreams and visions are regarded as a later form of divine manifestation, which developed into distinct phenomena. A dream does not amount to a theophany, but it is not always possible to distinguish between vision and theophany (Davies 1962:619). The main distinction between the phenomena of theophany, dream and vision may be found in the increased distance between the divine and mankind<sup>80</sup>. With the wane of theophany, God continued to address his people through celestial beings in dreams and visions. The *Tendenz zur Vergeistigung* in the theophany of 1Ki.19 is seen by some scholars as a transformation from the theophany to the prophetic vision in Israel during the 9th century<sup>81</sup>. Elijah, according to this interpretation, failed to see God, but only heard the divine voice: He became the forerunner of Amos, as this event ends “the obsolescence of the theophanic mode of revelation and opens the age of prophetic vision” (Terrien 1978:56). During the crucial conflict between Yahweh and Baal, the theophany was replaced by the visions of the prophets, and it returned to popularity only in theophanic elements contained in apocalyptic literature during post-exilic times, when biblical authors were influenced by the religions of Babylon and Persia<sup>82</sup>. Yahwistic faith became increasingly universal, and Yahweh concealed in transcendence. Now divine manifestation

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<sup>80</sup> “Revealing implies concealing; the more the narrator reduces the gap between the human and the divine, the more he has to emphasise the distance” (Polak 1996:120-1). Replacements were sought, as post-biblical Judaism taught that theophanies had ceased (Miller & Miller 1973:752).

<sup>81</sup> Weiser (1950:514), Eichrodt (1967:15-23), Cross (1973:169-70,190-4), Jeremias (1976:896-7).

<sup>82</sup> The Old Testament apocalypse’s origin is much debated as prophecy (Fohrer 1972:339, Clements 1978:84-6, Allen 1987:74, Hanson 1989:5, De Vries 1995:108-9); wisdom (Crenshaw 1967, Von Rad 1993:301-8), prophetic-sapiential combinations (Cross 1973:344-5, Hill & Walton 1990:312, Russell 1994:31; or as Persian-Iranian-Babylonian prototypes (VanderKam 1986:163, Beasley-Murray 1986:39, Collins 1991:31 and Russell 1992:24).

no longer took place on earth, on the contrary the visionaries ascended into the celestial realms. Prominence were accorded to angels as intermediaries explaining the contents of revelations to recipients<sup>83</sup>.

Phenomenologically theophanies and visions portray different characteristics in terms of:

- i. *Gattung* and *Sitz im Leben*: Theophany is embedded in epics of concrete wonders, while the prophetic vision is an autobiographic descriptions of the psychological tempests of the soul. Theophanies are written from the perspective of the third person (in the *Erform*), while the call visions of the prophets portray the first person (the *Ichform*). Visions are attended in solitude (cf. Isa.6), theophanies may be attended by several persons (cf. Ex.19-34). Despite these distinctions, Kuntz (1967:134-5) remarks that theophany and vision use the same terms, verbs and concepts. They do overlap in using the same content (*what*), but according to their form (*how*) they are distinguishable different phenomena.
- ii. Divine transcendence and immanence: Visions are more abstract and counter-intuitive than theophanies. They have the advantage of suppressing the privilege of the observer while enlarging the dimensions of the universe, and contain more advanced representations of the divine (cf. Ladriere 1988:244).

According to Long (1984:264) the *Visionsbericht* recounts what a person hears and sees in an inner perception, in three stages: The announcement of the vision reporting what the visionary “sees” (הִנֵּה), the transition to the vision (“and behold” / וַיִּהְיֶה), while the vision follows in images, scenes, sounds, voices and dialogues. The Old Testament contains three types of vision reports: The oracle-vision in question-and-answer style, the dramatic-word vision depicting a heavenly scene as a portent of some future event on earth, and the revelatory-mysteries vision aimed at conveying secrets of future activities during an oracular enquiry. In relation to the vision, the *Traumerscheinung* is a report of God

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<sup>83</sup> Cf. Michl (1978:23), Suter (1985:1063), White (1999:304). Collins (1991:13) defines apocalypse in terms of form (narrative framework & revelation by an other-worldly being) and content (disclosure of supernatural world & eschatological future).

appearing in a dream, either giving a message, or engaging in dialogue with a recipient. The report sometimes recounts the recipient's awakening, and the consultation of a qualified person to interpret the dream (Long 1984:248).

Revelations in the form of dreams and visions should be placed within the context of the prophetic oracle<sup>84</sup>. In the prophetic word formula *דְּבַר־יְהוָה* ("the word of Yahweh") came to a recipient, and culminates in the prophet's messenger formula, *כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה* ("Thus says Yahweh") (cf. Long 1984:265). Visions and dreams portray the background of the prophetic oracle<sup>85</sup>. The *Orakel* is a form of communication with the divine through a cultic intermediary in response to an inquiry (Long 1984:254). The words of ecstatic seers and prophets emanate from oracular events, wherein formally it is not the prophet speaking, but God speaking through the prophet. Occasionally the vision and dream are described as identical events in biblical literature. Balaam and Zechariah had their visions while sleeping (cf. Num.22:8-21, Zech.1-8). According to Long (1984:455-6) dreams in many Old Testament texts are to be regarded in the context of visions in general. The Greek word for vision, *ὄψις* is sometimes used for dreams as well (Gnuse 1998:469). The similarity of the dream and vision may also be noticed in Ancient Near Eastern literature, as in the Ugaritic *Epoch of King Keret*<sup>86</sup>:

"As he wept he fell asleep, as he shed tears (there was) slumber. Sleep overpowered him and he lay down, slumber (overpowered him) and he curled up. And in his dream El came down, in his vision the father of mankind, and he draw near to Keret, asking (him): What ails Keret that he weeps", .....,"because El in my dream has granted, the father of mankind in my vision, the birth of a family to Keret and a boy to the servant of El. Keret awoke, and it was a dream, The servant of El - and it was a visitation<sup>87</sup>".

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<sup>84</sup> Only the dream and vision are discussed here as part and parcel of the divine oracle in the Old Testament. Cultic practices like divination, the casting of the lot, the Urim and Thumim, the ephod, rituals and sacrifices to determine God's will, fall outside the scope of this study.

<sup>85</sup> Vriezen (1966:244), Long (1984:258), VanderKam (1986:169), Alter (1985:138-47), Holladay (1989:223-4). These phenomena could be imitated (Dt. 18, Jer.29:8-9, Jer.23:25-32, Eccl. 5:2-6).

<sup>86</sup> KRT Col.1:31-9 & Col.3:150-155. Cf. Gordon (1965:250-1), Gibson (1977:83,86).

<sup>87</sup> Ginsberg's translation of *whdrt* ("manifestation") as "a fantasy" is incorrect (1974:144).

Now that we have differentiated between the phenomena of theophany, dream and vision as part of the prophetic oracle, it is possible to give a summary of the distinctions:

Theophany	Prophetic oracle (dream & vision)
God is revealed in the earthly sphere to the human recipient by means of natural objects and in natural space and time	The human recipient transcends into the abode of the divine by means of cultic objects and in supernatural space and time
The event of manifestation is initiated by the actions of the divine alone, the role of the human recipient is that of a recipient	The event is co-originated in the oracle through the petitions of the human recipient, whose role is that of a participant
The event takes place in the form of concrete appearances of the divine, while much emphasis is placed on the sensorial experience of the recipient	The event of the appearance of the divine is of a more symbolic nature, while less emphasis is placed on the sensorial experience of the participant
When the angel of Yahweh / Elohim appears it is as a manifestation of the divine	A celestial being acts as a mediator or <i>angelus interpres</i> of the oracle's message
The phenomenon describes the divine as being near to the human recipient	The phenomena describe the divine as being remote from the human recipient

#### 2.4.4 Summary of the Development of Divine Manifestation.

The classification of development of the divine manifestation into different phenomena in the texts of the Old Testament, supplies adequate information to distinguish, from a phenomenological perspective, between theophany, epiphany and prophetic oracle in the form of dreams and visions. We summarise this information in four brief statements:

- i. Many Old Testament texts are identified as theophanies, while they are in fact samples

of other phenomena of manifestation<sup>88</sup>. This realization steers our study on course away from the whirlpool of the theophanic confusion described in 2.2.

ii. The theophany is the oldest phenomenon of divine manifestation which has the communication between God and mankind as its purpose. Later phenomena with a similar purpose, like the dream and vision, are of a more symbolic nature, in contrast to the blunt and substantive theophany.

iii. The theophany developed within the context of the epiphany which describes appearances of the divine in order to save or to inflict punishment. The theophany is, to a considerable extent, confined to earlier epochs of history; while the epiphany was reinterpreted in every period of Israel's history, including prophetic-apocalyptic and New Testament literature.

iv. During the ongoing theological process in the Old Testament, phenomena portraying the momentous, personal and unmediated presence of Yahweh were gradually replaced by phenomena which mediated Yahweh's presence in communal and daily life<sup>89</sup>. In the dream and vision man lost sight of the divine to an ever increasing extent. The role of Yahweh as an agent in history and as an object of sense perception, tends to fade in the later writings of the Hebrew Bible.

For the purposes of the theophany of *Job*, we should be aware that the concept of revelation in the sapiential tradition is of unique nature. In wisdom literature the order of creation is revealed to the wise and righteous, in the sense of natural theology. When man proves to be capable of benefiting from this exercise, God invites him on a 'guided tour' through the realms of creation. God's revelation of something capable of human

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<sup>88</sup> Some of these texts are Jdg.5:4-5, Dt.33, Ps.68, Mic.1:3-4, Nah.1:3-6, Hab.3, Mal.3:3 (which are epiphanies), Gen.15, 28, 1Sam.3 (which are dreams), Isa.6 and Ezek.1 (which are visions).

<sup>89</sup> The transformation from Yahweh's immediacy to more indirect modes in the history of Ancient Israel, is described in Otto (1959:90), Rowley (1961:24-47), Fohrer (1972:168-9), Pannenberg (1977:52-3), Zimmerli (1978:70-81), Terrien (1978), Niehaus (1995) and Brueggemann (1997:569-575). For an alternative literary view, cf. Deist (1983:7-8).

perception is still present in the divine discourses of *Job* 38-42, which differs materially from the revelation of the divine will through the prophetic revelation.

## 2.5 A Descriptive Definition of the Old Testament theophany.

*Theophany is a visible and audible manifestation of the divine in the natural sphere, of a temporary nature and at a specific place, initiated by the divine and resulting in human dread and awe, with the purpose of communication between the divine and mankind, which causes a lasting effect in the personal and communal life of the recipient and in the cosmos.*

From this description of the theophany, we may now analyse six aspects which define the nature of the theophany as characteristic in texts of the Old Testament<sup>90</sup>:

### i. A visible and audible manifestation of the divine (showing).

Visual and audible aspects signal God's real and direct presence during theophanies. Some scholars emphasize the words of the theophany in contrast to its visual aspects,<sup>91</sup> but once this is done the obvious distinction between the theophany and other phenomena becomes obscure. The contents of the theophany may be described as "visible words", manifested in concrete circumstances as the God who reveals something of himself. The act of observation in the theophanies directs the attention to these peripheral aspects of divine visibility, which passes subtly to the capacity to listen (Kuntz 1967:40). The mystical eye and ethical ear should inform each other reciprocally (Terrien 1978:xxviii).

The question whether man is able to God and survive the experience, has dominated theophanic debate in biblical times (cf. Gen.32:30, Ex.33:20, Jdg.6:22-3, Joh.6:46). Even

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<sup>90</sup> For other characterisations of theophany in the Old Testament, cf. Kuntz (1967:45), Knight (1977:156-7), Henry (1979:8-16) and Niehaus (1995:20-30).

<sup>91</sup> Dt.5:22-33, cf. Pax (1955:144,1978:225), Kuntz (1967:17-8,45), Childs (1985:41), Fischer (1989:212). Moyer (1984:1087) goes even further in describing theophany in "theological terms used to refer to either a visible or a auditory manifestation of God".



today it remains a vexed question concerning the self-revelation of God<sup>92</sup>. Scholars seek to answer the enigma by describing Yahweh as *Deus revelatus atque absconditus*, in terms of which He is both known and unknown. God is concealed and revealed in theophanies. These are the encounters in which God discloses himself and also removes his obscurity<sup>93</sup>.

From a literary point of departure this issue may be approached from two perspectives testified to in Old Testament texts: According to the divine perspective (with God as a literary Character) no one is able to see Yahweh and survive the ordeal (cf. Ex.33:20). From a human perspective (according to human capacity) the divine essence is invisible, leaving man with the form only in which the manifestation takes place (cf. Gen.32:30). That is how Israel grasped the mode of the presence of the divine in theophanies.

**ii. The manifestation of the divine in the natural sphere (epiphanic elements).**

The types of theophanies in Old Testament texts have been identified as manifestations in the form of anthropomorphism, the angel of Yahweh / Elohim, the storm, and the divine glory. Of these four, the calamities in nature are most often used to describe the manifestation of Yahweh. Natural elements became the manifestation of the divine, but never as an identification of the divine<sup>94</sup>.

God is revealed from the divine into the earthly realm in natural elements such as a storm, thunder, lightning, rain, smoke, darkness, cloud, fire, wind, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, shattering of rocks, etc. The upheaval of natural phenomena, concomitant to theophanies testify to the appallingly reality of theophany in an intentionally allusive

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<sup>92</sup> Because of this dilemma, Pannenberg (1977:52) disregards theophanies as “ancient manifestations ... wrapped in mysterious obscurity”. Cf. Morgenstern (1911:177, 1913:38).

<sup>93</sup> Cf. Terrien (1978:119), Weber (1981:199) and Ladriere (1988:245).

<sup>94</sup> This would result in the accommodation of Israel’s Ancient Near Eastern neighbour and the trespassing of the 2nd Commandment (cf. Schmidt 1983:83). “The Hebrew Deity is the master of nature and may never be identified with it” (Terrien 1978:194). These phenomena “intensify his coming; they do not yield his essence” (Kuntz 1967:35). Hunter (1998:260-1) has a somewhat “pantheistic” interpretation of Ps.29: “Yahweh becomes nature. He becomes the thunder and the storm. He instils fear, but it is fear that results in glorification and ultimately in peace for his people”.

manner. It is designed to both reveal and conceal the presence of God, while describing Yahweh's massive intrusion into life in a way that exhibits his awesome and ferocious power (Brueggemann 1997:568)<sup>95</sup>. These physical aspects of awe is always present during theophanies and serve to impress recipients and to authenticate the revelation.

During the process of manifestation the immanent God becomes the transcendent Agent-Communicator as the Lord of history and mankind. The partial disclosure of the divine in natural phenomena combines the phenomenon of the theophany with that of the epiphany. As biblical authors found themselves at a loss of words during these encounters with the divine, they refer to concrete manifestations in symbolic language.

**iii. Initiated by the divine at a specific place and of a temporary nature (initiative).**

Theophanies take place at specific times and places, at the behest of the divine initiative. Yahweh relates to people as He chooses, without some form of human condition, reservation, qualification or explanation (Brueggemann 1997:569). Man as the object of revelation and at the receiving end of that intrusion, is left to verbalize in the best of his abilities that which is unutterable in the sublimate of Yahweh.

God is always the one who initiates the theophany. Yahweh often appears (רָאָה, Niphal) but is never caused to appear (Hiph). Man cannot command a divine appearance, but may cultically request a form of revelation<sup>96</sup>. Even then the theophany comes as a surprise in its timing and impact. Usually the theophany is associated with watershed moments in the lives of people or communities. These theophanies are embedded in narratives as temporal events with a definite beginning and conclusion. "God appears for a purpose, accomplishes that purpose, then disappears" (Niehaus 1995:21).

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<sup>95</sup> Kuntz (1967:45), Moyer (1984:1087), Niehaus (1995:26).

<sup>96</sup> Scholars disagree on this point: According to Childs (1985:43) divine manifestation is not granted according to human need, not even to establish a covenant (cf. Kuntz 1967:45, Terrien 1978:28, Henry 1979:10, Niehaus 1995:20). According to Eliade (1961:27) man may provoke a manifestation in order to put an end to tension and anxiety caused by disorientation (cf. Knight 1977:156-7). The book of *Job* portrays something of both opinions.

The purpose of the theophany relates it to a specific place. The locations where theophanies manifested themselves acquire sanctity for the descendants of the recipients. God appears at springs, rivers, trees but predominantly on mountains, which were identified with the mythic cosmic mountain as the pivotal point of human society (cf. Hiebert 1992:505-7). Sinai / Horeb and Zion became such places for Ancient Israel.

**iv. Resulting in human fear (*mysterium tremendum et fascinans*).**

Theophany is the manifestation of the heavenly God into the natural world of man. As Yahweh himself is unsettled and unsettling in nature (Brueggemann 1997:567-8), both creation and creature respond correspondingly to divine actions which makes scant provision for familiarity during the encounter. Usually nature responds in an upheaval at the coming of God, while mankind responds with both fear and fascination upon seeing the conduct of the divine and hearing his voice. The irrational human response to the manifestation of God during theophanies can be described in terms of the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*. The divine holiness and mystery are experienced by human recipients in terms of both awe and dread, or love and fear<sup>97</sup>.

Human anticipation of death during the encounter with the divine is a rife. The recipient has to maintain a respectful distance from the divine holiness by executing some ritualistic acts of sanctification, like the washing of the body and clothes (Ex.19:10), the delimitation of the holy place (Ex.19:12-3,23-4), the removing of shoes (Ex.3:5), or the covering of the face (1Ki.19:13). The God who reveals himself often pacifies the terrified recipient by saying, "Do not fear" (Jdg.6:23). This divine assurance during theophany later became a religious attitude in the sapiential literature of the Old Testament as the "fear of the Lord"<sup>98</sup>.

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<sup>97</sup> Cf. Eliade (1961:121), Wright (1962:25), Pax (1978:225-6), Hiebert (1992:509) and Gowan (1994:27). Eaton (1964:167) compares the psychosomatic state of the receiver of a theophany to the travail of childbirth or the reeling and falling of a drunkard.

<sup>98</sup> Van Pelt & Kaiser (1997:527ff), Fohrer (1972:188-9). Fear as a characteristic response to the theophany is questioned by Jeremias (1965:106), but emphasized by Kuntz (1967:43).

**v. With the purpose of communication (telling).**

The aspects of telling which follows that of seeing the deity during theophanies, may be described as the ultimate aim of each manifestation. The specific circumstances under which each theophany takes place supply the context in which that event should be interpreted. Every theophany in the Old Testament texts has its own unique purpose, but with the universal object that those called by God to act as recipients of the manifestation may see God. The seeing of God implies that the recipients are given some insight or clarification into their calling by God, which are not necessarily of a prophetic nature.

God had a specific purpose in mind for each and every human being He called in the Old Testament to receive a theophany: Adam and Eve had to stand trial (Gen.3), Moses had to lead Israel out of Egypt to Sinai to receive the commandments of the covenant (Ex.3,19-34), the meeting of the family of Moses with God in the tent was to settle the dispute concerning the privileged status of Moses (Num.12), Bileam met the angel of Yahweh to gain insight into the true nature of his mission (Num.22-4), Moses and Joshua met Yahweh in the tent during the transfer of leadership to Joshua (Dt.31), Joshua met the commander of the heavenly armies to receive orders on Yahweh's holy war against Jericho (Jos.5), Gideon was given insight into his role of the judge (Jdg.6), and Elijah was once more commissioned as prophet by Yahweh at Horeb (1Ki.19).

Every theophany therefore had a specific purpose<sup>99</sup> and it was eventuated for the benefit of man as a privileged type of communication. During the process of communication mankind was given the opportunity to state his own case.

**vi. Causing a lasting effect in the life of the recipient and in the cosmos.**

There are no private theophanies. It may be granted to an individual, but always in full view of the community as a whole. The Old Testament knows no contrast between the individual and community. In a biblical sense the individual was always related to God as

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<sup>99</sup> Cf. Preuss (1995:67) and Henry (1979:9). "Theophany in the Old Testament is not merely an apparition. It is not neutral; it is defining" (Niehaus 1995:24).

a member of his / her community. Consequently, while the encounter with the deity involved a single individual only, the immediate and lasting effects of the event can be traced in the history of the clan, community and cult. The phenomenon of the theophany simultaneously reveals God's being-one-with and God's being-with human life<sup>100</sup>.

Finally, the lasting effects of some theophanies in the texts of the Old Testament are found in its eschatological quality of the restoration of God's purpose<sup>101</sup>, as well as in the bestowal of divine holiness on specific people (cf. Ex.34:28-35 and the reinterpretation of this text in 2Cor.3:7-18). This testifies to the importance of the theophany event. To be a recipient of this privileged type of the divine manifestation, has a lasting effect on the life of that individual and his / her community.

## 2.6 Summary.

The peculiar differences between the phenomenon of the theophany and other religious phenomena in the texts of the Old Testament, like the epiphany and the prophetic oracle in the form of visions and dreams, have been established and discussed in this chapter. Now that a substantial descriptive definition of the Old Testament theophany has been arrived at, we may turn to theophany texts portraying a comparable structure to that of *Joh's* theophany.

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<sup>100</sup> Cf. Miskotte (1967:131-2), Knight (1977:156-7), Anderson (1978:505), Pax (1978:224). The possibility that theophanies were ritually re-enacted or proleptically acted out in the cult by the community during worship is discussed in the last chapter of this study.

<sup>101</sup> According to Childs (1985:48) this is the ultimate object of any theophany in literature of the Bible. "Another characteristic of any Sinaitic theophany, therefore, is that it anticipates the eschatological revelation of Yahweh" (Niehaus 1995:25-6,29).

## CHAPTER 3

### NARRATIVE STRUCTURE OF THE THEOPHANY

*There is no form without a content, and no content without a form*  
(Sigmund Mowinckel)<sup>1</sup>

#### 3.1 Introduction.

In the previous chapter a descriptive definition of the theophany as a phenomenon in the Old Testament was established. According to this definition we can now identify theophanies in the texts of the Old Testament. This chapter deals with nine texts, which are analysed to provide a substantial referential framework to be applied to the theophany of *Job* 38-42.

#### 3.2 Previous Studies on a Referential Frame for the Theophany.

How did the process of *theofanieschilderung* take place in the Old Testament? Theophanies can be identified according to their content and structure, as texts constituting the manner which form and content are blended into expressive units. The authors and redactors of the Bible were as concerned with *how* they said something as with *what* they said<sup>2</sup>. The structure of theophanies were neglected in the past due to the lack of scholarly interest. Previous studies scrutinized one element of the theophany, but neglected the consideration of the literary pattern of theophanic disclosure as a whole. Form-critical judgements about theophanies are few and far between (Kuntz 1967:47-8).

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Niehaus (1995:39).

<sup>2</sup> A holistic approach to religious literature was very important in ancient Israel (Kuntz 1967:49), but the majority of Old Testament scholars still dwell upon the content of texts and disregard the way in which the contents are structured into a particular form (Hunter 1998:257-8).

While the content of theophany as a phenomenon of the divine manifestation has been clarified in the previous chapter, this one will concentrate on its structure. Past studies on the structure of theophanies have revealed different but related conclusions. The various preconceived ideas on the definition of the theophany in the context of the Old Testament produced divergent structures. These may be classified into three categories:

- i. Theophany as a literary genre in the Old Testament.
- ii. Theophany as an Ancient Near Eastern tradition in the history of Israel.
- iii. Theophanic report as part and parcel of the call narratives of the Old Testament

### 3.2.1 Theophany as a Literary Genre in the Old Testament.

The work done by Jeremias, Cross, Kuntz and Niehaus concentrated on the literary genre of the theophany. The theophanic *Gattung* originally identified by Jeremias (1965:3) is still adhered to by some scholars<sup>3</sup>. It consists of the two elements of the coming of Yahweh and the upheaval of nature in reaction to Yahweh's coming. According to Jeremias (1965:93-101, 118-50; 1976:896-8) this theophany genre originated in descriptions of the holy war of Yahweh as the divine warrior<sup>4</sup>.

Cross (1973:155-6) elaborated on two descriptions of Yahweh as the divine warrior. Borrowed from Canaanite literature by the people of Israel, this meant the march of the divine warrior into battle carrying his terrible weapons of destruction, and the return of the divine warrior from battle to the temple on his mountain. Behind both types he discerned an archaic mythic pattern for the theophany consisting of four elements (1973:162-3):

- i. The divine warrior goes forth to battle against chaos (Yam, Leviathan, Mot).
- ii. Nature convulses, writhes and languishes when the warrior unleashes his wrath.
- iii. The warrior returns to assume kingship enthroned among the gods on his mountain.
- iv. The divine warrior makes himself heard from his temple and nature responds once more: Heavens fertilise the earth, animals writhe in giving birth, men whirl in festive glee.

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. Hunter (1987) and Brueggemann (1997:568-9).

<sup>4</sup> The aspect of holy war in ancient Israel was initially expounded by Von Rad (1991).

Kuntz analysed narrative texts in the Old Testament which contain theophanies. After establishing guidelines for a theophanic structure<sup>5</sup>, he produced a flexible *Gattung* for theophanies in the Old Testament texts (1967:60):

- i. An introductory description in the third person.
- ii. The divine utterance of the name of somebody who is confronted.
- iii. A brief, expectant response from the mortal addressed.
- iv. The deity's self-assertion.
- v. His quelling of human fear.
- vi. The assertion assures his gracious presence.
- vii. The *hieros logos* addressed to the particular situation.
- viii. An inquiry or protest by the mortal addressed.
- ix. A possible continuation of some elements of 4-7.
- x. A concluding description.

These form-critical exponents have done much groundwork for a scientific interpretation of the theophany texts of the Old Testament. However, they tend to be very rigid in the analysis of texts according to strict subjective qualifications. Texts not suited to be adjusted to their preconditions were either discarded as being of a secondary nature, or as a later development of the prototype of the genre in the Old Testament. A different approach was followed by the second category of theophany structure.

### **3.2.2 Theophany as an Ancient Near Eastern Tradition in the History of Israel.**

While the form-critics related the theophany to the context of Yahweh's holy war, those who followed the tradition-historical method identified the festivals in the cult of Ancient Israel as the *Sitz im Leben* of the theophany. One may also call them its *fons et origo*<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> Kuntz (1967:50) follows five guidelines to a literary genre of the theophany in the Old Testament: (1) Establish the scope of the literary unit. (2) Detect movement within this unit from beginning to end. (3) Perceive the extent and frequency of expression of major motifs and elements. (4) Notice the specific ordering of the constituents. (5) Observe the recurrence of motif and / or expression that emerges from a comparison of a given literary unit in other texts.

<sup>6</sup> Muilenburg (1964:35-47), Crenshaw (1968:206-14), Clements (1978:78), Gray (1986:75-9).



Weiser (1950) identifies representations of the theophany of Yahweh in the Psalms as part of the *Festkult*. The tradition of the theophany was grounded in Ex.19-34 and later re-enacted in the cult during the dialogue between God and the believer(s)<sup>7</sup>. According to Gray (1988:423-4) stereotyped expressions of the theophany tradition, for example in Judges 5, developed either in the context of the war songs (Craigie 1968), or as part of the cultic renewal of the covenant (Weiser 1950). Kraus (1966:329) goes further by identifying an ancient theophanic tradition in Israel which originated in Yahweh's holy war but as part of the cult in the broad sense that nothing Yahwistic was alien thereto. The cult related elements of holy war to both the *epiphanie- en theofanieschildering*.

The interrelation between tradition and divine manifestation in Ancient Israel, led to the process of literary development of the theophanic tradition<sup>8</sup>. The purpose of the development was to make old cultic and legal traditions relevant for future generations in terms of its reinterpretation and application (cf. Von Rad 1988:23). An example of this can be seen in the reinterpretation of tradition made by the author of Deuteronomy. The biblical tradition probably emanated from an ancient form of hymnic theophanic accounts in the Ancient Near East<sup>9</sup>. The descriptions of the march of Yahweh from Seir in Dt.33:2 can be traced back to the cult of the sun as manifestation of the gods in Egypt, while manifestations in nature are based on the advent of the Canaanite storm god Baal. These theophanies were of a seasonal nature in their mythical contexts. However, in the ongoing process of revitalising Israel's theophanic tradition, theophanies of Yahweh as divine warrior were historicized and personalised in the Old Testament, as a continuous tradition from the Second Millennium BC up to Hellenistic and Roman times<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> Soggin (1987:235) identifies some elements in the development of this tradition in Gen.18 (the divine visitors eat food offered to them), Jdg.6 (the angel transforms the food into a sacrifice), and in Jdg.13 (the angel refuses to eat the food but invites the recipients to offer it as a sacrifice).

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Miller (1973:85-121,155-8), Knight (1977:145,154), Van Leeuwen (1985:70), Gray (1986:264) and Van Seters (1994:138-9).

<sup>9</sup> Cf. the classic epiphany texts as well as Gen.32:31.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. De Vries (1975:74), Wolff (1977:119), Fensham (1980:232), Schmidt (1983:165), Fishbane (1986:74-5), Taylor (1993:233-44) and De Moor (1997:304-5).

While identifying the theophany as originated from an Ancient Near Eastern tradition, Kingsbury (1967:205) describes the Old Testament theophanies as *topoi*, i.e. "general rhetorical patterns which may be used as building blocks for literary structures". As *topoi* the theophany developed from two basic traditions:

- i. A northern storm tradition, influenced by the Canaanites, which forms Israel's oldest tradition and texts (cf. Jdg.5:4-5, Ps.68:7-8, Dt.33:2-3, Hab.3:3-4).
- ii. A southern earthquake tradition, as a reaction against Baal imagery, which forms Israel's later tradition (cf. Am.9:1, Isa.6:3-4, Joel 3:16, Isa.64:1-3).

These two traditions were later conflated and moulded together in 1Ki.19 and Ps.50:1-6.

In the previous chapter mentioning was being made of Westermann (1981:100-1) who distinguishes two basic elements in the theophany tradition from the structure of Exodus 19 and 34, 1Kings 19, Isaiah 6, and Ezekiel 1 and 2. In them God appears to human beings in order to say something (i.e. mediation, calling, commissioning that individual). Similar findings were made by Van Seters (1975:261-2), who provided a sixfold basis in the "ancient story of theophany" according to the structure of Gen.15, Ex.3, Jdg.6 and 13:

- i. A general situation of distress.
- ii. The dramatic appearance of the messenger of Yahweh at a specific time and place.
- iii. The appearance is a response to a situation of need where a commission is desired.
- iv. The commission of the recipient is often followed by a protest of weakness.
- v. A confirmation of the promised deliverance followed by a sign or disclosure of God.
- vi. The deliverance is carried out in rest of the story.

Polak (1996:116-7) identified a theophany theme in the book of Exodus, as a basic narrative tradition which includes a traditional plot-scheme with overarching themes. This theophany theme embodies a series of recurring moments, presented in ever-varying form in the dimension of the theophany (the place where it occurs, private or public recipients and the extent of the audience), the distance from the apparition (or mediator), the perception of the recipient/s (hearing only or also visual), the circumstances (natural, speech, thunder, visual, fire), the purpose of the theophany (divine warrior, demonstration

of power, message or nature of deity characterised), as well as the relics present (elements which persist after the apparition). According to Polak these components are supra-textual, being not restricted to a specific textual unit but related to the theme as such. Whereas a pattern includes specific, static elements in a definite order (e.g. the call narratives), the supra-textual matrix contains dynamic poles of tension and opposition.

To view the structure of Old Testament theophanies as products which developed from the tradition of war songs in Israel's cult in the context of the Ancient Near East, is more preferable to it as being a literary genre. Theophanic descriptions always form part of larger textual units, as the next category shows.

### 3.2.3 Theophany Report as Part of the Call Narratives of the Old Testament.

Long (1984) describes the theophany as a report which can be defined in terms of its structure and content to take on special importance in Old Testament literature. A *Bericht* is a "brief, self-contained prose narrative, usually in third-person style, about a single event or situation in the past" (1984:259). As a report the theophany plays a part in the call-narratives of the prophets. Habel (1965:298) identifies the Old Testament call narrative as a genre, which developed from the early accounts of Exodus 3 and Judges 6 to a common literary form which authors used in later accounts of the calling of leaders<sup>11</sup>. Habel (1965:305) then establishes a close connection between the callings of Moses, Jeremiah (1:4-10), Isaiah (6:1-13, 40:1-11)<sup>12</sup> and Ezekiel (1-2). As part of the call narrative the theophany does not function on its own but as the embodiment of divine communication with the person called. It could be replaced with other phenomena in the later texts.

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<sup>11</sup> Habel is not concerned with a detailed exegesis of the texts in question, but "with the analysis of recurrent literary and thematic features which are relevant for an appreciation of the call *Gattung* and its development" (1965:298).

<sup>12</sup> According to Habel (1965:305) the prototype to the calling of Isaiah can be found in 1Ki.22:19-21. Zimmerli identified two different types of the call narrative: (1) Personal direct encounters between God and persons called (Moses, Gideon, Jeremiah) (2) Visions of the divine assembly in heavenly scenes (1Ki.22, Isa.6, Ezek.1). Long (1972:495) prefers "vision report" to "call narrative". Cf. Fretheim (1991:51), Gnuse (1998) and Landy (1999).

While the theophany thus featured in the pristine call narratives of Moses and Gideon, the vision took its place in the later texts relating the call of Isaiah and Ezekiel.

As genre the call narrative has an underlying structure with six broad literary features:

- i. The divine manifestation in times of crisis and in the midst of normal routine activities.
- ii. The introductory word from God to the prophet.
- iii. The leader receives a commission from the deity.
- iv. The leader balks at the commission.
- v. The leader is reassured that Yahweh is with him.
- vi. A sign is provided to the leader that he is called by the divine (cf. Habel 1965:317).

Scholars have interpreted the call traditions of the Old Testament variously: Whereas Habel establishes only one form or *Gattung*, Richter prefers a schema with five elements<sup>13</sup>. The schema of the call shapes the materials but fails to define them fully in a *gattungsgeschichtlichen* sense, because they can belong to various circumstances and texts, even to other genres. Some scholars prefer not to identify a call narrative or schema, believing each call to be an unique experience (cf. Bronner 1976: 30-2, Polak 1996:121).

The value of the theophany as part of the call schema of leaders in Ancient Israel, lies in the fact that the phenomenon is not removed from its textual context, as it is often the case with the genre- and tradition-approaches. However, the problem with the theophany as part of the call-narrative is that we find theophanies in the Old Testament texts which cannot adequately be described as call scenes, cf. Genesis 3, Exodus 34, Numbers 12, as well as *Job* 38-42. A possible structure and context for the theophany in some texts of the Old Testament can be explained by another, more recent approach in biblical science.

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<sup>13</sup> (1) Allusion to distress (2) Commission (3) Objection (4) Assurance (5) Sign. Richter omits the theophany and divine confrontation from the call schema (cf. Long 1972:495). This is in contrast to Habel (1965:298) who emphasizes the divine manifestation not as some form of ecstasy or feeling, but as a reassurance that the prophet is enthused by the spoken word. Gnuse (1998:464-5) relates the call narratives in the temple theophany to the result of prayer or human participation.

### 3.3 The Type-Scene as a Literary Frame for Old Testament Theophanies.

Robert Alter is in all probability the first scholar to apply the type-scene to biblical literature. This type-scene is defined as the “the marking of a crucial juncture in the life of the protagonist (birth, initiatory trial, betrothal, deathbed) by following a fixed sequence of familiar motifs” (Alter and Kermode 1987:672).

Alter (1981:47-9) explains the type-scene as a tactic agreement between the artist and his audience, which can be identified as the ordering of a literary work of art according to a grid of conventions. These conventions have previously been identified by form-critics as the recurring regularities of a pattern rather than in the manifold variations of literary convention. Some essential elements of ancient convention are useful for the understanding of the biblical narratives, because they assume a high degree of literary purposefulness (1981:49). A scenic quality or event takes place when “the narrative tempo slows down enough for us to discriminate a particular scene, to have some illusion of the scene’s ‘presence’ as it unfolds” (Berlin 1983:46).

In *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, Alter (1981:51) identifies eight various type-scenes in the Old Testament:

- i. Annunciation
- ii. Birth of a hero from a barren mother
- iii. Encounter with a future wife
- iv. Epiphany in the field
- v. Initiatory trial
- vi. Danger in the desert
- vii. The discovery of a well
- viii. The testament of a dying hero<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> Tate (1992) also provides evidence for interpreting the function of the Satan in the Old Testament as a literary category of the type-scene for popular explanations of the origin in Gen.3, Num.22 and *Job* 1-2. “The features differ, but there is a common form to the story that alerts viewers to the main course of events” (1992:470).

What is important in the biblical type-scene is not so much its schema of convention, but what is done in each individual's application of the schema to give it a sudden tilt of innovation or even to refashion it radically for imaginative purposes. Most striking of the type-scene is its slow, stately progress, which is achieved by the extensive use of dialogue and specification of detail beyond the biblical norm, and by the elaborate use of verbatim repetition as a standard resource to biblical writers. Sometimes authors gave only swift allusions and transfiguration to these type-scenes, while their contemporary audiences immediately grasped the significance. The fact of recurrence in type-scenes reproduce in narratives the rhythm of a divinely appointed destiny in Israel's history (Alter 1981:52-60).

Rather than describing the theophany as a genre, tradition, or even as part of the call narrative, this study interprets it as a type-scene with a certain supra-textual matrix. In doing so, we utilise the structure of Alter's type-scene of the "epiphany in the field" without endorsing its typification as "epiphany", to describe a type-scene of the theophany as an unique form of divine manifestation to the human recipient. The previous chapter explicated the theophany as a religious theophany, and this one deals with the theophany as a reported form appearing in the texts of the Old Testament. While in the texts of the Old Testament we find the theophany on the one hand as a religious phenomenon, on the other hand it also appears in a reported form, which entails that form and structure are added in a particular manner in a specific text. It is in this instance that we follow convention, identified in Alter's description of the literary type-scene.

Sands (1975:45-9) provides an example of what is to be expected from such an approach. While studying appearances of God at different times and according to various schools of thought, he concluded that the supernatural was often presented by an uniform method. He provides four common features in the "most sublime" of Old Testament passages<sup>15</sup>:

- i. Natural phenomena as a sign of divine presence and concealment.
- ii. The Voice's declaration of some aspect or quality of God.
- iii. The Mystery (some expression or action of the servant receiving the revelation).

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<sup>15</sup> Genesis 28:10-22, Exodus 3:1-7, 23:12-24:9, 1Kings 19:8-18 and *Job* 38:ff.

iv. The definite purpose of the manifestation (bringing comfort or confirmation).

From the definition of theophany in the previous chapter, the characteristics thereof as a religious phenomenon have been set forth. The structure of theophany is now explained in its reported form in some texts of the Old Testament.

We propose a preliminary type-scene of theophany, consisting of the following elements:

i. **Background.** In this part information on turmoil, chaos, and the presence of evil in various forms is reported, which both proceed and lead to the manifestation of the deity. The manifestation should be seen in the light of both the divine initiative (*that* Yahweh is manifested) and the situation portrayed in the background (*why* Yahweh is manifested).

ii. **Manifestation.** The manifestation of the divine onto the earthly sphere takes place by means of phenomena such as a cloud, fire, wind, thunder, silence, etc. This brings about a certain human reaction as a response to the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*<sup>16</sup>.

iii. **Dialogue.** Communication takes place between the deity and man, as the purpose of the four types of theophany in the Old Testament. The style usually comes in a question-answer format, with the content of the divine words exceeding that of the human recipient.

iv. **Intrigue.** This forms part of the plot of every theophany. Specific events take place during the divine manifestation and communication that are left unanswered and unexplained by the author as part of the unique and mysterious aspect of every theophany.

v. **Conclusion.** The last part of the type-scene is provided by the narrator, who either tells us that Yahweh left the scene, or that the recipient responded in a certain manner to fulfil his calling after the theophany event. The type-scene forms part of larger textual units, but may be studied separately as a substantial unit within the whole.

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<sup>16</sup> The non-rational or supra-rational elements of the divine nature (Otto 1959:13), which we have described as “both frightening and attractive, daunting and fascinating” (Gowan 1994:28).

### 3.4 Application of the Type-Scene to Theophanies in the Old Testament.

The elements of this preliminary theophany type-scene is of a supra-textual nature. It will now be applied to nine Old Testament texts, which have been identified as theophanies. The aim of this investigation is to establish a referential framework for the structure of the theophany in its reported form, to be applied to the divine discourses of the text of *Job*.

#### 3.4.1 Exodus 3-4 (Theophany and the Divine Name).

The divine manifestation to the lone shepherd in Ex.3:1-4:17 has been described as the *locus classicus* of the Old Testament theophany<sup>17</sup>. Janzen (1997:27) identifies it as “one of those texts in which the unfathomable reality of God has to be expressed within the limitations of human speech and the images of ordinary human experience”. According to Van Seters (1994:41) it has four levels of significance: (i) The discovery of a sacred place, (ii) the commissioning of a leader for a specific task, (iii). connecting the patriarchal traditions with Exodus, (iv). describing the presence of the divine among God’s people.

1. Background	God hears the lamentation of the Israelite slaves in Egypt (2:23-5) Moses led the flock of his father-in-law to the area of Horeb (3:1)
2. Manifestation	Moses is attracted to the mystery of a burning bush The angel of Yahweh appears in the burning bush Yahweh orders Moses to remove his shoes Moses hides his face in his mantle (3:2-6)
3. Dialogue	Yahweh calls Moses to free his people from Egypt Moses’ objections are countered by Yahweh four times (3:7-4:17)
4. Intrigue	The relation between Yahweh and the God of the patriarchs (3:14)
5. Conclusion	Moses returns to Egypt (4:18)

<sup>17</sup> Kuntz (1967:139) sees Ex.3 as the appropriate, indispensable biblical introduction to all other theophanies, Weiser (1961:142) as the “Typus religiöser Erfahrung im Alten Testament”.



i. Background. During the absence of God from his people, they are enslaved by the pharaoh, a human embodiment of evil. But God was never really absent, as the prologue to the theophany describes the divine conduct of hearing, remembering, seeing, and knowing his people (2:24-5, cf.3:7-8). While Moses drove the flock of sheep, belonging to Jethro, deep into the desert to the mountain of God, he encounters the divine in his activity as a shepherd<sup>18</sup>.

ii. Manifestation. Yahweh is manifested by his angel in the burning bush. Scholars have tried to decode this manifestation as an illusion<sup>19</sup>, yet it remains a material theophany and a real encounter with the deity. According to Berlin this manifestation is described in terms of Moses' interior monologue, which is combined with several poetic features: While the narrator reports that the angel appeared in the flame of the bush, Moses' internal psychological point of view saw the bush burning but not being consumed by the flames. The focus then shifts to his interior monologue ("Let me turn and see why the bush is not burned..."). Next, his curiosity turns to awe in the presence of the deity (3:6), from where we are exposed to God's external psychological point of view. "The reader understands that God has now attracted Moses' attention and can proceed to converse with him" (Berlin 1983:66-7).

Moses proceeds to investigate the wonder of the burning bush. As God calls on him, he responds in three ways: He declares in an act of self-presentation, "Here am I". He removes his shoes on the divine orders because he is standing on holy ground<sup>20</sup>. He

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. Gowan (1994:26), Niehaus (1995:85), Janzen (1997:26-9).

<sup>19</sup> According to Von Rad (1989:181) older expositions tried to "evaporate the phenomenon of the burning bush into symbols in order to be able to comprehend it theologically" - the bush signifying unholy Israel, the fire as Yahweh, the fire not consuming the bush as Yahweh's indwelling in Israel. Habel (1965:302) calls Ex.3:6 some kind of "visionary experience". Robinson (1997:118-20) sees it as a "perpetual theophany" or real encounter, which gave hope of restoration to people in the exile as a prefiguration of the Menorah, a symbol of the constant presence of Yahweh.

<sup>20</sup> Kuntz (1967:144) and Niehaus (1995:188) interpret the removal of Moses' sandals as act of recognition of the holiness and sovereignty of Yahweh who has drawn near. The interpretation of this divine order by Janzen (1997:28) as an act of divine hospitality which Moses gladly accepts, seems to be incorrect in the context of the theophanic type-scene.

covers his face with his mantle. These three responses is a complete reaction to the divine *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* in terms of the theophany type-scene<sup>21</sup>.

iii. Dialogue. The climax of the theophanic meeting lies in the deity communicating with Moses. The *hieros logos* is extended because of Moses' doubt, and is described in the form of a "presence-response pattern" (Durham 1987:29). Yahweh commissions Moses to free Israel, but he repeatedly and reluctantly declines the offer because he is scared. Moses advances four objections: He is not up to the task, he is ignorant of the divine name, his people are unbelieving and he lacks eloquence. Each and every time his objections are brushed aside by Yahweh, the last time in divine frustration.

iv. Intrigue. The mysterious presence of Yahweh and the revelation of the divine name have led to many interpretations of Ex.3:14:

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אֶל־מֹשֶׁה אֲהִיָּה אֲשֶׁר אֲהִיָּה  
וַיֹּאמֶר כֹּה תֹאמַר לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲהִיָּה שְׁלַחְנִי אֵלֵיכֶם:

*Then God said to Moses, "I Am Who I Am." And he said, "Say this to the children of Israel, 'I Am has sent me to you.'"*

Dyrness (1979:31) follows the LXX translation of אֲהִיָּה אֲשֶׁר אֲהִיָּה i.e. "I am the One who is" as Yahweh's words pointing to his deeds<sup>22</sup>. Elohim of the forefathers is indeed Yahweh of the covenant, who is here described in terms of his active presence. This is a theological expression of meaning relating to 3:12, "I shall indeed be with you". Ex.3:14 illustrates the close and essential relationship between God's Person and his Name, at the same time revealing the divine being as eternal, faithful, creating ("I am that I am"), while keeping the divine name a secret. The focus is on the assurance of God's presence, portraying Yahweh as *Deus revelatus* and *Deus absconditus*<sup>23</sup>. God always identifies

<sup>21</sup> "It was not the event itself that was fearful; only the realisation of the divine presence in the theophany made it such" (Van Seters 1994:39). Cf. Habel (1965:303), Robinson (1997).

<sup>22</sup> Terrien (1978:116) provides three translations of this part of Ex.3:14: (1) "I am who I am", (2) "I shall be who I shall be", or (3) "I cause to be whatever I cause to be".

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Vriezen (1966:235-6), Sitarz (1987:37), Durham (1987:41) and Von Rad (1989:181).

Himself during theophanies, often in terms of divine conduct, and in this case by the revelation of the divine name. The revelation of the divine name is necessary in this text for Moses to relate his encounter with Yahweh to that of Israel's patriarchs with Elohim.

v. Conclusion. As Moses leaves Horeb for Egypt the event of the divine saving of the Hebrew people from Egypt gains momentum. Yahweh will free them in the light of his twofold promise to Abraham of a great nation possessing their own soil (cf. Gen.12:1-7). But the *Mosetheophanie* is more than past promises, it also reflects the long-term strategy of Yahweh with Israel: Ex.3-4 foreshadows the later fiery theophany at Sinai / Horeb in Ex.19-34<sup>24</sup>. The structure of this theophany to Moses is also a stylistic example for the theophanies to Joshua (5:15) and Elijah (1Ki.19) (cf. Weiser 1961:142).

### 3.4.2 Joshua 5-6 (Theophany and Holy War).

Joshua 5 portrays a similar structure as Exodus 3 and Judges 6 in the sense that all three texts narrate the commissioning of a leader by divine intervention. Jos. 5:2-6:27 should be read as part of the cultic miracle that happened at Jericho. Both the theophany and epiphany are treated here as elements of Yahweh's holy war.

1. Background	The covenant ceremony at Gilgal Preparations are made for the war against Jericho (5:2-12)
2. Manifestation	The commander of the heavenly army appears to Joshua (5:13-4) Joshua bows before the heavenly commander and removes his shoes
3. Dialogue	Orders for holy warfare are issued to Joshua and Israel (5:14-6:5)
4. Intrigue	The function of theophany and epiphany in Yahweh's holy war
5. Conclusion	Jericho is destroyed by God in his holy war (6:6-27)

<sup>24</sup> The burning bush (הַשֹּׁבֵב) foreshadows the burning smoke on Sinai (אֵשׁ). Horeb is identified with Sinai, because the two traditions are unified in one theophanic theme (cf. Van Seters 1994:40, Robinson 1997, Propp 1999:194,222). In Exodus the theophanic theme "stands at the centre of the book as a whole, and permeates all traditions, sources and redaction layers" (Polak 1996:113).

i. Background. Israel arrives in Canaan under the leadership of Joshua, and prepares for war with Jericho. Evil is anticipated in the presence of the Canaanites, who will later mislead the people of God into apostasy. Joshua is appointed as the successor of Moses. At Gilgal the Israelites prepare for war against Jericho by conducting a covenant ceremony. The background of the manifestation of the divine warrior clearly anticipates the holy war.

ii. Manifestation. The *שַׂר־צְבָאֵי־יְהוָה* ("prince / commander of the armies of Yahweh") appears to Joshua as the leader of the covenant army of Israel. The manifestation of the deity takes place in the shape of a heavenly messenger. The prince of hosts is closely akin to the angel of Yahweh / Elohim who appears 69 times in the Old Testament (cf. Dan.8:11). Seeing the messenger is equated with seeing God. It is therefore surprisingly that Joshua confuses the heavenly commander with a possible human ally or adversary<sup>25</sup>. Only after the heavenly commander identified himself did Joshua react accordingly by bowing and removing his shoes at the command of the messenger. The removal of Joshua's shoes parallels that of Moses'<sup>26</sup>. The military figure as messenger symbolises the destruction of God's enemies, he serves as a visible manifestation of God<sup>27</sup>. The theophany anticipates that the victory will belong to God.

iii. Dialogue. The commander issues sacred orders for Joshua and Israel to obey. The important element in a holy war is not so much military ability, but obedience. The whole episode is "overtly cultic, with its complicated ritual and climactic theophany" (Mitchell 1993:51). While the divine warrior will fight the holy war on Canaan, God employs the services of Israel's cult as the instrument by which it would be accomplished.

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<sup>25</sup> Jos 5:13: "When Joshua was by Jericho, he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man stood before him with his drawn sword in his hand; and Joshua went to him and said to him, "Are you for us, or for our adversaries?" (RSV).

<sup>26</sup> Jericho is devoted to Yahweh in holy war. While Moses was already on holy ground in the discovery of a holy place at Horeb, Joshua will tread on holy ground (Van Seters 1994:39-40). According to Sitarz (1987:41) the theophany in Jos.5:13-5 is a *nachgebildet* of Ex.3:1-6.

<sup>27</sup> The role of the heavenly messenger is similarly described in Numbers 22, 2 Samuel 24 and 2Kings 19. Cf. Soggin (1987:114).

iv. Intrigue. The theophany is placed here, together with the epiphany, in the context of Yahweh's holy warfare. The divine commander has a similar function as in Num.22 and 1Chron.21 in the tradition of divine war. The literary effect increases the mysterious and numinous nature of Joshua's encounter with the deity. Joshua is required to remove his shoes, being on holy ground, while the city itself is subjected to the divine curse. His conduct resembles that of Moses<sup>28</sup>. The event is dominated by cultic detail - the procession of the ark, the presence of the priests, the trumpet and shouts - all of it portrays a context of cultic and military scenes. Mitchell (1993:51-2) finds it no longer possible to return to the thesis of Von Rad (1991) on holy war, yet the relationship between cultic descriptions and battle report remains significant in the interpretation of the theophany of Jos.5-6. The fall of Jericho resembles an epiphany.

v. Conclusion. The anticipation of divine action is realised as Jericho fell and is destroyed in the holy war of the divine warrior. The theophany of chapter 5 is followed by the epiphany of a holy war in chapter 6. Yahweh always remains true to his promises.

### **3.4.3 Judges 6-7 (Theophany and Commission).**

Judges 6:1-7:25 has been described as a theophany and cult legend which led to the founding of the sanctuary at Orah<sup>29</sup>. The book of Judges portrays a linear plot in terms of a cause-and-effect relationship of faith between Yahweh and the tribes of Israel. Polzin (1987:103-5) identifies six elements linking the major episodes in this rhetorical scheme: (i) Israel does that which is evil in the eyes of Yahweh, (ii) God surrenders Israel into the hands of their enemies, (iii) the Israelites cry to God to help them out of their dilemma, (iv) God rises up a deliverer in the person of a judge, (v) the deliverer defeats the enemy and (vi) the land is at rest for a certain amount of years.

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<sup>28</sup> In terms of warlike themes: In the mobilisation of Yahweh's army, Israel as being aided by the divine warrior, the prophetic confirmation of the outcome of the battle, and the confirmation of Joshua's leadership (Nelson 1997:81-3).

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Kroeze (1965:219) and Soggin (1987:117).

1. Background	The unfaithful tribes are handed over to Midian (6:1-10)
2. Manifestation	The angel of Yahweh is manifested to Gideon at Oprah (6:11-2) Fear of the deity as a retrospect experience (6:22)
3. Dialogue	Gideon is commissioned and responds negatively (6:13-23)
4. Intrigue	The commissioning of leaders during theophanies
5. Conclusion	Midian is defeated (6:24-7:25)

i. Background. In line with the identified cyclic pattern of the book, Jdg. 6:1-10 describes Israel as being unfaithful to Yahweh. Because of their sins they are handed over to the oppression of Midian and Amalek, who destroy the crops of the Israelites. The people cry to Yahweh to be delivered, but is reminded in a prophetic oracle of their continuous disobedience. Nevertheless, God hears their cries, but instead of commissioning someone from the influential families as judge, God turns to a man of humble parentage, who secretly threshes his harvest at Oprah.

ii. Manifestation. In Jdg. 6:11 the angel of Yahweh finds Gideon threshing wheat and calls him to bring in a harvest of redemption for Israel from the fields of Midian<sup>30</sup>. As in Ex.3:2 and Jos.5:13 the presence of Yahweh is guaranteed and concealed in the form of his divine messenger. But Gideon takes even longer than Joshua to recognise the true character of the angel. Only after the dialogue had taken place, and the angel had burnt the prepared food as a sacrifice to ascend to heaven in the smoke of the fire, does Gideon realise that he has encountered the deity. Jdg.6:22-3 testifies to an experience of the divine in retrospect terms. His fear for the encounter is quelled by Yahweh<sup>31</sup>.

<sup>30</sup> Niehaus (1995:233-4) analyses verses 11-8 and 19-24 as two theophanies, which are in fact one.

<sup>31</sup> Jdg.6:22-3: "Then Gideon perceived that he was the angel of the Lord; and Gideon said, "Alas, O Lord God! For now I have seen the angel of the Lord face to face." But the Lord said to him, "Peace be to you; do not fear, you shall not die"" (RSV).

iii. Dialogue. Gideon is commissioned to deliver Israel as judge of God and he is provided with promises which are accompanied by wonders. He sees himself as a member of Israel's weakest clan, but by virtue of God's predestination he is regarded as Yahweh's mighty man of valour (cf. Habel 1965:300). The gist of Gideon's objections to his calling may differ before and after his realisation that the deity had appeared to him, but the reasons for those objections remain the same: Will Yahweh really be able to support Israel in the battle with the people of Midian and Amalek? To persuade Gideon, God provides him with three signs each with a different nature: The sign of the angel ascending to heaven testifies to divine wonder, while the two signs of the fleece provide eloquent testimony of the supernatural and unnatural powers of the divine (cf. 6:36-40).

iv. Intrigue. We have already showed in 3.2.3 the way in which the calling of leaders during theophanies (to Moses, Joshua and Gideon) differs from the calling during dream-visions (to Isaiah and Ezekiel). The calling of leaders during theophanies is one of the most obvious reasons why Yahweh chose to manifest himself in the earlier history of Israel. According to Westermann (1981:100-1) the purpose of theophanies may be attributed to the mediation, calling or commissioning of a specific individual or people. Exceptions to these purposes of the theophany can be found in Gen.3 and *Job* 38-42, as shown in this chapter and the next.

v. Conclusion. After Gideon had exhorted the tribes of Israel to fight, Midian is defeated and routed by three hundred Israelites. The land is at rest for a couple of years, during which the sons of Gideon lead the tribes back to sin in the eyes of Yahweh.

### 3.4.4 Numbers 22-24 (Theophany and Oracle).

This text is a superb illustration of the various forms of manifestation of the deity in the Old Testament. Yet, the singular quality of the theophany in Num.22:21-35 among the other forms of Yahweh's self-revelation has in the past received scant attention. The author of Numbers regarded this encounter between God and Balaam in a theophany as more important than all other manifestations. This may be derived from the lengthy description of the theophany, in contrast to the other brief appearances of the deity.

Wenham (1981:166) divides Numbers 22-4 into three parts<sup>32</sup>:

- i. Day 1-2 : Introduction (22:2-6) and the first divine encounter (22:7-14).
- ii. Day 3-4 : The second (22:15-20) and third encounter (22:21-35) with the deity.
- iii. Day 5-6 : Introduction (22:36-40) and blessings (22:41-23:12, 23:13-26, 23:27-24:25).

1. Background	Israel arrives in the land of Moab Moab summons Balaam to curse Israel God initially prohibits but then allows Balaam to go (Num.22:1-20)
2. Manifestation	The angel of Yahweh stands in the way of Balaam's donkey The donkey realises danger and speaks to Balaam about the angel Balaam falls on his face in front of the angel (22:21-31)
3. Dialogue	The angel confronts Balaam's prophetic objectives Balaam bows according to the aim of Yahweh (22:32-5)
4. Intrigue	The different kinds of divine revelation in Num.22-24
5. Conclusion	Balaam meets Balak in Moab (23:36-41) Balaam's oracles in favour of Israel (Num.23:1-24:25)

- i. Background. Balak summons Balaam to curse Israel. Evil can be detected in these verses, both externally (Balak wants Israel to be cursed)<sup>33</sup> and internally (the same

<sup>32</sup> This threefold repetition is also identified in the activities of the donkey (22:23,25,27), in Balaam's sacrifices (23:2,14,29), as well as in his encounters with the deity (Wenham 1981:165).



Moabites would later influence Israel to fornicate with their daughters in Baal's religious events, cf. Num. 25:1-3). Balaam first rejects and then accepts the proposals of Balak because of directive dreams he had received from God. He then sets out on his journey without proper consultation with God, to be made aware of this by the angel of Yahweh. The note of the author in Num.22:21 that Balaam prepared his donkey to depart with the servants of Bileam, prepares us for the encounter with the angel that would follow after his conversation with the donkey.

ii. Manifestation. The angel stands in the way, so as to obstruct both Balaam and his donkey. In Num. 22:21-35, he acts as a  $\text{יָצִיט}$  ("adversary") to grant Balaam awareness of the manifestation of Yahweh<sup>34</sup>. After Balaam saw the angel he bows down as an appropriate reaction. Yahweh is ever present in the midst of the angel's activity, to ensure that the donkey's mouth and Balaam's eyes are opened (Meier 1995:101). The angel acts and speaks on behalf of Yahweh and carefully substitutes himself for Yahweh<sup>35</sup>.

The theophany takes place in terms of both supernatural (the angel) and natural objects (the donkey). Balak and Balaam are symbols of fatuousness and obstinacy. Their conduct is accentuated by the behaviour of the donkey. The proverbially ass is normally associated with similar characteristics, but in this instance exhibits more spiritual insight than the prophet. The donkey goes one better than Balaam, the seer who cannot see: Seers were renowned for their powers to see into the future. Yet, this one is incapable of seeing the end of the road (Carroll 1990:173, cf. Wenham 1981:168-71). The ability to pronounce the divine word is no indication of Balaam's holiness, but rather an eloquent testimony of the fact that God can use anyone for this purpose, even a humble donkey! The donkey-angel combination also emphasizes Balaam's spiritual blindness and powerlessness. The

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<sup>33</sup> Ackerman (1987:86) interprets the Moabite king as a *Pharaoh redivivus*, fearing Israel's power and willing to do anything to stop them (cf. Ex. 1:8-12 & Num.22:3-5).

<sup>34</sup> Num. 22:22: "But God's anger was kindled because he went; and the angel of the Lord took his stand in the way as his adversary. Now he was riding on the ass, and his two servants were with him" (RSV).

<sup>35</sup> Noth (1980:179) compares the ability of the ass to speak to that of the serpent in Genesis 3.

conduct and words of the donkey anticipate Balaam's demands in contrast to Yahweh's commands.

iii. Dialogue. The words of the angel of Yahweh prepares Balaam for the correct prophetic oracle to be pronounced by him on Israel. The dialogue is continued in the different oracles which Balaam pronounces on Israel under the influence of the Spirit of Yahweh (cf. Num.24:2). Under Yahweh's guidance his promises to the patriarchs are fulfilled in the history of Israel. An ironic and unexpected twist in these events is the fact that Yahweh employs a Near Eastern diviner to provide a vision of Israel's future, not even Moses who had seen Yahweh face to face<sup>36</sup>.

iv. Intrigue. In the light of the information which the previous chapter provided on the development of the divine manifestation in the Old Testament, it is interesting to note parallels in the context of the Ancient Near East. Numbers 22-4 exhibits four manifestations of the deity in the world of the Bible<sup>37</sup>: Firstly, God appeared twice to Balaam at night in dream-visions (22:9,20). In these nocturnal revelations the general Ancient Near Eastern divine name of אֱלֹהִים ("God") instead of יהוה ("Yahweh"), the covenantal divine name of the God of Israel, is used. Priest-diviners in the Ancient Near East used nocturnal dream-visions and omens to predict the future. Secondly, Yahweh is manifested in the theophany of the angel and the donkey. The remarkable extent to which this event is described, establishes it as being superior to the other forms of manifestation. Thirdly, God met Balaam during sacrifices which preceded his oracles (23:1,14,29). Whereas the sacrifices were of a communal nature prior to the oracles in 22:39-40, it is now presented as burnt offerings to seek an encounter with God and to receive an oracle. Fourthly, the Spirit of God descends on Balaam to produce another prophetic oracle in 24:2. Balaam is seized by the Spirit as an ecstatic prophet who utters his words under

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<sup>36</sup> Cf. Wenham (1981:164) and Ackerman (1987:87).

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Noth (1980:176-90) and Wenham (1981:170). According to Wagner (1996:87) "im Bileam-Komplex zu registrierenden offenbarungsphänomenologischen Elemente für das Verständnis von Offenbarung im Alten Testament".

direct divine inspiration, thereby functioning as a seer whose “eyes are opened”, i.e. seeing with the inner eye that which is concealed from normal sight. The oracles of Balaam take place in the form of the *Traumoffenbarung*, the *Berufungsvision*, and the *Inkubationsorakel* in the cultic context of ceremonies and offerings.

v. Conclusion. Not unlike the schemes of mice and men the plans of Balak, to bring down a divine curse upon Israel under the influence of Balaam, failed miserably. Instead, Balaam pronounces a divine blessing on the enemies of Balak at the behest of God. The blessing on Israel includes the destruction of both Balak, Balaam as well as the people of Moab<sup>38</sup>. In conclusion of the type-scene, the author mentions that Balak and Balaam quitted the scene to return to their homes (24:25).

### 3.4.5 Genesis 3 (Theophany and Judgement).

Genesis 3:1-24 has been identified as a theophany<sup>39</sup>, but only once has the text been analysed according to its theophanic structure (cf. Niehaus 1995:33). This is a type-scene of a judicial theophany, which portrays a religious event in terms of a legal trial<sup>40</sup>.

1. Background	God's creation with mankind as the central creature (2:4-25) Divine prohibition for man to eat from the tree of knowledge (2:16-7) Presence of evil and the disobedience of man and his wife (3:1-7)
2. Manifestation	Yahweh manifested in a wind during the late afternoon Man and his wife hide between the trees in the garden (3:8)
3. Dialogue	Between Yahweh and the man, his wife and the snake (3:9-22)
4. Intrigue	The mystery of the trees of knowledge and life (2:9,17; 3:2,22)

<sup>38</sup> Cf. how the prophecy of Numbers 24:17 was fulfilled in Numbers 31:8 and 2 Samuel 8:2.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Keil & Delitzsch (1861:97), Pax (1955:113), Davis (1978b:92-3), Smith (1993:107-8) and Niehaus (1994:263-7). In contrast to these scholars, Westermann (1990:601) finds in Gen. 1-11 no encounter with the deity in history (epiphany) nor an encounter with the holy one (theophany): In the biblical prehistory there is no religious area of existence, no separation between the sacred and profane, as well as no distinction between the *revelatio generalis* and the *revelatio specialis*.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Brueggemann (1982:40-54), Westermann (1990:252-3), Niehaus (1994:267).

i. Background. After Yahweh had created man and his wife in their pivotal position in the cosmos, they receive their respective functions as the viceroy and consort in the garden of Eden, subject to an injunction to abstain from the fruit of the tree of knowledge. Soon peace in the garden is disturbed by the presence of evil in the form of the snake of seduction. According to Brueggemann (1982:40-4) the main issues in Gen.2:4-3:24 are those of power and freedom. Man is destined as creature to live in God's world, with God's creatures, but on God's terms. These events are described in four sequences: (i) The function of man in the garden (2:4-17), (ii) the formation of a human helper (2:18-25), (iii) the disruption of the garden (3:1-7) and (iv) judgement and expulsion (3:8-24).

The identity and function of the serpent have been variously interpreted<sup>41</sup>. In the Ancient Near East the serpent was a dualistic symbol, which portrayed both life and fertility, immortality and eternity, wisdom and the numinous, as well as chaos and evil (Joines 1975). According to Brueggemann (1982:47) it should not be seen as a phallic symbol, as the Satan<sup>42</sup>, or as a principle of evil or death, but as a literary device which moves the plot of the story to a new agenda. Von Wolde (1994b:7-12) identified the serpent as a semantic prototype of knowing and shrewdness, of knowledge and life, and also of knowledge and differences. In the narrative of Gen.3 it is transformed from an aid to an enemy of man. Westermann (1990:238-9) likewise identifies the serpent as the mysterious origin of evil, which originated neither from God nor from man. In the narrative of the Old Testament the serpent is the first manifestation of evil.

The serpent manipulates the woman and then the man to eat, in defiance of divine orders, from the fruit of the tree of knowledge so as to achieve divine status<sup>43</sup>. After eating from

<sup>41</sup> Cf. the summaries of Joines (1975), Westermann (1990:337), and Van Wolde (1994b:4-7).

<sup>42</sup> Revelations 12:9 and 20:2 were later reinterpreted the serpent as a manifestation of the Satan.

<sup>43</sup> Joines (1975:19) is correct in stating that the serpent deceived mankind for his own purposes, by obtaining conflict with the deity and the demise of mankind. However, to interpret this as the serpent's ambition to share in the Godhead is difficult to prove in Gen.3 (cf. Van Wolde 1994b:6).

the prohibited fruit the eyes of the man and his wife are opened to their nakedness, which they initially concealed with leaves. When Yahweh appears they hide themselves among the trees.

ii. Manifestation. The theophany takes place in Gen.3:8, when the guilty human beings hear Yahweh walking in the cool evening breeze. They hide from God in terror, because of their disobedience. The divine manifestation takes place in the natural form of a storm theophany, and the response of man and his wife testify to this event:

וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ אֶת־קוֹל יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים מִתְהַלֵּךְ בַּגֶּן לְרוּחַ הַיּוֹם  
וַיִּתְחַבְּאוּ הָאָדָם וְאִשְׁתּוֹ מִפְּנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים בְּתוֹךְ עֵץ הַגֶּן:

*“And they heard the voice of Yahweh Elohim walking in the garden in the latter part of the day. Then the man and his wife hid themselves from the face of Yahweh Elohim among the trees of the garden”.*<sup>44</sup>

Biblical translations state that mankind heard the voice of God walking in the garden “in the cool of the day” (KJV, ASV, RSV), “in the afternoon / evening” (LXX), or “in the afternoon breeze” (VUL). Niehaus (1994) interprets the unusual Hebrew expression in the light of Akkadian evidence, wherein the Akkadian *umu* has a Hebrew cognate, *ywm* (“storm”). By comparing the ‘voice’ of Yahweh to his ‘thunder’ at Sinai (cf. Ex.20:18), Niehaus (1994:265, cf. 1995:159) proposes the following translation of Gen.3:8: “Then the man and his wife heard the thunder of Yahweh God as he was going back and forth in the garden in the wind of the storm, and they hid from Yahweh God among the trees of the garden”<sup>45</sup>. When Adam and his wife heard the voice of Yahweh walking in the terrible storm theophany, they went into hiding fear stricken, being both physically and spiritually naked in the eyes of the deity. This response of fear in the presence of the deity became a standard part of human reactions to theophanies in the Old Testament. Gen.3:8

<sup>44</sup> Gen 3:8 : “And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden” (RSV).

<sup>45</sup> Niehaus’s translation is questioned by Grundke (2001:548-551), who follows the ancient interpretation of the wind as an ordinary daily phenomenon, translated it as “at the windy time of the day”. God does appear, but in a more subtle manifestation than Niehaus envisaged. It might be a storm theophany, but then in a most muted and understated storm, like a “tempest in a teapot”.

is the first Sinai-like storm theophany, when God appeared as a Judge of primeval human disobedience (Niehaus 1995:18). Yahweh chose to judge rather than ignore his people.

iii. Dialogue. The divine judgement on Adam, Eve and the snake comes in two parts: First, there is some kind of hearing wherein Adam shifts the blame for his disobedience onto his wife, who casts the blame on the now-silent snake (3:9-13). Secondly, the verdict entails punishment for Adam and his wife, as well as a divine curse on the snake and the earth (3:14-19). Already in this first theophany of judgement we find that the type-scene adumbrates the events of the later comparable theophany of judgement of Num. 12. God summons three guilty creatures to give account for their actions. One of the more-guilty creatures is a female, and the divine punishment has a retributive.

iv. Intrigue. Genesis 3 is filled with mystery since it employs themes commonly found in the creation myths of the Ancient Near East. The acme of mystery in this text, however, is the function and meaning of the tree of knowledge and its relationship to the tree of life<sup>46</sup>. What was the intention of Yahweh when He removed the human couple from Eden, to prevent them from eating of the tree of life and thereby gaining immortality? Westermann (1990) explains the trees as two stories combined in one narrative in Gen.3 to describe the conflict between God and man, wherein man pursues life and God prevents him from acquiring it. Brueggemann (1982:45-6) combines the tree of life (as fellowship with God) and the tree of knowledge (as the divine prohibition) for practical reasons into one, i.e. "the tree of command": Man neglects his vocation and abuses the latitude given to him by deliberately misinterpreting the divine prohibition as an option rather than a order. Both the life before God and the human destiny is affected by this *faux pas* "to be like God". According to Landy (cf. Van Wolde 1994b:35) the tree of knowledge depends on the tree of life in the sense that it stylistically complements the tree of life by functioning as a symbol of death, just like the psychological correspondence between *Eros* and *Thanatos*. Van Wolde (1994b:32-47) explains the theme of life and death in Gen.2-3 in terms of both trees, occurring in four episodes: (i). Initially neither life nor death existed (2:4-6).

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<sup>46</sup> For various interpretations of the trees, cf. Westermann (1990:241-4), Van Wolde (1994b:32-6).

- (ii). Man was created as a living being with the possibility of death presented as mutually exclusive in terms of either life or death (2:7-24). (iii). Under the influence of the snake, man and woman reject the possibility of death and opt for life without death (3:1-7). (iv). Yahweh then relates human beings to both life and death (3:8-24).

This process can also be explained from the perspective of the divine purpose with the trees: By creating the two trees God introduces the possibility of good and bad as well as the ability to procreate. This possibility becomes reality, as man obtains knowledge to act like the deity (cf. 1:26-8), i.e. being procreative and able to discriminate between good and evil, like God. When man acknowledges himself as different from God by hiding from Him, procreation is developed from a possibility to a modality of pain, death, work, toil, children, and burden. The meaning of 3:22 should not be understood as eternal life, but as the beginning of the history of mankind<sup>47</sup>. God and man are presented in the trees in terms of continuity and discontinuity, timelessness and time, transcendence and immanence. While God remains unlimited mankind is restricted (Van Wolde 1994b:45-7).

v. Conclusion. The human beings are driven from Eden, which is guarded in an epiphany of cherubim armed with flaming swords. As the gates to Eden is closed on the primordial parents of mankind, those to the rest of biblical history are opened. The Eden theophany of judgement functions as an introduction to all other biblical theophanies.

#### **3.4.6 Numbers 12 (Theophany and Inspiration).**

Numbers 12:1-16 has often been quoted by scholars to clarify the unique role of Moses as mediator between Yahweh and the people of Israel, but seldom as a theophany event.

In the previous chapter we have discussed the content of the theophany. We now focus on the theophany type-scene.

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<sup>47</sup> Gen. 3:22 "Then the Lord God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil; and now, lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever" (RSV).

1. Background	The issue of divine guidance and the authority of leadership (12:1-4)
2. Manifestation	The glory of Yahweh descends on the tabernacle (12:5)
3. Dialogue	Judgement of Aaron and Miriam and Moses' intervention (12:6-14)
4. Intrigue	Direct and indirect forms of divine inspiration (12:6-8)
5. Conclusion	The issue is settled and the journey is continued (12:15-16)

i. Background. Num.12:1-4 portrays the dispute over divine inspiration among the key members of the cult of Israel, during their wanderings through the wilderness. Moses is accused of having married an alien wife, as well as the abuse of his authority. Evil infiltrates the most intimate part of Israel's cultic life, namely the well-springs of divine inspiration. It is manifested in the persons of Israel's high priest and prophetess. Yahweh summons these three family members to a conclave in the tent of meeting.

ii. Manifestation. In Num.12:5 it is described how Yahweh descended in the pillar of the cloud, to stand at the entrance of the tent of meeting<sup>48</sup>. Aaron and Miriam obey the order to present themselves, but show no sign of fear as reaction to the divine appearance. Their arrogant and overbearing disrespect in the presence of the deity contrasts starkly with the humble attitude of Moses before God and man (12:3).

iii. Dialogue. Whereas the judgement theophany of Gen.3 was cast in the form of question and answer, Yahweh here pronounces the high priest and prophetess guilty without giving them a proper hearing. The issue is further clarified in 12:6-8: Yahweh speaks personally and directly to Moses, whereas Aaron and Miriam only know God indirectly through dreams and visions. Aaron is chided by Yahweh, and Miriam becomes leprous. Moses, by acceding to Aaron's plea, intercedes for Miriam who was banished from the camp of Israel for a period of seven days. Similar to Job, Moses makes intercession for his relatives and for Miriam who is punished.

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<sup>48</sup> Num. 12:5: "And the Lord came down in a pillar of cloud, and stood at the door of the tent, and called Aaron and Miriam; and they both came forward" (RSV). For similar theophanies in the cult of Israel, cf. Num. 14:10ff and Dt.31:15.



iv. **Intrigue.** The incidence of the various forms of the divine manifestation was discussed in Numbers 22-4 within its Ancient Near Eastern context. In Numbers 12 it is depicted in an unique Israelitic perspective. The relationship between the purposes of divine inspiration and the modes of divine manifestation is clearly stated in this text. Theophany, in its various types (anthropomorphic, the angel of Yahweh / Elohim, storm and glory theophanies) remains the oldest form of divine manifestation for the purposes of communication between God and man. Prophetic inspiration in dreams and visions are of a lesser nature than the direct form of appearances during theophanies. Recipients of divine manifestations are not to accept it as some personal award. Yahweh himself remains the only true God who deserves all the glory.

v. **Conclusion.** After Miriam is allowed back into the camp of Israel, the journey through the wilderness is continued once more. The question of divine inspiration is settled among the members of Israel's sacerdotal and leading family.

### 3.4.7 Deuteronomy 31-2 (Theophany and Leadership).

To the best of our knowledge the theophanic character of Deut.31-2 has not been discussed previously, probably due to the description in 33:2 of the dominant classic epiphany. The structure of Von Rad (1988:188) serves as a guideline for our type-scene of the theophany: (i). The appointment of Joshua (31:1-8,23), (ii) a theophany in the tent of meeting (31:14-5), (iii). the preparation for the song of Moses (31:16-22) and (iv). the directions of God are deposited in the book of Deuteronomy (31:9-13, 24-9).

1. Background	The past and present leaders are summoned to the tent of meeting: Moses to die and Joshua to lead the people of Israel (31:14)
2. Manifestation	Yahweh appears in a cloud at the entrance of the tent (31:15)
3. Dialogue	Joshua appointed to lead, Moses entrusted to write a song (31:16-23)
4. Intrigue	The role of theophany and the ordination of leaders
5. Conclusion	The song, blessing and death of Moses (31:24-34:12)

i. Background. Dt.31 serves as the conclusion to the sermon of Moses to the people of Israel (cf. Dt.1:5-31:6). He appoints Joshua as his successor to conquer Canaan as the promised land for the tribes of Israel. Both Moses and Joshua are called upon by Yahweh to present themselves in the tent of meeting to receive the divine instructions.

ii. Manifestation. In 31:14-5 we are informed as to the way in which the manifestation of the deity took place<sup>49</sup>: While Moses and Joshua remained standing Yahweh appeared in the tent in the form of the pillar of cloud which also remained standing at the entrance of the tent of meeting. The fact that the divine pillar remained standing at the entrance of the tent testifies to the fact that this, and other glory theophanies in the cultic place of the nomadic Israel, does not mean that the tent was Yahweh's permanent residence. It served only as a place of dialogue with God who, under the cover of smoke, occasionally descended onto it (Von Rad 1988:189).

iii. Dialogue. An appropriate human response to the manifestation is not totally absent from this text, because the song that God ordered Moses to write down and teach Israel probably served as a suitable reaction to the changing form of the theophany in the Israelite cult. Moreover the way in which Joshua would lead the people of Israel into the promised land, would prove to be a suitable response to Yahweh's theophany of ordination of this successive covenantal leader. The song of Moses (Dt.32) serves to teach Israel to remember the acts of divine intervention on the behalf of their fathers and for their own sake. The historical acts of Yahweh are described in epiphanic language.

iv. Intrigue. The role of the cultic theophany during the ordination of leaders in Israel is clearly illustrated in Dt.31-3. When a new leader was to be appointed Yahweh legitimized the appointment in terms of a theophany in the cult. The song of Moses in Dt.32:1-43 should be regarded as a new revelation of God in the cultic liturgy and feast of Israel. The blessing of Moses in Dt.33 may just as well be seen in a similar way, as it describes the

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<sup>49</sup> Deut. 31:14-5: "And the Lord said to Moses, "Behold, the days approach when you must die; call Joshua, and present yourselves in the tent of meeting, that I may commission him." And Moses and Joshua went and presented themselves in the tent of meeting. And the Lord appeared in the tent in a pillar of cloud; and the pillar of cloud stood by the door of the tent" (RSV).

epiphany of Yahweh in history. The theophanies at Sinai, previously recorded in the sermon of Moses in Dt.4, are now called to mind and relived.

v. Conclusion. As the book of Deuteronomy draws to a close Moses dies and is buried by Yahweh on the mountains of Moab. Joshua becomes the new leader of Israel.

### 3.4.8 Exodus 19-34 (Three Theophanies and One Mountain).

The Sinai complex consists of three theophany type-scenes, i.e. Ex.19-23, 24-31, 32-34. All three theophanies are related in successive stages to the establishment and renewal of the covenant between Yahweh and Israel. While the first is concerned with the commandments of the covenant, the second focuses on communion with Yahweh in the covenant, and the third on the renewal of the covenant after Israel's apostasy<sup>50</sup>.

Exodus 19-34 illustrates Israel's burgeoning theology of divine cultic presence, which is conveyed through changes in the imagery of the theophany on the Horeb / Sinai (cf. Dozeman 1989:12). Regarding these changes in theophanic description, scholars using the Documentary Hypothesis identified various traditions pertaining to the multiple theologies on the manifestation and presence of the divine in these texts, as part and parcel of the changing imagery of the theophany on Sinai<sup>51</sup>. It would be quite impossible for any scientific study on Exodus 19-34 not to take seriously these conclusions arrived at by form-critics and tradition-historians<sup>52</sup>. But the fact that Exodus 19-34 can be segmented according to the different views of the redactors / sources of J, E, D, and P does not imply

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<sup>50</sup> According to Zimmerli (1978:48) theophany, covenant, and commandments constitute the primary theological accents of Ex.19-34. It was originally an independent theophanic tradition, but in its present form is shaped as narrative framework for the apodictic code (De Vries 1975:163), while the focus remains on the elements of the theophany (Booij 1984:9, cf. Sitarz 1987:39-40).

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Rowley (1961:42,45), Kuntz (1967:103), Schmidt (1983:51-2), Deist (1987:96-108), Sitarz (1987:25-6), Dozeman (1989), Van Seters (1994:247-89), Schwartz (1996).

<sup>52</sup> As we have mentioned in the previous chapter, the Sinai theophany is usually regarded as a later development, which was used in a major attempt to historicize the theophanic myth and to place it in the centre of the desert experience. The character of the Sinai theophany was influenced by Zion as the temple mount (Van Seters 1994:270,289, cf. Jeremias 1965:110).

that it cannot be studied as a meaningful entity as it currently features in the *BHS*. It would be patently unfair not to assume that the final redactor, which compiled the different theologies on manifestations at Sinai, reworked Exodus 19-34 to such an extent that it is anything other than meaningful as it now stands.

We propose to study this text as a given unity, although we will keep the many and diverse findings of the Documentary Hypothesis in mind and use them where and when required. Because Yahweh changed the way of his divine manifestation, the Sinai event was reinterpreted by later generations through cultic observation and re-enactment, leading eventually to the inevitable conventionalization of the language of the theophany. In short, the cult of Israel kept the Sinaitic event alive in their conscience<sup>53</sup>.

Polak (1996:130-1) identifies the theophany as an overarching theme which combines linear progression and cyclic inclusion in Exodus. A framework can be established by central key words, like “seeing”, “hearing”, “speaking” and “doing”. The narrative shifts from personal to national revelation, from manifestation of physical divine power to the communication of the covenant code. The effect is a lasting form of manifestation, which will endure after Israel leaves the mountain and the scene of the theophany, i.e. the enduring manifestation of Yahweh’s glory is seen in the tent of meeting (1996:146-7).

In Ex.19-34 a two-phase movement occur between narrative and normative, between divine action and human response (cf. Fokkelman 1987:57-8 and Fretheim 1991:202):

Narrative	Normative
19:1-25 (Initial theophany)	20:1-17 (Ten Commandments)
20:18-21 (Initial theophany)	20:22-23:33 (Book of Covenant)
24:1-18 (Covenant theophany)	25:1-31:18 (Cultic instructions)
32:1-34:35 (Glory theophany)	35:1-40:38 (Cultic instructions)

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Kuntz (1967:73). According to Schmidt (1983:51) “Yahweh was not God of one single natural phenomenon.... One particular theophany is not in itself a theophany of Yahweh, nor is Yahweh in his theophany bound to one particular phenomenon. Yahweh was never a ‘storm god’, ‘fire god’ or ‘light god’”.

We now proceed to analyse the three theophanies on Sinai in their successive stages. The first theophany of **Exodus 19-23** is linked with the issuing of the commandments emanating from the covenant between Yahweh and Israel.

1. Background	Israel arrives in the wilderness at the mountain of Sinai (19:1-2) Moses is entrusted with orders of purification for Israel (19:3-15)
2. Manifestation	Yahweh is manifested on Sinai in storm elements Israel shudders as Moses ascends the mountain (19:16-20)
3. Dialogue	Commandments of Yahweh's covenant with Israel (20:1-23:33) Communication between Moses and Yahweh (19:21-4)
4. Intrigue	Different elements of the divine manifestation (19:16-9)
5. Conclusion	Moses descends from Sinai to promulgate Yahweh's orders (19:25)

i. Background. When Israel arrives at Sinai the people are informed by Yahweh, through Moses, to prepare themselves cultically for the theophany and the revelation of God's will.

ii. Manifestation. Yahweh descends onto the mountain and is manifested through the elements of thunder, lightning, cloud, the blast of a trumpet, smoke, fire and earthquake. In reaction to this manifestation both nature and Israel tremble. The people requests Moses to act as mediator between them and Yahweh<sup>54</sup>.

iii. Dialogue. Moses proceeds to act as mediator of Yahweh's principles for the covenant with Israel<sup>55</sup>. Some conversation takes place between Yahweh and Moses, but this is overshadowed by the content of the book of the covenant, which is narrated by God to Moses who has to teach it to the Israelites.

<sup>54</sup> Ex. 19:16-9: "On the morning of the third day there were thunders and lightning, and a thick cloud upon the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled. Then Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God; and they took their stand at the foot of the mountain. And Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire; and the smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain quaked greatly. And as the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him in thunder" (RSV).

<sup>55</sup> "Exod.19 holds but half the theophany; the other half, the completing half, is in Exod.20" (Durham 1987:274).

iv. **Intrigue.** Gowan (1994:28) calls Ex. 19 the classic theophany of the Old Testament, because it combines the different phenomena of divine manifestation in thunder, lightning, cloud, trumpet-sound, earthquake, smoke, and fire. Van Seters (1994:250), in contrast to Kingsbury's tradition of storm and volcanic theophanies (cf. 3.2.2), combines all the natural elements in the pillar of cloud which previously led Israel to Sinai. The theophany seems to be of a cultic nature.

v. **Conclusion.** Moses descends from the mountain to proclaim God's book of the covenant to the people of Israel (cf. Ex. 19:25). Now that they know the will of Yahweh, the next step to the actual making of that covenant can be taken.

While the preparations for the covenant were being made in the initial theophany, **Exodus 24-31** portrays a second theophany as the consummation of the covenant in terms of a communal meal between Yahweh and the leaders of Israel.

1. Background	Orders to purify Israel's seventy leaders for a covenant meeting Four priests and seventy elders ascend Sinai (24:1-9)
2. Manifestation	The party sees God's presence A covenantal meal takes place (24:10-11) Moses alone ascends Sinai again (24:12-8)
3. Dialogue	Cultic instructions: Acts and objects to be implemented (25:1-31:17)
4. Intrigue	The cultic objects as symbols of the divine presence
5. Conclusion	Moses descends Sinai with the tables of testimony (31:18)

i. **Background.** Moses is told by Yahweh to ritually prepare the seventy leaders for a covenantal meal with Him on Sinai. The people beneath the mountain sacrifice to Yahweh after they had listened to the commandments of the covenant.

ii. Manifestation. In Ex.24:9-11 it is told how the seventy leaders and four priests ascend Sinai to partake in the divine presence in a communal meal of the covenant<sup>56</sup>. Moses is told once again to ascend the mountain, where he remained for forty days. During this time Yahweh spoke to Moses from the cloud, which acted to accommodate both the presence and concealment of the divine (Ex.24:15-8).

iii. Dialogue. Moses receives orders on the establishment of cultic objects such as the building of the ark and the tabernacle, with its cultic furniture, objects, sacrifices and acts (cf. Ex.25-31).

iv. Intrigue. The continued presence of Yahweh among Israel necessitates the making of a covenant<sup>57</sup>. To adhere to the cultic laws of Yahweh, Israel is provided with a plan to build the cult wherein divine manifestation can happen in a more permanent manner (cf. 24:16-8). The description of the tabernacle is an architectural representation of the experiences of Moses involving the divine glory on Sinai. The three levels of humanity - people, priests and Moses, who are allowed to approach God in successive and restricted stages in Ex.19-24, are reflected in the three divisions of the tabernacle. As the cloud of divine presence previously descended on Sinai, so it will in future descend on the tent and tabernacle<sup>58</sup>.

v. Conclusion. After the forty days were elapsed, Moses took with him, on his way down the mountain, the two tables on which the commandments of Yahweh were written (31:18).

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<sup>56</sup> Ex. 24:9-11: "Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up, and they saw the God of Israel; and there was under his feet as it were a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness. And he did not lay his hand on the chief men of the people of Israel; they beheld God, and ate and drank" (RSV).

<sup>57</sup> Durham (1987:342), Niehaus (1995:197), Polak (1996:140-1).

<sup>58</sup> According to Janzen the tabernacle becomes a home away from home, where God dwell among Israel (1997:191). The ark is an emblem of God who fights for his people (1997:195), while the cultic articles signify divine hospitality and the lampstand that Someone is at home (1997:189-98).

The third type-scene of the theophany narrates how the Israelites were unwilling to wait for their mediator for forty days. They persuade Aaron to establish a Canaanite form of the worship of Baal. This amounts to a breach of the covenant which they had entered into with Yahweh. After the people of Israel are punished for this apostasy, **Exodus 32-4** narrates the way in which the covenant with Yahweh is re-established in a third theophany.

1. Background	The Israelites commit apostasy by trying to mediate God (32:1-6) Yahweh's anger with Israel is interceded for by Moses (32:7-14) Moses and God punish the Israelites (32:15-35)
2. Manifestation	Divine presence manifested on the tent of meeting (33:1-23) Yahweh's glory is manifested to Moses on Sinai (34:1-8) Moses worships Yahweh (34:8) The face of Moses also temporarily reflects Yahweh's glory (34:29ff)
3. Dialogue	Yahweh orders Moses to prepare Israel for a renewal of the covenant Another set of the decalogue is provided (34:9-28)
4. Intrigue	The permanent presence of Yahweh in the tabernacle (33:7-11).
5. Conclusion	Moses returns to Israel to convey Yahweh's orders (34:29-35)

i. Background. The covenant which was envisaged and executed during the first two theophanies, is endangered when Israel misunderstands Yahweh's manifestation in terms of the Canaanite religion of Baal. The scene of the golden calf shows how Israel prefers the permanent presence of an artefact god with a mediator who translates their requests in cultic terms. As a reversion of the fiery radiance of the Sinai theophany, the role of the fire used to melt the artefact is in opposition to that of the theophany. The punishment of Israel is ironic: They are forced to drink water mixed with the ashes of the image's remains, which permeates their bodies and heightens the proximity of the idol to absurdity.

ii. Manifestation. Exodus 32-4 shows that Moses has become an indispensable mediator of the deity to Israel. But Moses himself becomes prey to "*libido theologica*, the lust for absolute knowledge" in 33:21-3 (Terrien 1978:144). Moses requests to see an



unconcealed manifestation of the deity, to which Yahweh responds negatively<sup>59</sup>. Yet, during the manifestation the divine glory is passed on to the face of Moses (34:29-35).

iii. Dialogue. The conversation between Yahweh and Moses is described in stages during this theophany. Initially he intercedes for the Israelites whom Yahweh wants to destroy because of their apostasy (32:7-14). Then Moses persuades Yahweh not to remove his presence from the people of Israel, but to remain with them on the journey (33:12-7). And in the final conversation of this type-scene, the ten commandments are rewritten by Yahweh and made known to Moses for the sake of Israel's covenant with God (34:1-27).

iv. Intrigue. The tent of meeting would henceforth mediate the presence of the divine in terms of the cloud that once descended onto it. It becomes the place where Israel can seek God. The fact that the glory of Yahweh descended on the tent as the pillar of cloud which previously guided Israel through the wilderness and descended on Sinai, makes one type of the glory theophany identical with the others at Sinai<sup>60</sup>.

v. Conclusion. After Moses had conveyed the divine commandments to the people of Israel, the covenant is re-established. In the rest of the book of Exodus 35-40 the instructions of Yahweh on the cult of Israel are obeyed.

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<sup>59</sup> Ex. 33:18-23: "Moses said, "I pray thee, show me thy glory." And he said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you, and will proclaim before you my name 'The Lord'; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. But," he said, "you cannot see my face; for man shall not see me and live." And the Lord said, "Behold, there is a place by me where you shall stand upon the rock; and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by; then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back; but my face shall not be seen" (RSV).

<sup>60</sup> According to Kuntz (1967:72) Ex.19-34 is a theophany par excellence, whose influence was exerted upon subsequent theophanic descriptions as "an act of unique and unsurpassed revelation". Cf. also Durham (1987:452), Van Seters (1994:332,343) and Polak (1996:141-3).

### 3.4.9 1 Kings 19 (Alternative Theophany).

Elijah is portrayed in 1 Kings 17 to 2 Kings 1 as the “severe moralist from Gilead” (Carroll 1990:174-5), who hopes to lead Israel back to her initial covenant with Yahweh at Sinai. In this controversial theophany the way in which God chooses to manifest Himself, is to be regarded as an integral part of the message He wishes to communicate (Rice 1990:159).

1. Background	Elijah fled from Jezebel to Horeb, assisted by an angel (19:1-11)
2. Manifestation	A series of manifestations, after which he covers his face (19:12-3)
3. Dialogue	Elijah is re-commissioned as prophet (19:14-8)
4. Intrigue	Changes in the form of the theophany (19:12)
5. Conclusion	Elijah obeys the orders of Yahweh (19:19-21)

i. Background. In the epiphanic *Kulturkampf* on mount Carmel 850 prophets of the Canaanite god Baal are massacred at the command of Elijah. Jezebel, the queen of Israel and follower of Baal as the quintessential symbol of evil, sends a message of retribution to Elijah. Elijah flees to Horeb. After the triumph on mount Carmel (1Ki.18), we find him at mount Horeb desiring to die. As a zealot of the Mosaic tradition of the covenant, Elijah likewise makes a pilgrimage to the source of Israel’s faith (Anderson 1978:254-5). In his pathetic situation he is strengthened by an angel during the journey. The overall structure of this type-scene is one of divine manifestations linked to intinerary<sup>61</sup>.

ii. Manifestation. In 1Kings 19:11-2 God descends on the mountain of Horeb in a series of divine manifestations:

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<sup>61</sup> Long (1984:197-200) identified four genres of the theophany, epiphany, lament, and commission in 1Kings 19. Verse 4-8 is a dream epiphany and verse 9-18 a vision, opening with the prophetic word formula, “And behold!”. Theophany and visionary language may be similar, but also differ.

וַיֹּאמֶר צֵא וְעַמְדָּתָ בְּהָר לִפְנֵי יְהוָה וְהִנֵּה יְהוָה עֹבֵר וְרוּחַ גְּדוּלָּה וַחֲזֵק מִפָּרֶק  
הָרִים וּמִשְׁבַּר סֻלְעִים לִפְנֵי יְהוָה לֹא בְרוּחַ יְהוָה וְאַחַר הָרוּחַ רַעַשׁ לֹא בְרַעַשׁ  
יְהוָה: וְאַחַר הָרַעַשׁ אֵשׁ לֹא בְּאֵשׁ יְהוָה וְאַחַר הָאֵשׁ קוֹל דְּמָמָה רַקָּה:

*"Then He said: "Go out and stand on the mountain before the face of Yahweh". And he looked and saw Yahweh passing by. Then a big and fierce wind slashed the mountains while tearing to slices the boulders before the face of Yahweh, but Yahweh was not in the wind. And after the wind followed an earthquake, but Yahweh was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake there was a fire, but Yahweh was not in the fire. And after the fire there was a still, small voice"*<sup>62</sup>.

Scholars disagree on the relation between the elements of storm, earthquake, fire and the קוֹל דְּמָמָה רַקָּה<sup>63</sup>. Booij (1984:14) regards the elements of the storm, earthquake and fire merely as harbingers of Yahweh's coming, because only at the "sound of a light whisper" Elijah wrapped his face in his mantle and stood at the entrance of the cave to meet God. According to Gowan (1994:35) theophanic language never claimed that God was in the wind, earthquake, fire or the "thin sound of silence". All of it form part of the same numinous experience. Lust (1975:114-5) agrees that the threefold pattern should read that Yahweh was "not yet" in the storm nor in the earthquake or in the fire", because these cosmic signs precede and announce God's coming<sup>64</sup>. The announcement is concluded in both Exodus 19:16,19 and 1Kings 19:12 by a terrifying sound which Lust (1975:114) translates as a "roaring and thunderous sound": Yahweh's voice is heard as a

<sup>62</sup> 1Ki. 19:11-2 "And he said, "Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord." And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and broke in pieces the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice" (RSV).

<sup>63</sup> This phrase is also translated as a "sound of sheer silence" (NSRV), "gentle whisper" (NIV), "soft whisper of a voice" (TEV), "low murmuring sound" (NEB), "sound of a gentle breeze" (JB), "sound of a light whisper" (Montgomery), "stillness, and then a small whisper" (Sandmel), as well as a "voice of gentle stillness" (cf. Kuntz 1967:152).

<sup>64</sup> Biblical authors separate Yahweh's presence from outward manifestations. In the four elements the "actual contrast is between the fireworks of God's theophany and the quiet calm that followed, not between God's presence and absence" (Nelson 1987:124, cf. Niehaus 1995:248). God was not in the wind, earthquake, fire, nor in the sound of the breeze. "He is above nature, but controls all aspects of these elements" (Bronner 1976:34).

roaring thunder at the end of a series of cosmic events. As a result, Elijah first fled into the cave and came out while covering his face in the presence of Yahweh. By wrapping his face Elijah indicates his apprehension of the divine presence (Gray 1980:411-2).

1Kings 19 refers back to the theophanies of Exodus 3-4 and 19-34. Elijah becomes a *Moses redivivus*, in the sense that he receives from Yahweh a similar commission and deliberately attempts to revitalise the Mosaic tradition in his day. His journey is similar to that of Moses in terms of time (40 days and nights), place (Horeb / Sinai) and theophanic description<sup>65</sup>. Yet, in the case of Elijah we find an important reversal of the traditional theophany to Moses: Moses requests to see the divine glory, while Elijah is prepared by God for this purpose. Moses is denied a view on the deity, while Elijah is invited to an interview. Moses asks for the help of Yahweh, while Elijah complains of its lack. Moses' boldness is contrasted to Elijah's reverence<sup>66</sup>. In the component of intrigue we will explain the implications of this alteration in the traditional theophanic type-scene.

iii. Dialogue. Elijah desires to be released from his prophetic office, but Yahweh insists that he continues the commission which consists of three commands. The exhausted prophet is re-commissioned by the deity in a completely overwhelming intervention<sup>67</sup>. Elijah complains about the covenant of Moses which was broken by the people of Israel. The people have overturned the Yahwistic altars and killed their prophets. He is empowered for one purpose only - the re-establishment of a covenant between Yahweh and Israel by means of subversive military action and prophecy, in Israel and abroad.

iv. Intrigue. What is the implication of the change in the way the divine manifestation took place in 1Kings 19:11-2? Scholars have provided three interrelated

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<sup>65</sup> Cf. Weiser (1950:516), Jeremias (1965:162), Kuntz (1967:151), Gray (1980:408-9).

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Kuntz (1967:147), Gregory & Hauser (1990:145-6), Niehaus (1995:245-7).

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Long (1984:199-200), DeVries (1985:235-6). Nelson (1987:122-9) places more emphasis on the dialogue which took place between Yahweh and the depressed prophet than on the acts of manifestation itself. This however affects his interpretation of the text.

interpretations<sup>68</sup> : (1) The storm theophany is left behind to distinguish between Yahweh and Baal. (2) Theophany is replaced with the prophetic vision in 1Ki.19:12. (3) The Mosaic theophany is reinterpreted in 1Ki.19 as a development of the event.

The first interpretation of the change of the theophany relates it to the fact that the storm theophany was gradually abandoned by the adherents of the Yahwistic faith, to distinguish Yahweh from the Canaanite Baal. According to Fensham (1980:232) the main theme in 1Kings 17-9 is the contest between Yahweh and Baal, with the emphasis on the power of Yahweh and the impotence of Baal as the storm deity. In 1Ki.19:11-2 Yahweh is no longer identified (like Baal-Melkart) in manifestations such as the storm, earthquake, wind or fire, but in the silence following in the wake thereof. Kuntz (1967:152-3)<sup>69</sup> sees the elements of 19:12 as a contradiction in terms - silence and sound are juxtaposed and henceforth Elijah would identify Yahweh's presence in terms of silence. In the new encounter Yahweh becomes distinct from Baal. The misconception of Carmel and the violent methods of 18:40 are jettisoned, because Yahweh is no longer identical to the cosmic powers of nature. According to Jeremias this is a polemic against Israel's own religious tradition in its Ancient Near Eastern context (cf. Würthwein 1994). The storm theophany is discharged in favour of other forms of divine manifestation.

Proponents of the second interpretation think that the theophany is replaced with the prophetic vision as the future form of the manifestation of the deity in 1Kings 19:11-2. In a re-evaluation of Yahweh's powerful presence in nature, manifestation becomes a symbol of divine spirituality and intimacy (Shorter 1985:64). Revelation is changed to events in ordinary life, no longer happening only in the spectacular manifestations of nature. The still, small voice is a private, personal revelation to Elijah, assuring him of the fact that he

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<sup>68</sup> For other summaries, cf. Nelson (1987:123-4), Würthwein (1994:142-9), as well as our discussion in chapter two (cf. 2.4.3).

<sup>69</sup> Cf. also Anderson (1978:254-5), Rice (1990:159-61). "The intelligible small voice of Yahweh's word transcends the thunder of Baal" (Nelson 1987:123-4).

remains God's prophet<sup>70</sup>. Nelson notes that Elijah's situation is no different after the theophany, as he complains of the same things, feeling sorry for himself (cf. 19:10,14). The still, small voice is "nothing more than a signal that the theophanic excitement is over and that Elijah can emerge so that God can try something else" (1987:125,126). Elijah is so deeply depressed that the manifestations of the angels, the word of God, and the pyrotechnics of the theophany fail to change his attitude. Volz saw the changes of the theophany as moralising (Elijah is to fight with inner weapons), Fohrer as spiritualization according to Yahweh's nature (cf. Würthwein 1994:142-9). Gray relates 1Kings 19 to Exodus 33 to describe this theophany as "intelligible communication". Elijah expected an intervention, as was anticipated in the traditional liturgy of the cult, but it turns out to be "an intelligible revelation to find God's direction in the ordinary course of daily life and to communicate it regularly and constructively" (Gray 1980:410,411, cf. 1986:265). 1Ki. 19 is an advance in the human conception of the divine as personally accessible, which anticipates the prophetic oracle as expression of the divine will in contemporary history. And for Carroll (1990:174) there is humour to be found in 1Ki.19:11-3 in the satirical take-off of the pyrotechnic legend of Moses, which is debunked of its mythical elements. Now God comes in a "gentle little breeze", and the tumult which made Elijah flee into the cave in fright, is replaced by the breeze which draw him out (DeVries 1985:236). The theophany is replaced by the prophetic vision.

The third interpretation regards 1Kings 19 as a reinterpretation and development of the Mosaic theophanies. The covenant that was mediated by Moses seems to have been nullified, and this theophany at Horeb announces that an important intervention by Yahweh is about to take place, as the imperceptible whisper marks the beginning of new era in Yahweh's manifestation. However, the still, soft whisper is not to be taken as a more elevated, ethical or spiritual concept of God<sup>71</sup>. The result of the manifestation

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<sup>70</sup> Cf. Nelson (1987:123-4). Another interesting explanation in Nelson is that the three violent elements foreshadow the three violent figures of Hazael, Jehu, and Elisha, while the quiet theophany presages the remnant of the seven thousand. But it lacks an exegetical basis.

<sup>71</sup> "With an OT theophany everything depends upon the pronouncement: the phenomena which accompany it are always merely accessories" (Von Rad 1993:19-20). No symbolic meaning should be read into the "voice of thin silence".

actually increases the tension (cf. 19:13), as the manifestation of Yahweh in terms of 'air breath' represents the extreme limit of comprehension by the human senses. The theophany in 1 Kings 19 presents the more sophisticated mode of a new theophany meeting<sup>72</sup>. Würthwein (1994:151-2) interprets this theophany as a cultic event, during which silence presented the divine manifestation and presence in the cult of Israel<sup>73</sup>.

v. Conclusion. Elijah leaves Horeb to fulfil his threefold prophetic duty. After he bestowed his prophetic task on Elisha, he is taken up to heaven in 2 Kings 2.

### 3.5 Summary.

In this chapter we have identified nine texts of the Old Testament which portray the theophany as a religious phenomenon, according to its descriptive definition as it was established in chapter two. These nine texts were analysed as type-scenes of the theophany in its reported form. Our study has produced a reasonable paradigmatic structure for the theophany as a type-scene, consisting of the following components: (i) Background, (ii) Manifestation, (iii) Dialogue, (iv) Intrigue and (v) Conclusion.

The structure of the theophany as a type-scene in its reported form is used in the next chapter as a referential frame, which we apply to the structure of the divine discourses, during the analyses of *Job* 38-42 as an Old Testament theophany.

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<sup>72</sup> Cf. Kuntz (1967:137), Cross (1973:194), Lust (1975:114).

<sup>73</sup> According to Würthwein (1994:141) the theophany to Elijah is a cultic event during which the presence of the deity was presupposed. 1Ki.19:11-4 is a later addition and 19:9-11 a gloss.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE THEOPHANY OF JOB

*Poetics is concerned with form, rather than content, or with content when it is expressible as a form (Chatman). How the book of Job means is part of what it means (Ciardi)*<sup>1</sup>.

#### 4.1 Introduction.

This chapter builds on the conclusions made of the theophany as religious phenomenon (chapter 2) and of the theophany framework (chapter 3). The application of the type-scene as theophanic model to the divine discourses of *Job* 38-42 is text-analytical and rhetorical in nature. The theophany in its reported form is maintained as a referential framework for the structure of the divine discourses of *Job*.

In this text-orientated study the unity between the different parts of the text in the *BHS* is maintained<sup>2</sup>. The focus is placed on the function of the divine discourses in the final form of *Job*'s text. To disqualify parts or the whole of this text as an interpolation may be an easy alternative, but also the "lazy man's logic", according to Tsevat (1980:9-10). We should come to terms with the text as we have it, not as we might prefer it to be.

The message of the book of *Job* is communicated both in the content of the individual sections and through the design of the book as a whole. The narrative development of the text can be read in successive stages, which culminates in the Yahweh speeches as the dramatic climax and conclusion to the literary and theological aspects of the book<sup>3</sup>. The text of *Job* is structured as a complete narrative with a beginning, a complication and a conclusion that recalls the beginning (Whedbee 1990:10). It is the result of a conscious

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Janzen (1985:228).

<sup>2</sup> Scholars maintaining the unity of the text of *Job* are Dhorme (1967), Polzin (1977:61-73), Gordis (1978), Kubina (1979:115-43), Habel (1985:25), Van Oorschot (1987), Hartley (1988:31), Clines (1989:lix), Terrien (1991), Goldin (1996:378), Viviers (1997:110), Wilcox (1998:86).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Lillie (1957:355), Rowold (1985:199), Seitz (1989:10), Nel (1991:206), Dailey (1993a:64).



creative literary process<sup>4</sup>. The design of the text shows that the narrative plot of *Job* reaches its fullest development in the divine discourses of *Job* 38-42. The multiplicity of the semiotic layers of this text make more than one interpretation possible<sup>5</sup>.

#### 4.2 Job 38-42 as a Theophany.

Before investigating the character of the divine discourses of *Job* as an Old Testament theophany, it is important to note that "theophany" denotes two different concepts here:

- i. *Job* 38-42 exhibiting the theophany as a religious phenomenon.
- ii. *Job* 38-42 as a theophanic type-scene in its narrative form.

The first aspect of the theophany as religious phenomenon is discussed here in 4.2, and the second register of the theophany as a type-scene in its reported form is explicated in 4.3.

The divine discourses have often been described as exhibiting the religious phenomenon of the theophany<sup>6</sup>. Yet, the phenomenon of the theophany has not been studied in terms of both its structure and content. While the "tempest" or "whirlwind" appears in the titles of many studies, the storm as an aspect of study has received scant attention (Luc 2000:111).

*Job* 38-42 is thus called a theophany, but not treated phenomenologically as such. Several reasons for this incongruity are given by scholars: Jeremias describes *Job*'s theophany as stunted, because it emphasizes the answer from God more than the actual appearance of God. To call this a theophany is inappropriate, and the divine discourses should rather be seen as a "vollständige Auflösung der Form" of the theophany<sup>7</sup>, as a major departure from

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<sup>4</sup> "The biblical narrators are imaginative literary artists with definite intentions - they are not editors, collators or redactors" (Habel 1983:102).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Frye (1975:13), Loader (1987:4-6), Nel (1991:207-16), Perdue (1991:196-99, 1994:124).

<sup>6</sup> Pax (1955:131), Fohrer (1959:131-20), Anderson (1962:419), Crenshaw (1968:51), Terrien (1978:28), Van Selms (1983:167), Porter (1991:296), Habel (1992:37), Hiebert (1992:509), Williams (1992:229), Wahl (1993:26), Stek (1997), Viviers (1997).

<sup>7</sup> Job 38:1-40:6 "ist jene Theophanie, auf die hin das ganze Buch Hiob angelegt ist und die ursprünglich wohl nur einmal berichtet worden ist. Sie führt Hiob zur endgültigen Unterwerfung unter Gott. Geschildert ist aber nicht Jahwes Kommen, sondern nur seine Antwort an Hiob, die an ihn, 'aus dem Sturm' ergeht" (Jeremias 1965:69).

the Old Testament theophanic genre from its oldest form in Judges 5:4-5. From this *Gattung* only the word “tempest” has remained (Jeremias 1965:102). The view of Jeremias is supported by Janzen (1985:254): “We remind ourselves that chapters 38-41 are not in the technical sense a theo-*phany*, but a divine answering (38:1) and speaking. All this is to say, then, that [*Job* 42] verse 5 brings to a positive conclusion the question which Job has posed in great anguish throughout the dialogues: Will the silent God *speak*, that Job may *hear* and will the absent God *appear*, that Job may *see*?”.

The criticism of other scholars also disregards the character of the divine discourses as a theophanic phenomenon. Some view it as nothing more than an evasive tactic. Others think that *Job* 38-42 portrays the coming of the divine warrior of Ancient Near Eastern myths to vanquish chaos and establish justice on earth, but then Yahweh never vanquishes any creature, instead He lets them live and flourish (cf. Brown 1999:233). According to Cox the theophany has no real function in wisdom literature, where reason and experience and not revelation are normative (Dailey 1993b:187-8, cf. Gibson 1985:222). Whybray (1998:25,158) interprets Job’s seeing of God in 42:5 as a seeing with the inward eye (i.e. a vision), as 38:1 does not state that Yahweh literally manifested himself to Job.

From a literary point of view it is possible to prove that *Job* 38-42 functions as a theophany type-scene in terms of both its structure and content. We do so in three ways:

- i. The connection between the storm imagery in *Job* 1-37 and 38-42.
- ii. The stormwind identifies *Job* 38-42 as an Old Testament theophany.
- iii. *Job* 42:5 testifies to the theophanic character of the Yahweh speeches.

Firstly, it is almost impossible not to note the occurrence of the imagery pertaining to storms in the text, both in *Job* 1-37 and 38-42. No matter what message the divine discourses convey, it must be related to this imagery to serve as a key to the issues of *Job* 1-37. When looking at the semantic usage of storm imagery through the whole text, we find that this is indeed the case. Images of storms occur in the death of Job’s flocks (1:16) and children (1:18-9), the accusations of the friends (8:2; 15:2,30; 22:13-4), the view of

Job of God as Destructor (9:5-8,17,23; 14:18-9; 21:18-9; 26:8-14; 27:20-3), Job's refutation of the arguments of the friends (5:15-7; 13:12), the poem of wisdom (28:25-6), Job's final argument (30:15,22), the words of Elihu (35:16; 36:24-37:13,17,21-2), as well as in the divine discourses (38:1,8-11,22-30,34-5; 40:1,4[Heb.40:6,9])<sup>8</sup>.

The above-mentioned texts testify to the fact that the theophany of the divine discourses was foreshadowed and anticipated in *Job* 1-37<sup>9</sup>, because the storm images bind the prologue, dialogues, Yahweh speeches and the epilogue together as a whole<sup>10</sup>. When Yahweh answers Job from the storm, Job and nature reacted accordingly<sup>11</sup>.

Secondly, the stormwind identifies *Job* 38-42 as illustrating the religious phenomenon of the theophany. The noun סַעֲרָה means "a gale" or "a heavy windstorm" (Holladay 1989:258). This word is used in the introductory phrases of 38:1 and 40:6:

וַיַּעַן יְהוָה אֶת־אִיּוֹב מִן הַסַּעֲרָה וַיֹּאמֶר

*"Then Yahweh answered Job from the windstorm with the following words"*.

The very formulation implies that these Hebrew lines describe theophanies, because the "windstorm" is a fitting accompaniment of the storm theophany in the Old Testament<sup>12</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Van Selms (1982:24,86), Dailey (1993b:187-95), Luc (2000:111-23). *Job* 28 and 32-37 have been ignored as irrelevant by some scholars (Perdue & Gilpin 1992:16). This study sees it as a later addition but part of the present text

<sup>9</sup> Hartley (1988:487) is only partially correct: The theophany does surpass and fulfil Job's deepest yearning, but it does not come as a complete surprise - it was hoped for by Job (cf. 9:17,31:35). God is bound to act because of the lawsuit of Job. He does so in the theophany (Tsevat 1980:7-8).

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Dhorme (1967:547), Habel (1983:104), Good (1990:396), Williams (1992:219), Luc (2000:115). "Die Theophanie ist der letzte Akt des Hiobsdramas, in der es die Entscheidung fällt - ein verborgenes Hinweis auf den inneren Aufbau der Hiobsdichtung, die tatsächlich in der Erscheinung Jahves ihren Gipfel und ihr Ende erreicht" (Weiser in Pax 1955:131). According to Dailey (1993b:189) the "storm" is a transformative phenomenon, as its semantics reveal similar meteorological phenomena throughout the book. However, none of these terms is adopted to introduce the divine speeches in 38:1 and 40:6; it is not from a blowing gale, rotating whirl or tumultuous squall that Yahweh speaks but "from the storm". Cf. also Luc (2000:111).

<sup>11</sup> Storm "steht hier als Chiffre für Theophanie, für das von vielfältigen Reaktionen der Schöpfung begleitete Erscheinen Gottes in seiner Göttlichkeit" (Keel 1978:13).

<sup>12</sup> Semantic studies identified the divine discourses as biblical theophanies, because of the storm imagery, cf. Pope (1965:249), Dhorme (1967:547), Kuntz (1967:35), Preuss (1977:338), Wolff (1977:161), Rowley (1980:241), Nel (1991:216), Mettinger (1992:44).

When the author introduces the voice of Yahweh as coming from a storm, it is to evoke the graphic imagery of the theophany. According to Dailey (1993b:189-90) the emphasis on the theophanic event lies, not primarily in its horrific proportions, but rather in what is taking place in the meeting between the deity and man. In biblical history encounters with the deity were associated initially with salvation and only later with condemnation. These findings of Dailey are in sharp contrast to those of Perdue (1991:202), who describes the controlling image for the two divine speeches as “theophanic judgement”, as well as Preuss (1977:338) who calls it a *Gerichtstheophanie*. We agree with the latter two: When Yahweh was manifested in the religious phenomenon of the theophany, Job responds accordingly in fear. “This is top-of-the-line theophany, the sort of thing that happens at crucial junctures of the culture’s experience and to people not like Eliphaz and Elihu but like Abram and Moses” (Good 1990:340).

The theophany to Job functions as a turning-point in the narrative and argument of the text. It has a dramatic effect which can also be illustrated in the narrative poetics of other Old Testament texts, wherein the numinous is employed by biblical authors to provide authenticity to their arguments (cf. Alter 1981). During the theophany the numinous is made a literary character in the text, in the sense that the deity appears on earth as a Character to encounter other human characters. Furthermore, the fact that the Yahweh speeches are introduced by **וַיֹּאמֶר** (“then he answered”) supports our line of argumentation, because this is also the way in which the speeches of the other characters are indicated by the author in the dialogue part of *Job* 3:2-42:6<sup>13</sup>. The prefix (ו) is added as consecutive to the verb in its *qal* form (**וַיֹּאמֶר**) to introduce each new argument in the narrative (cf. Van der Merwe, Naudé & Kroeze 1997:126, as well as Holladay 1989:277).

Third, literary evidence for the divine discourses as a religious phenomenon of the theophany can also be found in the penultimate response of Job to this event in 42:5:

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. 3:2, 4:1, 6:1, 8:1, 9:1, 11:1, 12:1, 15:1, 16:1, 18:1, 19:1, 20:1, 21:1, 22:1, 23:1, 25:1, 26:1, 27:1, 29:1, 32:6, 34:1, 35:1, as well as 38:1, 40:1, 40:3, 40:6, 42:1.

לְשִׁמְע־אָזְן שְׁמַעְתִּיךָ וְעַתָּה עֵינֵי רָאִתִּיךָ

“By the hearing of an ear I have heard You, but now my eyes have seen You”<sup>14</sup>.

Previously Job heard of Yahweh through the sapiential traditions of his friends, but now he has actually seen God directly. The tautological formulation of this verse as *figura etimologia* emphasizes the physical and concrete aspects of Job’s perceptions. In this final words of Job we discover that the words from the windstorm was in fact a theophany (Habel 1983:105). The windstorm served as a medium for that theophany, in the sense that it simultaneously concealed the divine essence while embodying the divine presence (Van Selms 1983:208). Yahweh has been manifested to him in a similar way as it happened before on Horeb / Sinai in Exodus 3-4 and 19-34<sup>15</sup>. The divine appearance to Job is compared to that of Moses. On the mountain Moses saw certain phenomena that indicated the presence of the divine, such as the appearance of the angel of Yahweh in the burning bush (3:2), in the storm elements (19:16), and in the descending cloud of glory (24:15, 34:5). Job too saw the windstorm in which Yahweh manifested himself. The gale descended on Job for the same reasons the various phenomena did on Moses - to facilitate an encounter and discourse between Yahweh and man. Both aspects of the encounter and discourse with the deity had an effect on the recipient - this we see on the face of Moses (cf. Ex.34:28-35) and in the words of Job (cf. 39:36-8[Heb.40:3-5] and 42:1-6)<sup>16</sup>. Job 38-42 definitely describes the theophany as a religious phenomenon.

#### 4.3 Analysis of the Divine Discourses as a Theophany Type-scene.

We have showed *that* the divine discourses exhibit the theophany as a religious phenomenon. In this section the focus is shifted to *how* the divine discourses exhibit the theophany in its reported form. Job 38-42 is to be analysed as a type-scene of the theophany according to its framework established in chapter 3. In the type-scene exists a

<sup>14</sup> Job 42:5: “I had heard about you before, but now I have seen you with my own eyes” (NLT).

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Num.12:6-8. For similar views, cf. Tsevat (1980:12), Habel (1985:582), Seitz (1989:14).

<sup>16</sup> The contents of Job’s responses are explained in 4.3.3.2 and 4.3.3.4. But for the present it is worth while to note the change in the attitude of Job prior and after his encounter with Yahweh.

particular relationship between a text and its frame (Habel 1983:103). A frame analysis has to be applied to *Job* 38-42, for us to be able to interpret the content of the divine discourses in the context of its natural theophanic structure<sup>17</sup>. To the best of our knowledge this has been done only once before by Sands (1975:47), whose analysis of *Job* 38-42 reveals four features about the appearance and words of the divinity:

- i. A natural phenomenon : the whirlwind
- ii. The declaration of the Voice : the recital of the wonders of creation
- iii. Mystery : the words of Job in 42:5
- iv. Purpose : the consolation of Job.

Whereas Sands limits his analysis of the divine discourses to *Job* 38-42, our study includes chs. 1-37 as background of the type-scene. In this instance the text of *Job* is unique, because it is the only type-scene of the theophany in the Old Testament which encompasses an entire book. The nine texts we analysed in chapter 3 all portray the type-scene as parts of larger books, but the narrative flow of the arguments and plot of *Job* necessitates the exposition of chs. 1-37 as background to the dramatic appearance of Yahweh<sup>18</sup>. From a literary (and human) perspective there would have been no divine discourses had it not been for the events causing them<sup>19</sup>. The theophany type-scene of ch. 38-42 is related to the whole structure of the *text* of *Job*.

In the following diagram the different elements of the theophany type-scene is noted. After that the aspects of the theophany in its reported form are discussed separately.

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<sup>17</sup> In other words: The "phenomenon of manifestation serves as the framework within which the words of divine proclamation should be interpreted" (Dailey 1993b:191). Cf. also Keel (1978:22), Polzin (1977:121) and Westermann (1977:124).

<sup>18</sup> The narrative flow and plot of the whole text of *Job* 1:1-42:17 exhibits a chiasmic form:

- (a1) Prologue: A patriarchal setting of the sacrificing clan (1:1-2:13).
  - (b1) Dialogue: Different theologies of wisdom (3:1-37:24).
  - (b2) Divine discourses: Theophany as an implied answer (38:1-42:6).
- (a2) Epilogue: Job is reconciled with his friends and family (42:7-17).

[For other opinions on the form of the text of *Job*, cf. Polzin 1977:61-73 and Habel 1985:27].

<sup>19</sup> This statement should not be regarded in contrast with the characterisation of the theophany in chapter 2.5, in which we emphasized the divine initiative in the theophany. Yahweh chose to reveal himself, if He chose not to reveal Himself there would have been no text of *Job*.

Theophany type-scene	Text of Job 1-42
1. Background	Different theologies of wisdom (1-37): The Satan & Job's wife (1-2) The three friends (4-25) Job (1-31) Elihu (32-7)
2. Manifestation	Yahweh answers Job from the windstorm (38:1 & 40:1)
3. Dialogue	Two speeches in question-answer style (38-42) Job's response of resignation and fear Effect : True faith
4. Intrigue	A cosmic theophany
5. Conclusion	The friends are reprimanded & Job restored (42:7-17) Job prays for the friends & is consoled by his family Retribution takes place

#### 4.3.1 Background.

The background of the type-scene already alludes to and anticipates the dramatic intervention of Yahweh. *Job* 1-37 narrates the perspectives of religious people on the issues of real life. Job lost everything that has been important to mankind since times immemorial - his belongings, family and health - and therefore also his meaning in life. This affects his relationship with the divinity, because of his belief in the absolute providence of God, as his words in 1:21 and 2:10 testify:

יְהוָה נָתַן וַיְהוּדָה לָקַח יְהוָה שֵׁם יְהוָה מְבָרָךְ

*"Yahweh gave, and Yahweh has taken away; blessed be the name of Yahweh".*

גַּם אֶת-הַטּוֹב נִקְבְּל מֵאֵת הָאֱלֹהִים וְאֶת-הָרָע לֹא נִקְבְּל

*"Shall we receive also the good from the hand of God, but shall we not receive evil?"*

Soon the patient Job becomes the impatient one, because of his situation of suffering and the ensuing conversations with his wife and three friends that resulted from his situation. As background to the manifestation of Yahweh, the narrative of *Job* 1-37 creates tension and suspense that would evenly build up to such unbearable and inhuman proportions that it could only be solved by a direct intervention from God<sup>20</sup>.

All the characters have some explanation to offer about the suffering of Job - the Satan, Job's wife, Job himself, Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar, and finally also young Elihu - rely on some form of inspiration from the deity to corroborate their arguments<sup>21</sup>. These perspectives of the characters represent the different and conflicting traditions from the sapiential world of the Ancient Near East<sup>22</sup>. The different traditions are in conflict, primarily because of the different sources of inspiration from which their truths are derived: The Satan has right of admission to the divine assembly, while Job's wife is overwhelmed by his situation and reacts accordingly. Job, Eliphaz and Elihu revert to dream-visions, while Bildad adheres to ancient tradition and Zophar to esoteric wisdom. The stage of discussion is soon filled with arguments from diabolical, sceptical, experiential, traditional, and esoteric perspectives. As the discussion waxes in intensity, it becomes obvious to the reader that only a direct and dramatic intervention of God (as Character) will be able to transcend the belligerent opinions to resolve the dilemma.

We now take a closer look at the different views expressed by the characters as the backdrop of the type-scene. The different theologies of the characters in *Job* 1-37 can be related to the theophany in terms of the diverse ways in which they *see* God and therefore *know* the deity accordingly to support their truth-claims. The seeing of God is the mode of inspiration, while the knowing of God is derived by the characters from the mode. If we summarise an interpretation of the ways according to which the characters

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<sup>20</sup> "Tension between the divine plan and the disorderly nature of historical events is characteristic of biblical narrative" (Alter in Habel 1985:27).

<sup>21</sup> Nel (1987:108) understands the friends of Job not as caricatures, but as theologians of format with different concepts. The same can be said of all the characters in the text of *Job*.

<sup>22</sup> Penchansky (1990:9) views *Job* as a disparate text with conflicting voices from extra-Israelite origin. We agree on the conflicting voices, but not on the disparity as *Job* remains part of the Bible.



claim to see and know God, the following outline of *Job* 1-42 indicates the way in which the theophany was anticipated in the background (in the words of all the primary characters). After this sketch the different views of the characters are discussed in detail:

- i. The Satan: "I know how Yahweh thinks about the faith of mankind".  
"I see to it that God sees the truth about man as his creation".
- ii. Wife: "I have come to know God as the ultimate Destroyer".  
"There is no point in either seeking or seeing God".
- iii. Job: "See what God has done to me!".  
"I see the Creator as the Destroyer in my dream-visions".  
"I want to see God in the judicial court to know reasons for his conduct".
- iv. Friends: "We have seen God and we know Him from these events".  
"Listen to us and you will also see and know God":  
Eliphaz: "I have seen God in a dream-vision, and I know him from experience".  
Bildad: "I see God in history, and I know him from tradition".  
Zophar: "I have seen God in mysteries, and I know Him in esoteric ways".  
Elihu: "I see God's Spirit in dreams, and I know Him from spiritual acts".
- v. Yahweh: "Yes, all of you have seen something of Me".  
"No, in fact you all know very little about my ways".  
"In my theophany I will show and tell you more about Myself".

The Satan (הַשָּׂטָן) features in the first two chapters of *Job* only, as one of the "sons of God" (בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים)<sup>23</sup> who came to challenge Yahweh on the integrity of Job. He is the heavenly prosecutor over earthly affairs and clearly subordinated to the authority of

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<sup>23</sup> The Hebrew word הַשָּׂטָן means "accuser" or "adversary". This heavenly advocate features 14 times in the prologue as *advocatus diaboli*, not as the proper name ὁ διάβολος, which is used in the LLX, 1Chron. 21:1 and the New Testament. "The Satan" is a divine adversary, but not yet an independent personality like the New Testament's "Satan". The 'Satanology' of early Judaism and the New Testament stem from the influence of the Persian-Iranian dualism during the exile. Cf. Gordis (1965:70), Polzin (1977:60), Loader (1984:4), Holladay (1989:350), Tate (1992:462-3).

Yahweh (1:8-11,2:3-5)<sup>24</sup>. We disagree with some scholars who think that the Satan is replaced after the prologue by Job's wife and / or friends as his earthly accusers<sup>25</sup>. The reason why the Satan disappears from the scene is because he has fulfilled his literary function as prosecutor. Job, who is totally unaware of the secret meeting in heaven between Yahweh and the Satan, clearly does not know nor care about the Satan, as he states his case against God as the One in whose hands his situation and life rest in the final place (cf. 42:11).

Job's wife figures only in one verse of the book (2:9)<sup>26</sup>. Job's situation directly affects her and she becomes not an agent of evil, but a victim whose faith is smothered by the suffering of her husband. Her words testify that she experiences God not as Creator but as Destroyer, and that she chooses neither to see, nor care to know God.

It is interesting to note the religious development of Job's character in the narrative<sup>27</sup>: Initially, Job as a pious and Godfearing man brings sacrifices to God as a precaution against the sins of his children (1:5). As his situation worsens<sup>28</sup>, he no longer sacrifices but receives terrible dreams of divine terror (3:23-5,6:4,7:14). Job does not deny that he is a sinner, but complains about the excessive, divine punishment meted out (7:20-1,16:12-6). The covenantal tradition of retribution is not just - retribution is determined by the rule of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, the punishment has to be in proportion to the injury caused. God appears to be cruel, in tormenting Job without reason. The last part of Job's defence consists of two arguments: Firstly, in the poem of wisdom (ch.28) Job reaffirms the traditional source of wisdom (28:28):

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<sup>24</sup> "... it cannot be stressed too strongly that in all periods of Jewish thought, biblical and rabbinical, 'the Satan' or 'Satan' is not co-equal with God, but subservient to Him" (Gordis 1978:13-4). In *Job* the Satan is "God's devil" (Luther in Preuss 1995:260).

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Rowley (1980:36), Kroeze (1960:60), Janzen (1985:49-51), Girard (1992:202). Stek (1997:453) interprets the friends' arguments as of a satanic origin. Job's wife has also been described as a *diaboli adiutrix* by Augustine, or an *organum Satanae* by Calvin (Van Selms 1982:29). In *Job* the Satan is a literary device (Whybray 1998:13, Clines 1994).

<sup>26</sup> "Then his wife said to him, 'Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God, and die'" (RSV).

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Tsevat (1980:5), Loader (1987:2), Perdue & Gilpin (1992:15).

<sup>28</sup> Brenner (1981:129) describes the main categories of his situation as practical hardships (suffering), spiritual and intellectual disharmony (removed from God), and moral injustice.

וַיֹּאמֶר לְאָדָם הֵן יִרְאֵת אֲדֹנָי הִיא חֵכְמָה וְסוּר מִרַע בִּינָה

“And He [God] said to mankind: ‘Behold: The fear of the Lord - that is wisdom, and the evasion of evil - that is insight’<sup>29</sup> .

This chapter is a reflective pause of the argument thus far, but also looks forward in an anticipation of the solution in the divine discourses<sup>30</sup> . Secondly, *Job* 29-31 is his final address in which Job mentions his former well-being and his present misfortune. He challenges God to apply the rule of *andi alteram partem* i.e. to afford him an opportunity to speak in his own defence. By reverting to judicial rhetoric Job sees himself as the victim of the abuse of judicial power, and questions both divine providence and justice (13:3,22-4,23:3-5, cf. Brenner 1981:129). Job wants to see God on the bench, but the last thing he probably expected was to see God being manifested in a theophany.

Job’s three friends refer to the concept of retribution to explain the sad situation of Job. The inspiration for their arguments stem from different sources<sup>31</sup> : Eliphaz sees the good and terrible sides of God in a dream-vision (4:12-21), and the veracity of this have been strengthened by experiences from life (4:8,5:3-4,15:17). Job should take notice of what is happening to him. Bildad sees God’s intervention in the history of mankind, and reverts to the knowledge of the divine from the tradition of his forefathers to interpret that Job should be converted accordingly (8:8-10). Wisdom resembles the process of wine-making - “Hoe ouder, hoe meer gezag” (Van Selms 1982:77). Zophar beholds the divine in the mysteries of creation and makes use of esoteric wisdom to know the ways of God (11:5-10,20:3). It is best for Job to remain humble and insignificant before the deity. No man is able to understand the divine, but the prayers of the righteous carry great weight with God (Van Selms 1982:99). Although all three sages use different sources of inspiration to know God, the conclusions they arrive at concerning the suffering of Job belong to the Ancient Near Eastern idea of retribution, which was observed by the

<sup>29</sup> Job 28:28: “And he said to man, ‘Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding’” (RSV).

<sup>30</sup> According to Viviers (1997:111) both *Job* 28 and 32-7 are “arguments from authority”, which anticipate the answer of Yahweh to Job in the theophany.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Preuss (1977:328), Good (1981:200), Atkinson (1991:61-6).

Israelites in their covenant with Yahweh. The young Elihu receives knowledge of God through dream-visions (33:14-9), as a charismatic sage under the influence of the Spirit of God (32:7-8,18,36:3). Typical of the young hothead, Elihu tends to be self-assertive (33:33). The suffering of Job serves pedagogic purposes: God is training Job by punishing him with torture (33:19). Yet, his words form a structural bridge to that of Yahweh (36:26-37:24), as it provides closure to the narrative plot in a religious context where the direct appearance of God becomes memories of the heroic past. God's response from the windstorm is an unexpected event in sapiential literature and the words of Elihu prepare the way for Yahweh's theophany<sup>32</sup>.

The arguments of the "theologians" have reached a *cul-de-sac* after the words of Elihu. The Satan and Job's wife have disappeared, the sympathy of the friends has evaporated, Job's vehemence against his "pastors" has increased accordingly. Both parties cling to the system of divine retribution from the different perspectives as a form of magic, i.e. the view of the traditionalists (Job's friends) and the sceptic (Job)<sup>33</sup>. On the one hand, the friends, the self-appointed champions of God's cause, defend the standard concepts of the orthodox tradition by presenting a theology that persists in dogmatic insensitivity (cf. Loader 1984:1). They propound the theory of retribution by using the metaphor of sowing and reaping in agriculture to describe the theology of the ordinary man - God as the great avenger working accordingly the principle of causality, thereby punishing evil as the product of mankind. As traditional sages they attack Job as being wicked in terms of the theory of retribution, which fails to supply a convincing solution for his suffering<sup>34</sup>. On the other hand there is Job as a sceptic sage, who rails against his friends and complains about the way God applies this magical formula to his life. He depicts God as

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<sup>32</sup> "After the anti-climax of Elihu follows the climax in the development of the plot, the theophany of Yahweh" (Vivier 1997:111). Cf. also Habel (1983:105), Alter (1985:91), Wahl (1993:11,205).

<sup>33</sup> For the view of divine retribution as a form of magic, cf. Good (1981:207,213). Mettinger (1997:9) makes a deconstruction of God according to the three views on the divine in *Job*: (1) The Avenger of retribution of the friends, (2) The Tyrant misusing his power according to Job, (3) The abusing Victor who protects and sustains his creation according to the author in *Job* 38-42.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Brenner (1981:130), Mettinger (1992:40-1), Robertson (1977:43) and Gruber (1998:90).

the One who created a world devoid of meaning and order (*Job* 3). He experiences God as immoral, tyrannical and the prime mover of his affliction (cf. 9:17 and 12:7-25)<sup>35</sup>.

As background of the type-scene, the theological debate between Job and his friends deals with the perennial conflict among believers emanating from the disparity of religious claims and actual life experiences (cf. Crenshaw 1970:385). Seven characters claim to have seen God, which makes them *au fait* with the working of his mind particularly in the sphere of human suffering. Two of these character - the Satan and Job's wife - have withdrawn from the narrative scene before the debate properly got underway. The remaining five characters - Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar, Elihu, and Job - continue the debate from traditional and sceptic perspectives, but to no avail. Instead of resolving the situation of Job's suffering, his pain is accentuated by the dearth of suitable answers.

No human explanation can bridge the gulf between the views of the traditionalists and those of the sceptics. Therefore, the author / redactor of *Job* added a third, divine perspective as a dramatic and climactic resolution to the problem of human suffering. This third view transcends the one-sided perspectives of the traditionalists and the sceptics. Whereas the background states the ideas of human beings who claim to have seen the divine, the second register of the type-scene narrates how the deity revealed himself to man. It comes as a new and latent answer in the very ancient form of the theophany.

#### 4.3.2 Manifestation.

The manifestation of Yahweh as the second register of the type-scene is explicitly recorded in *Job* 38:1 and 40:1 [Heb. 40:6]. This religious phenomenon has been identified as a theophany in 4.2, and it is discussed here in its reported form, wherein the absented God (*deus absconditus*) became the present One (*deus revelatus*).

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. Mettinger (1992:42-4,1997:5).

According to Hartley (1988:487) the dramatic action of the theophany is expressed in three ways: Yahweh speaks himself, the windstorm attends his appearance, while the special name of God (*Yahweh*) is used<sup>36</sup>. That Yahweh speaks “from the stormwind”<sup>37</sup> is beyond human ken, although the language reminds us of God as a divine warrior, which simultaneously protects the elusiveness of the divine nature (cf. Perdue 1994:58-9).

The name יהוה (“Yahweh”)<sup>38</sup> is inextricably linked to the Old Testament tradition of the theophany, and by employing the *tetragrammaton* the author evokes all the other salvific foundations of the Old Testament<sup>39</sup>. This encounter parallels the rare and privileged appearances of the divine to the patriarchs and prophets. While the name of Yahweh often occurs in other texts of the Old Testament in the contexts of creation and covenant, its occurrence here is a subversion to both the creator God of Genesis 1 and the covenant God of Exodus. Yahweh is not the typical covenant God in *Job*, as is testified to by the absence of typical covenant terminology in the divine discourses. The characters are non-Israelites who receive a theophany from Yahweh to make another facet known of God, a side not well-entrenched in traditional theology and also not well-received by sceptical theology.

Job recalls the tradition of the theophany in 9:17 with trepidation. This is intended to strike the addressee with fear when the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth speaks from a storm<sup>40</sup>. There is no mentioning of fear in human reaction to the appearance of Yahweh, because greater emphasis is placed on the words than the appearance of God. This theophany is not depicted with all the previous splendour of a privileged intrusion of the

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<sup>36</sup> “Severe storms, though relatively rare in Palestine, were associated with theophanies of Yahweh from Israel’s earliest history... In the whirlwind God was both audibly and visibly present” (Habel 1985:535). Cf. also Kuntz (1967:39), Habel (1985:528), Hartley (1988:490), Crenshaw (1992:71).

<sup>37</sup> The writing of the nun in medial style suggests that at one time the two Hebrew words, “from the storm” were written together. Fohrer suggests that it could be an error for *minni* (‘from’) (Hartley 1988:490). The lack of the definite article in 40:6 is insignificant (Dailey 1993b:188).

<sup>38</sup> “Yahweh” appears in *Job* in the prologue, in 28:28, the Yahweh speeches and the epilogue. It does not feature in the dialogue. The occurrence in 12:9 is regarded as an error (Hartley 1988:491).

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Hartley (1988:491), Dailey (1993b:190), Whybray (1998:157).

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Fohrer (1983:124), Gutiérrez (1987:68), Nel (1991:216), Dailey (1993b:190).

deity into human affairs. The emphasis shifts immediately to the recital of the words, and the unique way in which Yahweh asserts his role as Creator in creation.

#### 4.3.3 Dialogue.

*Job* 38-42 is a theophany in its reported form which includes both aspects of its structure and content: The words of Yahweh go *pari passu* with a direct manifestation of Yahweh to Job. Without these words the structure will disintegrate<sup>41</sup>. The divine discourses not only form an effective structured poem in themselves, but are also the climactic development of previous images, ideas and themes in the text (Alter 1985:87)<sup>42</sup>. Images and motifs from *Job* 1-37 are taken up and represented, as Yahweh places stress on questions of Job's participation in the original and ongoing acts of creation. God's words are closely related to what were said previously, and to answer Job's accusations He makes use of the same words, motifs and themes used by both Job and friends<sup>43</sup>. Job challenges God in 31:35,<sup>44</sup> now Yahweh challenges Job to hold his own against the Creator during intellectual combat<sup>45</sup>. Nowhere else in the Old Testament did God assert his role and sovereignty as Creator in the way He is doing it here. Yahweh asks three types of questions - "Who are you?", "Where were you?", "Are you able?", to which Job replies lamely - "I am nothing", "I was not there", "I am not able" (Janzen 1985:225).

In his lawsuit against God, Job has laid charges of divine mismanagement of the universe and divine culpability. These charges become the themes to be defended by God - Yahweh's design (38:1) and justice (40:3[Heb.40:8])<sup>46</sup>. By making use of creation

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<sup>41</sup> Cf. the formulations of Driver & Gray in Keel (1978:14,22). "Wahrscheinlich hat das Wort in einer alten Theophanietradition seinen Platz" (Westermann 1977:112).

<sup>42</sup> Claims of the Yahweh speeches as a later addition are therefore inadmissible.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Habel (1985:51) and Janzen (1985:250).

<sup>44</sup> Job 31:35 "Oh, that I had one to hear me! (Here is my signature! let the Almighty answer me!) Oh, that I had the indictment written by my adversary!" (RSV).

<sup>45</sup> The "girding of one's loins" (38:3,40:2) have two symbolic allusions: To do work unhindered (Hartley 1988:492), or as an act of preparation in belt wrestling (Gordon in Crenshaw 1992:72).

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Rowold (1985:200), Alter (1985:89-90), Hartley (1988:33), Crenshaw (1992:71), Mettinger (1992:44-5), Newsom (1994:16), Brown (1996:91-2), Vivier (1997:114), Whybray (1998:157).

poetry, wherein human beings and their juridical categories cease to be central, Yahweh defends himself as King and Judge against Job's lawsuit in terms of his divine plan and governance. God chooses to defend the lawsuit in the forum of creation rather than in the court of justice, thereby evoking the Ancient Near Eastern tradition of the divine warrior who uses his power to subdue the forces of evil and to order creation (cf. Scholnick 1987:186-7). His rhetorical questions concern both the abiotic and biotic, as well as the natural and supernatural aspects of creation. The primary purpose of the divine discourses is to motivate Job to withdraw his accusations against God. To achieve this, we find in the divine discourses descriptive poetry with a didactic purpose (Schökel 1988:15) and a confrontational message (Rowold 1985:210)<sup>47</sup>.

God appears in the windstorm 'to answer' Job (38:1,40:1) in two speeches<sup>48</sup>. The implication is that the author intended the divine discourses as an answer. This answer must come from the content of the theophany. The dialogue with Yahweh brought a new understanding in Job on his previous words about God to the friends. It also refutes the words of his friends and consequently the bulk of traditional theology.

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<sup>47</sup> *Job* 38-42 follows the general pattern of a disputation (Hartley 1988:42, Murphy 1981:44).

<sup>48</sup> *Job* 38:1-42:6 is structured according to two speeches from Yahweh and two responses from Job, as the author exploits the Ancient Near Eastern literary convention with one revelation and one response (Whedbee 1990:243). This twofold structure of the divine discourses is criticised by Steinmann (1996:91-4), who follows a fourfold structure in *Job* 38-42 during which Yahweh speaks four times and Job replies twice: First divine speech (38:1-39:30), second divine speech (40:1-2), Job's first reply (40:3-5), third divine speech (40:6-41:34), Job's second reply (42:1-6), fourth divine speech to Eliphaz (42:7-8). According to Wilcox (1998:87-94) Yahweh's speeches were not addressed to Job but to Elihu, as the last speaker before the divine reply. Elihu is not condemned in the epilogue as he has already been condemned in 38:2. This view of Wilcox has been refuted by Bimson (2000:125-8) as unconvincing and resting on shaky premises. God addresses Job as the one "without knowledge".



#### 4.3.3.1 The First Speech of Yahweh.

In the first divine discourse Yahweh defends his  $\text{הצַו}$  or divine plan as God's basic design for his creation (38:2)<sup>49</sup>. In an "avalanche of counter-questions" (Loader 1987:2) God asks Job whether he is able, either to create the cosmos (38:4-38) or to take care of its creatures (39:1-33[Heb.38:39-39:30]). The universe with its cosmogony, meteorology and zoology show that it is God who creates, sets in motion and sustains its variety<sup>50</sup>.

In the cosmological realm we find the two-by-two constituents of the earth and sea, the dawn and darkness, as well as life and death. The creation of the earth is described in terms of the structure of a temple in 38:4-7<sup>51</sup>, wherein all the different parts are contained and cared for by God. During the formation of the earth the heavenly beings could only celebrate the acts of God. Everything have its proper place, even the sea or chaos for which Yahweh had established its natural boundaries (38:8-11)<sup>52</sup>.

In the meteorological realm each element plays an active role under the hand of Yahweh which constrains, assigns, stores, plans and directs everything (cf. Brown 1996:95). And according to Cornelius (1990:25-32) the sun epiphany of 38:12-5 illustrates from an iconographical point of view the cosmological-creative acts of God in the polarity of light and darkness as it was described in the worlds of the Old Testament and Ancient Near East. Light signifies the creation, life, order and salvation of Yahweh which eliminates the powers of chaos. God is the Creator who controls the sun as an instrument of salvation in destroying the powers of darkness and injustice. Some meteorological elements too can become potent weapons used by the deity during an epiphanic warfare. Hail and snow are stored by Yahweh for purposes of a holy war. The same applies to the rain-bringing west wind and the scorching east *sirocco* (38:22-38). These (almost military) acts of creation

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<sup>49</sup> Cf. Mettinger (1997:10), Holladay (1989:280) and Are (1999:295).

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Alter (1985:94), Habel (1985:532), Rowold (1985:202), Newsom (1994:18).

<sup>51</sup> Cf. the description of the laying of the foundation of the cosmic temple in *Enuma elish* (Brown 1996:92-5, Hartley 1988:495).

<sup>52</sup> Hartley (1988:496), Mettinger (1997:11).

of Yahweh as Creator are described very differently from the Yahwistic and Priestly portrayals in the creation narratives of Genesis. Especially the vivid role assigned to man in Genesis 1 and 2 as the representative of God, is absent in *Job* 38-9.

In the selection of zoological imagery the further enigma of the "new" revelation of God's creative activity is obvious. Once again, unlike in Genesis 1-2 and Psalm 8, the role and function of mankind are not only minimized, but totally omitted. Yahweh takes care of the animals of the wild, and as objects of contemplation their portrayals describe the manner in which God marvels in their boldness, courage, conflict and restoration<sup>53</sup>: The lion's hunger is appeased by God, as well as that of the raven (even though it is an unclean bird). God looks after the kids of the wild goat, who roams as freely as the wild donkey in the wilderness. The wild ox is an awesome and powerful animal which will not be subjected, but willingly depends on Yahweh as its master and provider of sustenance. The ostrich may be utterly devoid of reason, reckless and unwise, but God has compensated for this by its superb ability to run. The horse is a creature of beauty, power and unwavering courage, under the divine guidance it drags man into battle and human corpses from the scene. The eagle lives on the heights and feeds on the violence of Yahweh's created order.

The structure of the animal discourses emphasizes the distance between man and God in terms of both wisdom and power. Miller (1991:419-21) makes the following observation: The lion and its scavenger, the raven, search for prey which includes the mountain goat, the wild ass, the wild ox, and the ostrich that laughs at the war horse which bears its rider off to war, where the eagle dines on the corpses. Man has a place among the animals of the wild, but only as part of the food chain. He must train the horse so that he can find his place in that food chain. Job should not be surprised by the violent disaster which came upon him, for this is typical of the animal world. Keel (1978) illustrates the existing rivalry in the biotic world between the wild and cultivated. These animals are associated with desolate places, which are frequented by demonic spirits and beyond the sway of man. As

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<sup>53</sup> Cf. Hartley (1988:504-11), Whedbee (1990:239), Newsom (1994:22-3), Brown (1996:96-100).

remote animals they are hardly known by man but intimately by God, who created and still controls them. God uses them to show Job that there are many things beyond his ken. He actually finds himself in no-man's land (cf. Brown 1996:99).

In conclusion to the first speech of Yahweh we have to emphasize the observation that the presence of Job in particular (and therefore mankind in general) is not negotiated in *Job* 38-9. The cosmogonic, meteorologic and zoologic realms function under divine guidance free of any human participation. The Creator alone understands the mysteries of the created order. Contemplation of the natural world delivers the self-centred man from himself<sup>54</sup>. In this reduction of the role of man unlike other texts of the Old Testament, *Job* 38-9 states that man is not the climax of creation, nor the (exclusive) *imago Dei*<sup>55</sup>. God seeks to convince Job of his wisdom and compassion over the universe. If man is unable to control the cosmos, how can he hope to challenge God's way of governing the universe?<sup>56</sup>

#### 4.3.3.2 The First Response of Job.

Job's reply follows immediately after the first speech of Yahweh about the divine rule of the universe. The meaning of his response is made clear in 39:37-8[Heb.40:4-5]:

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<sup>54</sup> "The implication of this point is that if human beings could direct the weather patterns, they would guide them for their own selfish benefit" (Hartley 1988:515).

<sup>55</sup> It is important to note that creation and God's involvement in creation is not invariable structures in the Bible. Therefore it is possible for the divine discourses to subvert other perceptions of biblical creation, without declaring that which was subverted null and void. We only state that other alternative perspectives are also possible.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Lillie (1957:356), Loader (1984:22), Alter (1985:102), Wolfers (1995:222-3). "Yahweh's message to Job is that he cares for him even more than for these wild animals. He cares for Job in the abundance that Job formerly experienced and in his present suffering. His suffering has taken place within the world structure without upsetting that structure... That means that Job's suffering has taken place within, not outside, God's wise governance. Just like the wild ass which has to go hungry in exchange for its freedom, so Job has to endure suffering in exchange of his relationship with Yahweh" (Hartley 1988:516).

הֵן קִלְתִּי מִה אֲשִׁיבֶךָ יְדֵי שְׁמַתִּי לְמוֹפֵי: אַחַת דְּבַרְתִּי וְלֹא אֶעֱנֶה וְשִׁתִּים  
וְלֹא אוֹסִיף:

*"Look! I am small. What shall I answer You? I place my hand over my mouth. Once I have spoken and I could not answer. Twice but I will proceed no further".*

Job's words are usually interpreted as resignation and an affirmation of the fact that Yahweh's appearance and words have overwhelmed and shamed him<sup>57</sup>. A silenced Job wishes to hide himself from God's presence. In his smallness he cannot think of anything to answer the mighty Creator. The function of Yahweh's speech and Job's response is to contrast the ignorance of man in general and Job in particular, to the knowledge and potency of Yahweh. As an alternative perspective to Gen.1:26-7 and Ps.8:6-7, Job replies that man is not the crown of creation but the carrier of humility and submission.

The meaning of 40:4-5 becomes even more clear in the context of the type-scene.

Yahweh's manifestation had an effect on Job. This is emphasized by the reduction of this words in comparison to that of Yahweh. This response of Job testifies to the beginning of the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*, the typical reaction of the recipient during Old Testament theophanies: Adam and Eve hide in the garden of Eden (Gen.3:8), Moses and Elijah cover their faces in the presence of the divine (Ex.3:6, 1Ki.19:13), the trembling Israelites ask Moses to mediate between Yahweh and themselves (Ex.19:16, 20:18-21), Balaam and Joshua bow down before the angel of Yahweh (Num.22:31, Jos.5:14), and Gideon fears death in the presence of God (Jdg.6:22-3). What we find in 40:4-5 is the beginning of this response, which will only become obvious after Job's second reply to Yahweh. Here, the *mysterium tremendum* has not yet waxed to the extent of including the *mysterium fascinans*. Because of Yahweh's words Job has gained knowledge of the divine plan and his human situation, but he is not transformed by this insight. Wisdom is knowing when to speak your mind and when to mind your speech. Instead of having the

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<sup>57</sup> Cf. Murphy (1981:43), Hartley (1988:42,517), Good (1990:163,1981:235-7), Vivier (1997:114). Job's description of himself as "small" has the meaning of being humbled both by God's words and his afflictions (Habel 1985:549). Job does not retreat, but merely reiterates God's omnipotence and his own weakness (Gordis 1978:558).

effect of harmony and peace between God and man, Job is even more perturbed by God's power and his own insignificance<sup>58</sup>. This necessitates the second divine discourse.

#### 4.3.3.3 The Second Speech of Yahweh.

Yahweh makes use of forensic rhetoric in the second divine discourse. The theme of this part of the text of *Job*<sup>59</sup> is the justice of God, as it is clearly stated in 40:8:

הֲאֵף תִּפְרֹר מִשְׁפָּטַי תִּרְשִׁיעַנִי לְמַעַן תִּצְדֶּק

*“Will you also annul my judgement? Will you condemn Me that you may be justified?”*<sup>60</sup>

As explanation of his justice which entails the whole of the cosmos, Yahweh employs descriptions of the Behemoth and Leviathan, two symbolic creatures whose identities have been hotly debated by scholars as<sup>61</sup>:

- i. Historical powers<sup>62</sup>.
- ii. Mythical monsters from an Ancient Near Eastern origin<sup>63</sup>.
- iii. Natural beasts, Behemoth as the hippopotamus and Leviathan as the crocodile<sup>64</sup>.
- iv. *Double entendre* or both mythical and actual animals<sup>65</sup>.
- v. Caricatures of either Job<sup>66</sup> or Yahweh<sup>67</sup>.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Brenner (1981:133), Greenberg (1987:298).

<sup>59</sup> Loader (1987:3-4) and other scholars disregard this part of the text as a later insertion.

<sup>60</sup> “Will you even put me in the wrong? Will you condemn me that you may be justified?” (RSV).

<sup>61</sup> For summaries on this identity debate, cf. Gammie (1978:217) and Habel (1985:557-8).

<sup>62</sup> Westermann (1977:109-17) interprets the 1st discourse as praise to the Creator, and the 2nd as praise to the Lord of history: Behemoth and Leviathan are seen as early historical powers and the enemies of Israel, “die Mächte der Geschichte verkörpern” (1977:113). Wolfers (1995:161-2,190-1) interprets Behemoth and Leviathan as allegories: Leviathan is the animated spirit of the Assyrian victories over Israel, as well as a detached part of God's unity. Behemoth is the errant people of Judah and no match for Assyria or God in the eight century BC. Job symbolises the remnant who kept their faith and was restored by God.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Pope (1965:265-87), Weiser (1961:255-61), Keel (1978:126,156), Kubina (1979), Terrien (1991). For Gibson (1989:309) they are from Canaanite mythology, “metaphors of the power of evil which God, having created..., is having difficulty controlling”.

<sup>64</sup> Most modern translations, Fohrer (1963), Driver & Gray (1964), Dhorme (1967:618-25), Andersen (1977), Gordis (1978), Eybers (1978:89), Scholnick (1987:204), Schökel (1988:16). Also described as the elephant and the whale by Thomas Aquinas and Calvin (Lillie 1957:356).

<sup>65</sup> Loader (1984:25), Alter (1985:106-7), Newsom (1994:23), Viviers (1997:112). According to Crenshaw (1992:73) Behemoth symbolises natural evil and Leviathan supernatural evil of myth.

While scholars disagree on the interpretation of the second divine discourse, the general intention of the Behemoth-Leviathan description is common knowledge: They represent evil in the form of the chaos related to their actions. Behemoth and Leviathan are symbolic forces of evil, somehow related to Yahweh<sup>68</sup>. These mythological symbols are differently portrayed in *Job* than in the Ancient Near Eastern chaos-order myths: The symbols of chaos are described in a way as though God is proud of them (Nel 1991:206). Chapters 40-1 does not narrate the failure of God to control evil (cf. Brenner 1981), but rather God's supreme powers of subjugating evil. Even these forces of evil are subjected to the will of the Creator. Chaos do exist, but always as contained evil.

The second discourse describes Yahweh's universal justice and reveals a unique perspective on Yahweh, as He allows but also controls even the most dangerous forms of cosmic evil. Yahweh controls these forces of evil by means of the epiphany which is described before Behemoth and Leviathan in 40:6-14. Yahweh comes as divine warrior to battle the incarnations of chaos, and his victory results in recreation and continuity of life. Job is challenged to do the same.

Job charges Yahweh in 19:7 of committing  $\text{רָשָׁע}$  as a broad category of unlawful conduct which includes the loss of his health (2:7), family (1:19) and wealth (1:10-5) "without cause" (2:3). Now Yahweh defends his  $\text{רָשָׁע}$  as a legal term describing both the actions

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<sup>66</sup> Gammie (1978:217-31) sees Behemoth and Leviathan as didactic caricatures of Job. Job is likened to Behemoth, Leviathan and the other animals of ch.39 as a tough, difficult and victorious opponent of God and man: "Job finds himself mysteriously mirrored in creation and creation mysteriously mirrored in himself" (Brown 1996:107). During the Middle Ages Albertus Magnus described Behemoth as a human symbol of sensuality and sin (Gordis 1978:569).

<sup>67</sup> Behemoth and Leviathan are "self-congratulatory assertions of Yahweh" (Brueggemann 1997:390). "The logic is that two things (God and the monsters) equal to the same thing (power stupidly and disdainfully used) are equal to each other" (Robertson 1977:50). "Yahweh sees something in Job which we would not ascribe to him but to God, that is, an equal power which causes him to bring out his whole power apparatus and parade it before his opponent" (Jung 1965:47, also Williams 1971:246, 1978:67).

<sup>68</sup> Gammie (1978:218), Keel (1978:126,156), Schökel (1988:16), Mettinger (1997:11).

of the divine Ruler and Judge of the universe<sup>69</sup>. The divine King of the first discourse is also the divine Judge of the second discourse. Yahweh's argument against Job's lawsuit is that man cannot claim title to any part of the cosmos in which he resides (Scholnick 1987:196,201). Job is provided with a vision previously only available to the Creator, wherein he realises that he is only part and not chief of this complex cosmos. Job cannot control Behemoth and Leviathan because only God can do so<sup>70</sup>. The ultimate response of Job to Yahweh should be seen from this angle.

#### 4.3.3.4 The Second Response of Job.

Translation is a form of interpretation. Nowhere has the truth behind this statement been showed more clearly, than in the case of *Job* 42:1-6. We first give the Hebrew of verse 42 and thereafter 34 translations of this text<sup>71</sup>:

עַל־כֵּן אֲמַאֵס וְנִחַמְתִּי עַל־עָפָר וְאָפֶר

“Therefore I abase myself and recant in dust and ashes” (Hartley 1988:535).

“Therefore I abase myself and repent in dust and ashes” (Gordis 1978:491)

“*Wherefore* I abhor *myself* and repent in dust and ashes” (Wilcox 1998:89).

“Wherefore I abhor (myself), and repent in dust and ashes” (KJV & ASV).

“So I am shamed of all I have said and repent in dust and ashes” (TEV).

“Therefore I despise yet repent of dust and ashes” (Dailey 1993a:67).

“Therefore I despise and I am sorry upon dust and ashes” (Good 1990:25).

<sup>69</sup> Cf. Gordis (1978:566), Scholnick (1987:187-94), Holladay (1989:221), Crenshaw (1992:76), Mettinger (1992:45-7), Perdue (1994:179).

<sup>70</sup> “Hunting Leviathan is no ordinary fishing trip” (Habel 1985:570, cf. Newsom 1994:25-6).

<sup>71</sup> For ancient translations, cf. De Boer (1991:188-92) and Newsom (1995:183):

LXX: διὸ ἐφάυλισα ἑμαυτὸν καὶ ἐτάκην ἡγημαι δὲ ἑμαυτὸν γῆν καὶ σποδόν  
 (“therefore I despise myself and I am melting, pining away”).

VUL: *idcirco ipse me reprehendo* (I myself abhor myself) *et ago paenitentiam in favilla et cinere*.

Syriac: “therefore I am silent and rise again from dust and ashes”

(using the verb as the rising from the dead, the resurrection into life, or awakening from sleep).

Aramaic: “Therefore I despise wealth and comfort myself for my sons, who are dust and ashes”  
 (dust and ashes referring to Job's dead children).

Qumran Targum: “Therefore I am poured out and dissolved and am become dust and ashes”.

Tanakh: “Therefore I recant and relent, being but dust and ashes”.

- “Therefore I despise and repent of dust and ashes” (Good 1990:171).
- “Therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes” (RSV, NRSV, NIV).
- “Therefore do I despise, and am comforted for, all that are dust and ash”  
(Wolfers 1995:373)
- “Therefore I feel loathing contempt and revulsion [towards you, O God];  
and I am sorry for frail man” (Curtis 1979:510).
- “That’s why I hate myself and sit here in dust and ashes to show my sorrow” (CEV).
- “Therefore I have had enough of it all and leave dust and ashes behind”  
(De Boer 1991:194).
- “Therefore I loath [my words] *and* abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes” (AB).
- “Therefore I melt away; I repent in dust and ashes” (NEB).
- “Therefore I recant and change my mind concerning dust and ashes” (Janzen 1985:251).
- “Therefore I recant and repent in dust and ashes” (Pope 1965:288)
- “Therefore I reject [my life] and am comforted concerning dust and ashes”  
(Brown 1996:108).
- “Therefore I reject and am comforted over dust and ashes” (Perdue 1991:232-3).
- “Therefore I repudiate and repent of dust and ashes” (Patrick 1976:371).
- “Therefore I repudiate and abandon dust and ashes” (Gutiérrez 1987:86-7)
- “I retract all I have said and in dust and ashes I repent” (JB)
- “I retract what I have said, and repent in dust and ashes” (NJB).
- “Therefore I retract and repent of dust and ashes” (Habel 1985:575)
- “Therefore I sink into the abyss and I grieve on dust and ashes” (Terrien 1978:372).
- “That is why I sink down and repent, on dust and ashes!” (Dhorme 1967:646).
- “I take back everything I said, and I sit in dust and ashes to show my repentance” (NLT).
- “Therefore I will be quiet, comforted that I am dust” (Mitchell in Tilley 1989:260)
- “Darum spreche ich mich schuldig und tue Busse in Staub und Asche” (LT).
- “Darum widerrufe ich und bereue in Staub und Asche” (Fohrer 1963).
- “Daarom verga ik in berouw op stof en zand” (Van Selms 1983:208).
- “en nou verag ek myself, nou sit ek vol berou, in sak en as” (NAV).
- “Daarom herroep ek en het ek berou in stof en as” (OAV, Kroeze 1960:284).



“Daarom trek ek alles terug wat ek gesê het en gooi grond op my kop in my berou” (DB).

The various interpretations on the true character of the ultimate response of Job to Yahweh may be summarised under one of the four categories of <sup>72</sup>:

- i. Religious conversion<sup>73</sup>
- ii. Judicial retraction<sup>74</sup>
- iii. Ameliorated adoration or a lyrical response<sup>75</sup>
- iv. Resilient rebellion or ironical<sup>76</sup>

Firstly, most official translations and scholars understand Job's response to Yahweh in terms of conversion or as capitulation before Yahweh. The interpretation is that Job repents because of either his encounter with Yahweh, or because of something that God said. After his repentance Job is transformed in terms of humility, faith, trust, serenity, gratitude and praise. Job consequently ultimately bows down before the awesomeness of God, in self-humility springing from an act of repentance. He submits unequivocally to God by confessing his fault in speaking of matters beyond his ken. The meaning of a life before God is affirmed, because *Job* 42:1-6 is a genuine response of repentance. The grandeur of the windstorm served to reform Job to recognise and obey God, who “in

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<sup>72</sup> For summaries, cf. Habel (1985:577-8), Morrow (1986:211-2), Tilley (1989:260), Penchansky (1990:49-50), Perdue (1991:198-9), Dailey (1993a:64), Newsom (1995:183), Pippin (1999).

<sup>73</sup> Kroeze (1960:286), Fohrer (1963), Pope (1965), Dhorme (1967:647), Anderson (1978:269), Kubina (1979), Crenshaw (1970:390), Murphy (1981:43), Rowold (1985:199), Morrow (1986:119), Simundson (1986:147), Greenberg (1987:299), Loader (1987:3), Stek (1997:456), Pippin (1999:299). The statement of Wilcox (1998:89) that Job repents of himself makes no sense.

<sup>74</sup> Westermann (1977), Gordis (1978:558), Habel (1985:582), Janzen (1985:251), Bezuidenhout (1986:439), Gutiérrez (1987), Scholnick (1987:200), Hartley (1988:537).

<sup>75</sup> Rowley (1970:266), Patrick (1976:371), Polzin (1977:59,69), Terrien (1978), Tsevat (1980:23), Brenner (1981:135-6), Gibson (1989:314-5), De Boer (1991:194), Fishbane (1992:98), Perdue (1994:180-1), Nicholson (1995:80), Brown (1996:108,1999:234-5). Job's “moment of self-abasement appears to be characteristic of the experience of the ‘twice born’.... Calvin and others hold that one effect of the theophany was to strike terror into the heart of Job. Job's experience, however, was one of awe and self-abasement rather than that of subject terror which usually retains and sometimes exaggerates the self-centredness, which Job has now lost” (Lillie 1957:358).

<sup>76</sup> Williams (1971:247), Robertson (1977:52), Curtis (1979:505), Good (1990:377-8), Whedbee (1990:243), Dell (1991:207-8).

every way accommodates Himself to us, in order to win us”, and “because of our rebellion God must show Himself in terror” (Calvin 1952:288-9).

Secondly, some scholars disregard the religious repentance of Job in favour of a legal retraction. After the second divine discourse Job withdraws the lawsuit which he has brought against Yahweh in chs. 29-31. His reply is not an act of repentance, but rather a legal retraction from the human side before the majesty of the divine. By acknowledging Yahweh’s lordship Job announces his recantation. After Job had formally withdrew his lawsuit case against Yahweh, he changed his attitude in the dust and ashes, which symbolises both his ongoing lament, as well as his modest place in the cosmos. In this universe, Job confirms the elementary nature of his being, and thereby acknowledges his humble place in the  $\text{הַאֲדָמָה}$  of Yahweh (Scholnick 1987:201). Recantation means to turn away from a planned course of action and to take up new course. Job does so by withdrawing his oath of innocence. And confessional speech, which makes use of legal jargon, illustrates the reconciliation between Yahweh and Job, in which they see once more eye to eye (Janzen 1985:247).

According to the third group of scholars Job neither repents nor retracts, but rejoices before Yahweh. He agrees to take up life again by dropping his anger at God in favour of praise for the Creator. A new relationship between God and man enfolds after chapter 42:1-6. Job discovers his sinfulness, not as a moral transgression, but in the pride of self-deification (Terrien 1978:372-3). By admitting God’s supreme strength and his own insignificance, Job gains a new foundation of divine knowledge, thereby integrating all the elements of faith - emotional, spiritual and intellectual. Job is prepared to believe in God as “accessible, honest, caring, and ethical” (Brenner 1981:135-6), but also basically incomprehensible. He ceases his attack and moves to praise after the effect of the theophany. He already feared God in the prologue (1:8), but now his fear is renewed as faith in 42:1-6. With his new insight and understanding Job is “a changed man sitting in

the ashes" (Tsevat 1980:23). He is reconciled with Yahweh. "Job came to see God for what God was. Job saw the world too, for what the world was" (Pippin 1999:303).

Interpreters from the fourth category understand the reply of Job to Yahweh as being of a paradoxical nature. Job says one thing but means another. He definitely does not repent, recant or rejoice in the presence of Yahweh, but he rather rejects the explanations that Yahweh had provided in the divine discourses. Job rejects Yahweh either directly in terms of defiance and contempt (Curtis and Williams) or indirectly through irony (Robertson and Whedbee). The result is the same: Yahweh has been exposed as a malevolent, foolish impostor who abuses his power in bringing havoc to creation. Job's repentance to Yahweh can therefore only be pretendingly "tongue-in-the-cheek". According to Curtis, Job does not repent, rather "he is sorry for a humanity that has to tolerate such a god", and the "rejection is final and total. Better no god than a god who does not care" (1979:501,510). According to Williams (1971:247) God had been had by Job, as the divine became the object of an ironic joke (cf. Robertson 1977:54,52). Yahweh's speeches are deliberately disappointing and an anticlimax. It is the experience of Dell (1991:208) that "often one does not receive a satisfactory answer but all one can do before such a God is to bow down and repent". And according to Good (1990:377-8) Job's innocence is established by himself and not by Yahweh: The "issue of sin is important in constructing the world is a sin, Job repents of it. If the essence of religion is that it solves the problem of sin, Job repents of religion".

After having stated the arguments on how the reply of Job should be interpreted, we now evaluate the truth behind each. Does the reaction of Job to Yahweh imply repentance, retraction, rejoicing or rejection? We take note of the statement of Morrow (1986:212) that an ambiguity may have deliberately been structured into 42:6 by the author, but we disagree: Interpreters should be aware of the danger of manipulating the intention of authors to say what they want them to say. The true intention of the author of *Job* is revealed in the theophanic poetics employed in the divine discourses, which emphasize the authentic revelation of new knowledge about God. Substantial proof has been provided

that *Job* 38-42 is to be regarded as a theophany, both in terms of the religious phenomenon and in its reported form. The reaction of Job shows the success of the theophany. It would impose a severe crisis upon the text if Job's reaction would imply a total disregard of the theophany. In the type-scene of the theophany, the reality of the manifestation of Yahweh necessitates a realistic reaction from Job in this context.

If the response of Job is to be interpreted within its natural theophanic context, it becomes obvious that he does not respond according to the perspectives of either the traditionalists (in terms of repentance before God), or the sceptics (in terms of the rejection of Yahweh). Both the traditionalists and sceptics want to force their preconceptions onto *Job* 42:1-6, but this should be resisted if we are willing to read the text with an honest and open mind. Job does not repent as part of an conversion before Yahweh, because he has been a believer since the first verse of the book<sup>77</sup>. His repentance is also not an ironic or feigned act, because this is not the way that someone who truly fears Yahweh would react to God, especially not during theophanies - Moses tried this, but he was immediately reproached by an irate Yahweh (Exodus 4:14). Job's reaction was both a retraction of his lawsuit against the Creator, as well as joy in the strengthening of his faith and of new insight on his situation of suffering. He still suffers, as he remains עַל-עָפָר וְאֵפֶר ("on dust and ashes") until 42:10<sup>78</sup>. Job's situation of undeserved suffering remains the most logical explanation of the Hebrew idiom<sup>79</sup>. He understands that his life is still controlled by Yahweh, and his faith in Yahweh is thereby exalted to new heights<sup>80</sup>.

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<sup>77</sup> Job 1:1: "There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was blameless and upright, one who feared God, and turned away from evil" (RSV).

<sup>78</sup> Job 42:10: "And the Lord restored the fortunes of Job, when he had prayed for his friends; and the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before" (RSV).

<sup>79</sup> Cf. the correlation with 30:19: "God has cast me into the mire, and I have become like dust and ashes" (RSV). This phrase may also imply a period of mourning (Van Wolde 1994a:223, Newsom 1994:26), or the futility of human life (De Boer 1991:191, Habel 1983:105). Muenchow (1989) studied it as part of the socio-cultural polarity between honour and shame: Yahweh defends his honour and Job is shamed. He first keeps silent and then hides his face from the sight of God. "Dust and ashes" symbolises his diminished state of mind (1989:609-10, cf. Janzen 1985:255-9).

<sup>80</sup> Job's repentance is not an impotent collapse and submission to superior power, but "an inward relaxing of his soul anguish and an appeasement" (Otto 1959:93,96). His soul finds peace.

In the same way that Job's first response is to be interpreted in terms of Yahweh's first speech, Job's second response alludes to the second discourse of Yahweh. However, it is important to note how *Job* 42:2-4 refers back to both divine speeches in 38:2-3 and 40:7<sup>81</sup>. Whereas Job was previously silenced and shamed before Yahweh in terms of the *mysterium tremendum*, 42:5-6 testifies to the fact that he is moved to the *mysterium fascinans* in the presence of God<sup>82</sup>. *Job* 42:5 states that the manifestation of Yahweh convinces Job, even without answering all his questions. This confession of Job contrasts the human faculty of hearing as a description of the traditional religious experience, to that of seeing the deity during an extraordinary spiritual experience<sup>83</sup>. While the hearing of the God silenced Job in 39:36-8[Heb.40:3-5], the seeing of Yahweh triggers a verbal response in 42:1-6. *Job* 42:5 and 6 are inextricably linked because of the occurrence of the conjunction  $\text{עַל־כֵּן}$  which always refers back to the reason of the event it introduces (Van der Merwe, Naudé & Kroeze 1997:249)<sup>84</sup>. The meaning of 42:6 therefore has to be deduced from Job's confession in 42:5: Job now experiences both the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* in the presence of Yahweh, because of the direct encounter with Yahweh in the windstorm and the words that were spoken to him. He is a changed believer with a new understanding of God, the world and himself<sup>85</sup>. The manifestation left Job full of adoration for the Almighty, as it creates for Job a moment of faith and

<sup>81</sup> Cf. Williams (1971:232-3) and Janzen (1985:251-3), Whedbee (1990:241-2).

<sup>82</sup> According to Loader (1992:350-7) the transcendent God who invokes fear and dread becomes in the theophany the immanent God in the abiotic and biotic aspects of the universe. In the end Job is moved to both "fear and self-renouncing wonder" of Yahweh (Eaton 1985:50). The theophany displays clearly the "tremendous mystery of God" and the 'fascinating' and 'august', in terms of the fear and majesty of God it arouses in man (Lillie 1957:357, cf. Atkinson 1991:139,157).

<sup>83</sup> "Hearsay religion, in this interpretation, now is superseded by immediate encounter with the divine" (Janzen 1985:253). "After all, he does confess that he was ignorant prior to the divine revelation, which replaced rumour with first-hand experience" (Crenshaw 1992:80). Job's "repentance" reflect the phenomenon of spiritual catharsis, wherein the "rational demand is superseded in and by his encounter with God" (Dailey 1993a:67). "What Job have seen we do not know... The conscious experience of God in the depths of one's being lies beyond the denotative potential of ordinary human language" (Dailey 1993a:66).

<sup>84</sup> Notice that some translations totally disregard the conjunction, while other diminish its meaning to that of an ordinary adverb.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. Frye (1975:16), Polzin (1977:105,121), Murphy (1981:44). Dailey (1993a:67-8) calls Job's experience a mystical communion with God, with the result to "transport the human person to a new level of existential belonging", in terms both an affective awareness and an intellectual insight.

communion with God (Nel 1991:222). Job is on the way of unverifiable faith (Ricoeur 1960:120), and he can leave behind his shamed position among the dust and ashes, while looking forward to his own position from the perspective of God.

As part of the theophany type-scene, Job's response in 42:6 to the manifestation of Yahweh is translated in our study in the following words:

עַל־פֶּן אֲמַאֵס וְנִחַמְתִּי עַל־עֶפֶר וְאֶפֶר

*"Therefore I retract [my lawsuit] and I take heart on the dust and ashes [of suffering]"*.

#### 4.3.4 Intrigue : A Cosmic Theophany.

The narrative register of the theophany in its reported form determines the structured form and the function of *Job* 38-42. The aspect of intrigue in the type-scene lies within the parameters of the traditional ideologies of Yahweh and their subversion through the divine discourses. This inconsequence causes an intrigue to be solved.

Through the theophany Yahweh provides new information about himself as Creator, as well as about his creation. The information communicated by God is unique among the texts of the Old Testament's creation narratives (particularly in Genesis) in terms of its authentic and subversive character. It is subversive in comparison to the generally expected creation and theological traditions, while the message is authentic to the sense that it narrated a new side of the deity. Job "sees" another side of God not known before, just as Moses also saw another dimension of Yahweh during the theophanies on Sinai<sup>86</sup>.

The aspect of intrigue of the theophany to Job has been variously described by scholars, but it usually boils down to two observations<sup>87</sup>: The first is that the Creator is too almighty to be judged from man's limited point of view. The theophany conveys in an

<sup>86</sup> "The theophany clearly summons us to larger views of God" (Lillie 1957:358).

<sup>87</sup> Cf. Anderson (1962:419,1978:558), Gordis (1978:558), Bezuidenhout (1986:400,432), Simundson (1986:150-1), Von Rad (1989:417-8), Fishbane (1992:86-9), Morrison (1996:342).

overwhelming sense the transcendent majesty of God, as a reminder that the first obligation of the whole cosmos is to acknowledge and glorify the Creator. Yahweh is the "totally other" who creates and sustains the universe. The whole cosmos, mankind included, is wholly dependent on God. Secondly, man must take notice of the definite gap between the human and divine perspectives<sup>88</sup>. The plan of God and the program of human mortals are not the same. Yahweh is the Creator, humans are creatures and clearly placed below and not beside the Creator. Consequently there is a difference between justice as human and cosmic concepts. The universe bears witness of cosmic justice, while human justice is related to act and reaction as part of retribution. God has made these rules of order among mankind, but He himself is not bound thereby, unlike the other gods of the Ancient Near East (cf. Nel 1987:103-9). This was the mistake of Job's friends who tried to form an orthodox point of view to force God into their human frames of retributive justice. The divine discourses do not nullify the concept of retribution, but God is aloof of this concept as Creator. Divine justice in cosmic terms supersedes the human covenant order.

The compilation of the final form of the text of *Job* can be dated as subsequently to the 6th century BC. The exile had a great effect on Israel's concept of the deity, and post-exilic sages tried to salvage the ancient faith in radically new forms<sup>89</sup>: Yahweh's role as Creator of the universe was emphasized to a greater extent in creation theology. This may be the reason for Yahweh's choice of the forum of creation rather than the court of justice as the venue for his response to Job: In creation theology man is barely noticeable and human concepts of justice have no foothold in the universe as elsewhere in the Bible.

The Yahweh speeches communicate a divine perspective on the universe in terms of a cosmic theophany<sup>90</sup>: According to Loader (1992:346-9) the anthropocentric sapiential

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<sup>88</sup> "Of course this justice of God cannot be comprehended by man; it can only be adored" (Von Rad 1989:417). Cf. Habel (1985:35), Preuss (1995:187,229).

<sup>89</sup> We disagree with Cross (1973:345-5) who explains the origin of *Job* as of an apocalyptic nature. *Job* was finalised during exilic times by sages, not by apocalyptists.

<sup>90</sup> The idea of the divine discourses as a cosmic theophany was borrowed from two scholars who used similar descriptions in different situations: Payne (1962:481) mentions the phenomena

problem of Job is answered by the non-sapiential motif of a theophany in nature. Divine presence on earth is of either a transcendent or an immanent nature. Whereas we read in *Job* 1-37 of the transcendent God, Yahweh becomes apparent in the divine discourses as the immanent God who is encountered in nature. This is confirmed to by Job in 42:5<sup>91</sup>. But Yahweh encounters Job in a different manner than his walking with Adam in Genesis 1-3: While Genesis portrays man as the crown of creation, *Job* 38-42 places this view in a critical light which is much more realistic about man's position and God's unfathomable alliance with the chaos of his created order. When Yahweh becomes immanent in this order of creation, it is to coexist with the forces of chaos already present in the universe.

By the seeing of Yahweh, Job receives through the import of the divine words a cosmic vision from a divine perspective (Scholnick 1987:185)<sup>92</sup>. In this cosmic theophany everything has its ordained place, even the monsters of chaos (Nel 1991:207). In the world as theophanic encounter Yahweh remains its Creator<sup>93</sup>. When the hidden God

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associated with the Day of the Lord in a "world-embracing theophany". Ladriere (1988:259) discussed a philosophy of the world as theophany.

<sup>91</sup> "Job showed that he too subscribed to the concept of God which accompanied the immovable doctrine: a transcendent, fearsome God. Now God has taken him through that same nature, and something has happened. He has seen God" as the accessible, immanent God (Loader 1992:357-8). Discussions on divine immanence and transcendence originated in the Western theology and was first applied to *Job* by Gordis (1978:435) who interpreted it differently from a Jewish perspective: The universe remains in the divine discourses a mystery to man, but the immanent God of chs. 1-37 has now become the transcendent God in chs.38-41. Loader and Gordis make different interpretations of the same theological concepts.

<sup>92</sup> By saying this we are not pleading a case for pantheism, as Bergant (1997:18-20) does from a liberation-critical approach on the "integrity of creation" as a basis of interpretation of the wisdom books: "It is not enough to say that creation is the medium through which God is revealed; in a very real sense, the medium is itself the revelation". We should instead trace "back to a personal source which is distinct from nature and surpasses any emergentist process that supports the world from the exalted heights of its own position" (Ladriere 1988:257).

<sup>93</sup> "In order that the term 'theophany' have full force it would seem necessary that the world be able by itself to provide positive indications of the existence and nature of God" (Ladriere 1988:247). The world can be "theophanic only with a view which enables it to appear as inhabited by a Presence which surpasses it. Visibility includes at the same time both manifestation and interpretation: from manifestation it retains property of making apparent the very structure of the donation, and from interpretation it retains the property of penetrating even to the most hidden meaning" (1988:252).



reveals himself his manifestations take place in the symbolic structure of creation, wherein both good and bad are woven into a complex fabric (Brown 1996:100).

In the cosmic theophany Job is allowed to look through God's eyes at the universe. Job's horizon is widened from the family and village to the cosmos itself and this affects also his own situation, as the *Götterverständnis* is related to one's *Weltverständnis*<sup>94</sup>. Job gained direct knowledge about God and indirect insight about the world in general. It transforms his moral world and moral imagination, as the Yahweh speeches offer a 're-description' of the world order. While Job previously had a worm's-eye view of reality from a human perspective, he receives a bird's-eye view from the divine perspective on the cosmos<sup>95</sup>. Through the theophany<sup>96</sup> he now receives a double vision - both divine and human - seeing God and through God's eyes seeing the world. This view is authentic when compared to other texts of the Old Testament. Mystery and incongruity remain, as it is accepted but not resolved. Job recognises the sanctity and infinite value of all life, and knowledge of being in the right position before God.

#### 4.3.5 Conclusion to the Theophany.

Job was reprimanded by Yahweh in the divine discourses, but after his response in 42:1-6 he is reconciled with Yahweh. In 42:7 Yahweh affirms that Job's response had been correct, and Job is ordered to pray for his friends who had not spoken as correctly in their arguments as Job did (in 42:1-6)<sup>97</sup>. Job has been accused by Yahweh of obfuscating knowledge (38:2,40:3), but after the withdrawal of his lawsuit his rebellious conduct is pardoned. He had been reprimanded for audacity, but now Yahweh allies himself with Job

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<sup>94</sup> Cf. Tsevat (1980:21), Mettinger (1992:40), Dailey (1993b:194), Newsom (1994:9,16).

<sup>95</sup> For different views on this narrative strategy of focalisation, cf. Whedbee (1990:241), Perdue (1994:43), Lasine (1997:292-5), Gruber (1998), Gitay (1999:239-50).

<sup>96</sup> We disagree with Ginsberg (cf. Gruber 1998:92-3) that Job received guidance from an angelic being during the dialogues, in contrast to his friends who relied only on human wisdom (cf.6:10). Human wisdom is inferior to divine wisdom, but Job receives it only by dint of the theophany.

<sup>97</sup> This way 42:7 makes sense. It cannot refer to Job's arguments in chs. 3-31, because then the Yahweh speeches in the form of a theophany would have been superfluous. Cf. Porter (1991).

in the rejection of his friends<sup>98</sup>. While Job was genuinely groping for the truth in his situation, the friends made blasphemous statements by attempting to shackle God with human systems of thought. As self-appointed protagonists of God they fail to suspect the possibility of a chasm between divine knowledge and the conventional knowledge of traditional wisdom. Job is a “stern warning never to infer sin from suffering (the error of the friends); or the enmity of God toward the sufferer (the error of Job)” (Greenberg 1987:301). The reconciliation of Job with God also affects his human relationships: Job prays for his friends and is also reconciled with his family. Thereafter he is restored by Yahweh according to the system of divine compensation (42:10-7)<sup>99</sup>. The reconciliation between Job and Yahweh is followed by the compensation of Job by Yahweh. Job lives for another 140 years, twice the ideal age of man (cf. Ps.90:10). He became twice as rich as he was at the outset (cf. 1:3 and 42:12). He is also blessed with another seven sons and three daughters (cf. 1:2 and 42:13), which cannot replace those who succumbed<sup>100</sup>.

Scholars have disagreed on the true intention of Job’s retribution in the epilogue.

According to Vischer the this-worldly conclusion shows that the “real decision whether God is truly God falls in this life. Here and now faith must prove true”<sup>101</sup>. If the concept of retribution was nullified by Yahweh in the case of Job, it would have led to either agnosticism or atheism. Retribution cannot be removed from the human scene, but it must receive a proper place within the bigger entirety of the universe (Nel 1987:110).

Resolution is needed in the plot, to alleviate Job’s pain to the extent of making his life worthwhile (Tsevat 1980:27). This ‘happy ending’ confirms the comic perspective of *Job*, wherein celebration and festivity occur side-by-side with evil and death in the remaining

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<sup>98</sup> The friends are rejected, “not *because* of disobedience, but *in spite of* their pious defence of God’s honour” (Loader 1987:7), as God is greater than any theology or concept. Cf. Hartley (1988:539,544), Gruber (1998:88).

<sup>99</sup> The interpretation of *Job* would have been much easier, had these last eight verses not been included by its author. Some disregard this part (Terrien 1991, Good 1990, Robertson 1977) or see it as an anticlimax (Rowley 1980).

<sup>100</sup> These rewards cannot compensate for Job’s pain and losses (Brenner 1981:137).

<sup>101</sup> In Hartley (1988:47): “Yahweh may withdraw his favour for a season, but his love is for a lifetime” (1988:545). According to Bezuidenhout (1986:457-8) Job’s blessing should be seen as an affirmation that he had succeeded the test. Cf. Perdue (1994:181-2).

contradiction and incongruity of Job's situation. It emphasizes the fact that the line between tragedy and comedy is extremely fluid in complex stories like *Job*. Job is a tragic hero who doggedly clings to his integrity in defiance of both God and the world (Whedbee 1990:245-6).

The narrative epilogue, almost in a hyperbolic fashion, affirms the new horizon that was opened up by the theophany and its scenes as demonstrated in the reactions of Job. The rejection of the views of the friends is dramatic irony. In this sense the text concludes asymmetrically, in the same way drama texts do: One view or position succeeds and a neutral position is unattainable. The conclusion resembles strongly the poetics of the drama text.

#### **4.4 Interpretation of the Type-Scene of the Theophany of Job.**

To conclude the discussion on the structure and content of the theophany in terms of its reported form as a type-scene in *Job* 38-42, we evaluate the validity of this study's hypothesis as it was formulated in the first chapter: *The divine discourses of Job provide a substantial answer to the salient questions of the book only when it is understood and studied as a theophany.*

As proof of the fact that *Job*'s theophany type-scene is indeed the key to the questions asked in the text concerning the suffering of Job, we discuss it in relation to the three hermeneutic categories of the interpretation of *Job*. We do so in order to provide evidence of the fact that the type-scene is in indeed the key to *Job*'s momentous questions:

- i. not in terms of a repentance to God, as Job is already a believer  
(the case of the traditionalists),
- ii. neither in terms of a rejection of God, as this is against the grain of the narrative  
(the case of the sceptics),
- iii. but in terms of the renewal and restoration of Job's faith  
(a literary interpretation of *Job*'s theophany and text).

During the past century and further back, there have been many diverse interpretations of the message of *Job*. As early as 1924 Fullerton showed the way in which the Yahweh speeches were written on two levels, to please both the traditionalists and the sceptics<sup>102</sup>. Goldin (1996:380-3) makes an interesting observation in his study on the historical development of the comprehension of *Job*'s message: (i) For centuries the patience of Job was emphasized in churchly exegesis, and references to Job's 'redeemer' (19:25) were associated to Jesus Christ. (ii) More recently, critics emphasized the vast gulf between divine and human knowledge. For some God remains beyond comprehension, for others, Job's uncertainty was dispelled by his personal encounter with the divine. (iii) Most recently, some theories see the message of *Job* as intending to be tongue-in-the-cheek<sup>103</sup>.

The three categories used by Goldin, are narrowed down to two by Morrison (1996). He explains *Job* in terms of the standard interpretation - which maintains that God has good reason to treat Job the way he does, but Job shouldn't expect to know that reason. He also explains *Job* in terms of the other body of interpretations - combined in a wholesale rejection of God's reasons, whatever they may be. Fox (2000:1-3) also mentions two types of interpretation on *Job*: (i) The popular interpretation according to which divine power is contrasted to human weakness, and divine mystery to human ignorance. After Job humbles himself and repents, he is restored. In the popular interpretation the reader identifies with Job and what he hears (2000:2). (ii) The scholastic interpretation which is not satisfied with the answers to suffering. According to this interpretation *Job*'s author is telling the reader more than God is telling Job, and the interplay between the two messages allows the reader a new way of viewing the meaning of human life and its crises<sup>104</sup>.

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<sup>102</sup> Cf. Gordis (1978:557) and Goldin (1996:382).

<sup>103</sup> The problem "with many of these interpretations is that the textual evidence supporting them appears too late in the book" (Goldin 1996:382). But this should be the place where interpretations of *Job* are to seek an answer, because the narrative reaches a dramatic climax in chs. 38-42.

<sup>104</sup> "God's speeches does not resolve the problem of undeserved suffering. This is a gap that must remain open. No solution would be credible, because there is undeserved suffering. But the knowledge that there is undeserved suffering is a comfort to those who suffer innocently. Misfortune is no disgrace" (Fox 2000:3). God knows everything, but not the way in which humans

Furthermore, we are made attentive of the fact that many scholars reach diverse forms of interpretation within each of these two or three categories: Newsom (1995:182) showed how the conclusions on *Job* made by two outstanding expositors are in contrast to each other<sup>105</sup>. The fact that excellent exegetes come to contradictory interpretations, left her with the question whether the divine speeches are not merely enigmatic, but also whether it was written in such a way as to render impossible any specific exposition. According to Brown (1999:236) the book of *Job* sometimes seems to provoke more questions than to provide answers to that questions, while Loader (1984:3) mentions the fact that scholars have been unable to reach consensus on either its actual message or on its main theme. We agree with Morrison (1996:339) that these diverse interpretations may depend more on the propensities and emphasis of scholars, than on ambiguities in the text itself<sup>106</sup>.

It is therefore necessary to make two remarks to conclude this introduction to the testing of the hypothesis of our study: Firstly, *Job*'s Hebrew is ambiguous and this makes more than one interpretation of the text, or parts thereof, possible. Translation is interpretation, and interpretation is never final. Scholars will (hopefully) continue to make fresh conclusions on biblical texts. Secondly, some interpretations on *Job* are ambiguous, not because of the text's Hebrew, but in themselves. It is impossible to read any text of the Bible *tabula rasa*. The majority of differences among scholars concerning *Job* come from this direction. This is shown in the next pages.

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would respond to something. Righteousness is important for God, He needs it in its purest form from human beings. "God places faith in humanity, and humanity must return the trust" (2000:8).

<sup>105</sup> Newsom compares the conclusions of Habel and Mettinger on the nature of God in the divine discourses: Habel shows how God in the divine discourses is the Sage in a world of balance constructed by opposites wherein the forces of chaos and death are present but constrained. God the Sage is not one who "intervenes or reacts, but one who modulates and constrains" (Habel 1985:65). According to Mettinger (1992:47-9) God is not an Avenger (friends) nor a Tyrant (Job) but a Victor (as in the divine discourses). While Habel sees Yahweh as a constraining Sage, Mettinger describes God as an aggressive Victor overcoming evil in battle daily against the forces of chaos.

<sup>106</sup> Among the different interpretations of the divine discourses "it is possible to observe the exegete interpreting the words of Job's answer in the light of the divine reality he or she claims Job discerned... The author has used language in such a way as to allow the reader's understanding of Yahweh's revelation to interpret Job's responses" (Morrow 1986:224).

#### 4.4.1 The Traditional Category.

According to the most popular explanations of the divine discourses, Yahweh educates Job by his divine power. The Creator is genuine in the founding of the earth and the bounding of the sea, the summoning of the rain and snow and the ordering of the cosmic lights, while keeping the food chain functioning. The whole purpose of the book is not to engage Job in a dialogue, but rather to overwhelm him with power (cf. Brueggemann 1997:390). Yahweh wants Job to repent of the words he spoke to his friends<sup>107</sup>. Yahweh is unwilling to acknowledge that Job suffered because of a divine wager between Himself and the Satan concerning Job<sup>108</sup>, but He is willing to be available for Job.

Rowley (1980, cf. Eaton 1985:51) compare Job's experience to that of Paul, who taught in 2Cor.12:6-10 that God's power makes believers perfect in weakness<sup>109</sup>. *Job* is all about the profit that believers can experience during their suffering in terms of the enrichment of their faith and the fellowship with God. Stek (1997:457) compares Job's situation of undeserved suffering to the message of Paul in 1Cor.13:12, according to which human beings must live in confidence of God even though we understand only in part. Fohrer (1963:557, cf. Friedman 1978:123) rejuvenated the old idea that suffering leads to intimacy with the divine - Job is taught by Yahweh to bear and endure his fate, and cultivates in him a true understanding and appropriate attitude towards suffering, i.e. the humble and reverential silence which is sustained as response in the presence of God.

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<sup>107</sup> The implication of the divine discourses according to the traditionalists is that "one must serve God not only in spite of all adversity but without even the expectation of an explanation" (Ginsberg 1978:119). Job saw "that a person may serve God faithfully, whether his circumstances are bleak or filled with promise, for he has the assurance that God is for him, seeking his ultimate good. A person can triumph over suffering through faith in God" (Hartley 1988:50).

<sup>108</sup> Although the word is not mentioned, this is exactly what is implied in the heavenly scenes of the epilogue (cf. 1:6-12 and 2:1-7).

<sup>109</sup> 2Cor. 12:7-10: "And to keep me from being too elated by the abundance of revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to harass me, to keep me from being too elated. Three times I besought the Lord about this, that it should leave me; but he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." I will all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities; for when I am weak, then I am strong" (RSV).

Gordis (1978, cf. Friedman 1978:123) interprets *Job* as an acknowledgement from the divine side that the world order is imperfect. The book offers no justification for suffering from the human perspective, but it demonstrates that it is possible for man to bear the shafts of evil threatening his very existence. Driver & Gray (1964:li) think that the purpose of the book is not to solve the entire problem of suffering, but to acquit God of this problem, while testifying to the latent worth of human nature against the sceptic conclusions drawn by scholars from a warped perspective on life.

We do not agree with the threefold view of the traditionalist that God smothers the questions of Job with divine power, that the purpose of suffering is to cultivate intimacy with Yahweh, and that Job is to repent before Yahweh for everything to return to normal. The interpretation that God subdues Job by might is false, because this was precisely what Job feared will happen to him in the dialogue (cf. 9:17). Job never doubted God's power, and the experience of it during the theophany phenomenon moved him to silence, but failed to provide answers to his situation. Insight in his suffering came by means of the words of Yahweh during the theophany type-scene, as part of the subversion of the view of traditional wisdom pertaining to the unique quality of man in the created order. According to the traditional view Genesis 1-2 and Psalm 8 boast about the intimate relationship between the Creator and man as the crown of creation, but in *Job* 39-41 this privileged position belongs to the animals of the wild and the monsters of chaos instead.

Tsevat (1980:25) views the argument of Gordis (of harmony between the natural world and moral sphere) and Fohrer (of proper conduct in suffering) as anaesthesia to a victim who has been unjustly sentenced. And according to Gibson (1989:308-10) the supposed confession of Job that he is a sinner may please Christian piety, but this was never the intention of the author. Such a repentance of Job would imply that the Satan had won the wager<sup>110</sup>, that Job's three friends had been correct, and 42:7 incomprehensible. God is in the epilogue still as convinced about Job's piety and integrity as he had been in the prologue, because He instructed Job to pray for the souls of his friends (cf. 1:8 and 42:7-

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<sup>110</sup> Cf. the unique argument of Fox (2000:7) that the Satan indeed won the bet.

10). Job remains a believer in Yahweh throughout the book. The context of the divine discourses and Job's responses is not one of overpowerment, justified suffering or of conversion.

#### 4.4.2 The Sceptic Category.

While scholars from the traditional category largely ignore the literary character of the divine discourses, those from the sceptic category reject the literary evidence pertaining to *Job's* theophany. The sceptics do so in three ways: They read the narrative of the text against its grain, they manipulate the intention of *Job's* author to fit their own views, and they reject the notion that *Job* should be studied as a text of the Old Testament. These discrepancies of the sceptics surface clearly in the following paragraph.

Firstly, the sceptics read the narrative of *Job* and the divine discourses against its natural grain. We do not deny the fact that the best drama texts exhibit some obscure and complicated characters and events, which are not immediately grasped by the reader. However, even the narratives of the most difficult dramas are supposed to convey a clear message for most people to understand, otherwise it would have little value as a text. The meaning of the text of *Job* is obfuscated by the sceptics, precisely because they choose not to read the text's clear message, but some parts of *Job* (such as the divine discourses) from an alternative perspective. God is severely criticised by the scholars following this type of interpretation<sup>111</sup>.

Secondly, the sceptics often manipulate the intention of *Job's* author to fit their own arguments. For example, it is obvious in the divine discourses that God creates and controls the different creatures of the cosmos with a certain amount of justice. But this is denied by Williams (1971:247) who describes the universe as meaningless, because it is

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<sup>111</sup> "While God may be more powerful than we are, he is beneath us on the scale that measures love, justice, and wisdom. So we know of him what we know of all tyrants, that while they may torture us and finally kill us, they cannot destroy our personal integrity. From this fact we may take our comfort" (Robertson 1977:54).



mismanaged by Yahweh as a muddled and jealous Tyrant. In a similar way Tsevat denies the order of creation as it is described with the inclusion of the beasts of chaos in the divine discourses. The God who spoke to Job in chs. 38-42 is “neither a just nor an unjust god but God” (1980:33).

A third characteristic of the sceptical category is their rejection of the notion that *Job* should be studied as a text of the Old Testament. Crenshaw (1992:84) uses the conclusion of Wilcox in *The Bitterness of Job*, to identify the text of *Job* as being entirely sceptical or even agnostic in nature, because its message is mainly a counsel of silence. The divine discourses are interpreted by Brenner (1981:133-5) as a partial acknowledgement of divine failure to dispose of evil. It is therefore nothing strange for these scholars that Job totally rejects Yahweh, according to both his responses (cf. Curtis 1979:497)<sup>112</sup>. According to this category of interpretation the Yahweh speeches are regarded as “sublime irrelevance” (Good 1981:235), “beyond the absurd” (Cox 1978:113), “poor theology” (Williams) or “tongue-in-the-cheek” (Robertson), with God as a “blustery, false comforter” (cf. Whedbee 1990:237)<sup>113</sup>. The sceptics provide no answer to the question as to why the book of *Job* was included in the Old Testament as part of the religious canon of the people from Israelite origin.

Scholars from the sceptical category read an ancient text against the grain of its original intention. Much of their observations cannot be justified, because they make use of the silent argument of rhetoric. The conclusions made by many sceptics are in contrast to the narrative movement of the text of *Job*. Wheeler (1999:443) relates the misinterpretation of *Job* to the hermeneutic presuppositions of the humanistic trends of our time. God is trying to explain something to readers - the desert is empty and threatening, yet God

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<sup>112</sup> Curtis (1983:549-62) believes that Job distinguishes between his personal and private deity and the high god. Job rejects the high God (Yahweh) in favour of his personal god (cf. 16:18-17:5, 19:23-7, 23:7, 9:33). But the Old Testament concept of monotheism features as early as in Exodus.

<sup>113</sup> Cf. Brown (1996:89) and Goldin (1996:382).

delights and rejoices in his whole creation, quite apart from the human interest in it. God's answer to Job is that it is not about man, but about God (cf. Wheeler 1999:448)<sup>114</sup>.

Whereas these scholars emphasize the sceptical nature of the text of *Job*, we think it is more authentic than sceptical in nature, when *Job* is compared with other sapiential literature from the Old Testament. Job does not reject Yahweh. Instead, his faith is renewed by God with the new insight into the cosmic theophany he is provided with. The theophany of *Job* illustrates another dimension of God, which was not known to the authors of the Pentateuch, the Prophets, or even the other Writings. And the natural human reaction to this portrayal of God is not one of scepticism but of profound awe and wonder in the presence of the deity. Ultimately the aim of the author of *Job* with the divine discourses as dramatic climax to the narrative of the book, is to lead us to a similar response in the presence of God, than that which Yahweh affected in Job.

#### 4.4.3 A Literary Interpretation of the Theophany of Job.

The literary meaning of *Job* is ignored by orthodox rigorism and rejected by resultant rebellion, because the words of subversion that is revealed through the theophany cannot be explained within a scheme (cf. Loader 1984:1). We should avoid both extremes of the dogmatist's optimism and the sceptic's pessimism when studying *Job*. There are many ways which man can utilise to argue on the limits that are imposed on mankind - "Scepticism can use them as arguments and, on the other hand, an uncritical religious mind can appeal to the awareness of such limits as a means of consolation against specific attacks and intellectual difficulties" (Von Rad 1978:97)<sup>115</sup>. Only after Job had testified to

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<sup>114</sup> "It will not do - with Jung and a score of modern critics - to bend the text and see Job's response as tongue-in-cheek, as though he is bluffing to get God off his back. Here the reader confuses his or her point of standing with that of Job, who is satisfied with the divine response. Here the reader would prefer immediate healing or explanation. Instead, the wisdom of creation is presented. Restoration follows later" (Seitz 1989:15).

<sup>115</sup> "Surely all ancient and modern sceptics, pessimists, scoffers and atheists are innocuous and well-meaning folk compared with this man Job... How strange it is that none of them has ever tried to learn from Job! If they had, they might have begun to realise at least what it is that they are attempting, and thus been able to give more forceful expression to their cause" (Barth in Von Rad

the old language of theophany in 42:5 did he find peace of mind. The message of *Job* remains therefore neither theological nor philosophical, but a profoundly religious experience (cf. Friedman 1978:122, Knierim 1995:167).

More ambiguous than the text of *Job* is the failure among scholars to take seriously Yahweh's speeches and Job's responses. The reason for this failure can be attributed to the theophanic phenomenon of the divine discourses, which have either been over-emphasised as a religious phenomenon, or totally disregarded in favour of the contents of *Job* 38-42<sup>116</sup>. Consequently, some scholars chose specifically to disregard either the structure<sup>117</sup> or the content<sup>118</sup> of the theophany type-scene (cf. Dailey 1993b:187). These two elements can be distinguished, but never be detached. The manifestation and the answer of Yahweh should be studied as a whole.

In the beginning of this chapter the structure and content of *Job* 38-42 have been identified as being theophanic according to our two registers - as a religious phenomenon, as well as a type-scene of the theophany in its reported form. Naturally, a literary interpretation of the divine discourses will place more emphasis on the second register of the theophany as a type-scene in its reported form, than on the first register<sup>119</sup>.

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1978:239). To emphasize either the rational or irrational sides of God, would eventually result in either rationalism (wherein God becomes abstract) or mysticism (of the mystery of God). This polarisation coincides with the views of scholars of revelation as an inward witness of the Spirit (as in the dogmatic theory) or as an experience of the divine self-manifestation (as in the psychological theory) (cf. Otto 1959:159,162ff).

<sup>116</sup> Cf. the remark of Perdue (1991:196) that the key to Yahweh's answer should be seek either in its contents, or in the theophany event itself. This have been the main approaches to *Job* 38-42, either to focus on it as a theophany while ignoring the content, or to interpret only its content outside the theophanic frame (Perdue & Gilpin 1992:15, cf. the criticism of Alter 1985:216).

<sup>117</sup> The brevity of the theophany is probably the reason why most scholars do not even discuss its meaning and interpretation (Luc 2000:119).

<sup>118</sup> According to Good (1990:435) Keel (1978:14) focus one-sidedly on the theophany without the speeches, as the essential thing that Job received an encounter with the divine.

<sup>119</sup> "It is the evocative imagery and experience of theophanic event, coupled with the metaphorical content of the speeches, that presents a new linguistic vision of creation, divine rule, and human existence" (Perdue 1991:199, 1994:168).

Alter (1985:87) studies the divine discourses from a literary perspective as an act of divine revelation, wherein the act of manifestation is combined with the literary aspects of poetry which portray the event of Yahweh's appearance and words. He describes *Job* 38-42 as "poetry in revelation". By means of poetical language Yahweh provides Job with a vision of the panorama of creation from a divine perspective. The effect of this event is that Job's own limited vision of the universe is being transcended together with his faith in Yahweh as the Creator.

According to Habel (1985:64-5) the resolution between Job and Yahweh comes in two stages: Initially in the personal appearance of Yahweh, but then also in the divine speeches which are designed to resolve the issue raised in the conflict of the dialogue of *Job* 3-37<sup>120</sup>. The theophany is the final resolution to *Job*<sup>121</sup>. This finding of Habel is similar to our solution that the theophany to Job is the key to his situation of suffering, according to both its registers as a religious phenomenon and the type-scene in its reported form. The theophany as a religious phenomenon finds its place in the second aspect of the type-scene's manifestation.

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<sup>120</sup> After meeting the deity Job abandons all his complaints. Yet, the value of the encounter is even beyond the experience itself, as God continues to speak after Job recants (Hartley 1988:50).

<sup>121</sup> "Since God comes to Job, he has been vindicated, the problem of meaning is no more" (Crenshaw 1970:389). Crenshaw changed his mind on the theology of the divine discourses, as he identified a collision between literary form and religious content of *Job* 38-41: The single function of the theophany (the bringing near of the one dwelling in concealment) clashes with the content of the speech. Perhaps this clash is built into the very essence of theophany, because of its close association with natural phenomena and the warrior ideology. "On the one hand, the manifestation of awesome natural forces elicited terror in persons who witnessed a theophany. On the other hand, the martial imagery ordinarily implied that the deity had come to bestow assistance on the one favoured by divine unveiling" (Crenshaw 1992:70). But the choice of medium of the appearance remains cruel: The "portrayal of deity in the speeches increases the distance between human beings and their maker. This distancing takes place, paradoxically, despite a literary form that emphasizes incredible closeness. Here form and contents clash, with the latter gaining supremacy. Must 'the greater glory of God' always require a belittling of human beings?" (1992:84). According to Luc 2000:119, cf. Nicholson 1995:80-2) the brevity of the theophany may act as a lessening of its cruelty. Theophany should be seen as a live-affirming act, rather than intimidation. "Jahweh selbst ist der Antwort" (Preuss 1977:342).

Dailey (1993b:191-2) describes the semantic symbolism of the phenomenon of the storm in *Job*'s theophany, by utilising the fourfold criteria that were identified by Paul Ricoeur: Firstly, the windstorm is bound to the literary context (in our case that of the type-scene), wherein prior references which alluded to such an event create an atmosphere of impending doom (cf. 9:17). Secondly, the double-sense of the storm, which on a non-literal level is articulated as an extraordinarily religious reality (of the theophany as a religious phenomenon). In contrast to the conventional pattern of theophanic episodes the uniqueness of the theophanic event is disclosed in *Job* (because the emphasis in this text is primarily on the second register of the theophany). Thirdly, the event is theologically evocative, because the mentioning of the storm encodes the advent of the deity according to the theophanic tradition (which supplied us with a theophanic framework from which the divine discourses could be analysed as a theophany in its reported form). Fourthly, the storm is denotative, for the symbol is imported and obtained in and through the literal meaning. The words of Yahweh ascend from on high in a saturating impact of divine self-disclosure (in our literary study on the theophany of *Job* 38-42).

The storm motif may serve as a negative image for Job's experience, but it is also a positive portrayal of God's design and control, as the phenomenon provides an important way of understanding the message of *Job*: "The reader encounters not only the thought that Job lives in a storm but that God is involved in storms and sees wisdom in their midst. Though sufferings often seem without purpose, unjust and destructive like storms, the reader who cries 'Where is God while the storm lingers?' may find here an answer, 'God is in the storm'. When the storms of life tarry and God seems to retreat into total silence, the book of *Job* will continue to bring hope" (Luc 2000:123)<sup>122</sup>.

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<sup>122</sup> God's appearances in storms suggest a common pattern in the Old Testament, but with different emphasis in *Job*. This theophany is lacking further description and wonders in nature, and is abbreviated as a major departure from early theophanic accounts in the Bible (Luc 2000:119). That is the reason for the increased emphasis placed on the 2nd register as part of the type-scene. "Rarely understood, the storm provides a powerful metaphor for God's mystery" (Luc 2000:121).

Through the authentic and subversive vision on the cosmos from the divine perspective, the theophany of Yahweh leads Job on the painful journey of transformation (Brown 1999:228). Job the patient from the framework and Job the impatient<sup>123</sup> from the dialogue becomes Job the faithful after the theophany<sup>124</sup>. Job is transformed by the theophany. The response of in 42:1-6 shows clearly that, whatever position he held during the speeches of *Job* 3-37, Job is now transformed through this spiritual experience.

#### 4..5 Summary.

The structure of *Job*'s divine discourses follows that of the narrative type-scene of the theophany in its reported form, as it was analysed from other theophanic texts of the Old Testament in the previous chapter. The type-scene as framework for application on *Job*'s theophany is essential for the interpretation of the divine discourses.

The different aspects of the theophany as it was illustrated earlier have contributed to the essence and meaning of the divine discourses. The background aspect of the theophany type-scene has shown that the traditional theologies of the Yahwist, the Priestly source, as well as the older wisdom lack the capacity to explain the role of God in the situation of human suffering. Therefore their refutation in the theophany of *Job* is immanent. A new understanding is required, and this is provided by the authenticity of the theophanic disclosure.

In the end Job responds in terms of the cosmic vision he received from God as part of the theophany type-scene. His response to Yahweh is neither that of repentance or rejection in the presence of God. Having received new and authentic insight on the nature of the divine, Job is moved to the withdrawal of his case against God, as well as to the

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<sup>123</sup> The descriptions of Job as patient and impatient were initially used by Ginsberg (1978:111-2).

<sup>124</sup> "Clines praat van die 'Irony of conflict between Theology and Theophany'. Job daag ons juis uit om die teologie vanuit die teofanie te bedryf. Eers wanneer jy vroom en opreg is voor God, praat jy soos Job reg oor God. Jou spreke oor God reflekteer dus jou posisie voor God. Dan is teologie eintlik doksologie!" (Olivier 1990:228, cf. *Job* 42:7).

transformation and transcendence of his existing faith in Yahweh. His response is that of awe and wonder before the divine, as illustrated in terms of the typical reaction of the recipient of theophanies in the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*. Job's situation of suffering is not immediately resolved but he accepts it as part of the insignificance of man in the eyes of Yahweh among the other creatures of the cosmos. When Job is compensated by God in the epilogue it is as part of the dramatic conclusion of the book.

We have learnt that a literary approach on the theophanic divine discourses both supersedes the traditional interpretation and overcomes that of scepticism, as the theophany is the key to Job's situation in an answer from the divine perspective. These different categories of interpretation on the text of *Job* may be expounded in terms of three windstorms: Firstly, there were the winds of force of the traditionalist that wanted to explain man's worth before the divine. Secondly, these storms were replaced by the winds of foolishness of the sceptics who tended to disregard God's worth for mankind. Thirdly, a literary approach has brought us the winds of faith in favour of the Character about whom it is all in the text of *Job*:

*God's cosmic design is to be explored, not obscured.*

*After all, being hit by a theophany is only the beginning of wisdom.*<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Habel (1992:38).

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUDING STATEMENTS

*Only those who have faith in the biblical God will continue to find it meaningful to think and speak about God's revelation through history, ..., only when we can no longer have faith in the biblical God will the concept of revelation through history be rendered meaningless for us. In that event, all theological discourse about it should properly and rightfully cease. In such a situation, as Job has taught us, nothing avails but a fresh and decisive personal encounter with the One who is both hidden and revealed in history.*

(Lemke 1982:46)

#### 5.1 Theophany and the Divine Discourses of Job.

In this study the theophany as religious phenomenon was identified in some texts of the Old Testament, and then transformed into a narrative type-scene which schematises the reporting of such an event. The register or constitutive aspects are fairly stable but may vary in exposition in specific instances. Our investigation has offered enough comparable proof to use the theophany as a type-scene schema or pattern. An application to the divine discourses of *Job* proof to fit the pattern.

The divine discourses can be seen as a key to the salient questions of *Job* only when it is read and studied as a theophany in terms of both its structure and content. This was the hypothesis that was argued throughout the study from two dimensions: As a religious phenomenon the theophany may be described according to definite characteristics. The divine discourses have been identified as a theophany, according to the phenomenological study that was done in the second chapter. As a type-scene of the theophany in its reported form, *Job* 38-42 correlates with nine similar texts in the Old Testament. The criteria for this theophany type-scene have been analysed in the third chapter, and applied to *Job* 38-42 in the fourth. This theophany type-scene consists of the following elements:



- i. Background.
- ii. Manifestation.
- iii. Dialogue.
- iv. Intrigue.
- v. Conclusion.

The analysis of the divine discourses within its theophanic framework has provided substantial evidence for the interpretation of the text of *Job*. This literary interpretation has warned against the optimism of the dogmatic traditions, as well as the pessimism of the sceptic scholars of our day<sup>1</sup>. The type-scene as a theophanic model is a key to the understanding of the text of *Job* as a whole. This has been shown during the application of the model to the Yahweh speeches of *Job* 38-42.

The application of the theophanic type-scene to the divine discourses has sensitised the investigator to be aware of new knowledge dimensions disclosed by the type-scene, as well as subversions of older opinions of God's creative activity and man's position in this order. Yahweh is portrayed in the theophany of *Job* as the Creator of the universe who governs it according a divine order and justice, which often is not obvious for mankind to see nor to understand. Job is provided with a cosmic theophany which left him informed about the greatness of God and the insignificance of man. Job receives insight into a new biblical anthropology which clearly differs from that of Genesis.

The effect of the cosmic theophany can be seen in the seriousness of Job's responses to Yahweh. Job is strengthened by the fact that Yahweh personally manifested himself to him<sup>2</sup>, and he responds accordingly neither in terms of repentance before God, nor in terms of the rejection of Yahweh. As the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*, a human reaction which is characteristic during theophany events, is experienced by him, Job's faith is

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<sup>1</sup> Are "theologians really genuine readers of the biblical texts or do they only use these texts for their particular ideological purposes?" (Jeanrond 1998:244).

<sup>2</sup> *Job* "reminds readers of both the value of rational enquiry and the need for mystical experience" (Dailey 1993a:69, cf. 1997:46,51).

transformed. This is indicated by Job's meaningful response to Yahweh - he is defeated in his case with Yahweh, but gained in the process and is enriched with a new understanding of Yahweh as Creator and Redeemer. Job's painful journey is a spiritual experience, without which no man can become truly wise. He learns to be receptive to the direct experience of truth, which he encountered during the theophany.

As the conclusion to our study, we will discuss four areas which is often included in Old Testament studies on either the theophany or on *Job*. The evidence gleaned in the preceding chapter have some substantial directives or answers to provide to the biblical themes of divine manifestation, wisdom, spirituality and theodicy.

## 5.2 Theophany and the Divine Manifestation in the Old Testament.

The religious-perceptual development of the phenomena of the divine manifestation in the biblical narratives has been traced. A diachronic view of these different phenomena of communication between Yahweh and mankind follows a specific historical development<sup>3</sup> :

The theophany is the oldest phenomenon which occurs in the oldest narratives wherein the deity appears and communicates with man. As part of the epiphany, the phenomenon of the theophany went through four stages, during which God became more accessible but also more concealed from human eyes. The earliest form of theophanies in the form of human beings, was soon replaced by appearances of the angel of Yahweh / Elohim. Later theophanies occurred through the manifestation of storm phenomena, and also in the cult

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<sup>3</sup> Although this study was primarily embarked upon from a synchronic perspective, we describe the diachronic development of the divine manifestation in Old Testament texts to understand more of the biblical history behind the text of *Job*. In this process we borrow the methodology of the historians of religion whose studies include both diachronic and synchronic dimensions. Cf. Eliade (1961:232): After he had established the characteristics of the structure of religious phenomena (or the essence of religion in its synchronic dimension), he investigates the historical context of religious phenomena (in terms of the communicating of its diachronic dimension).

through the glory of Yahweh, and in spiritualized forms such as the face and the name of Yahweh<sup>4</sup>.

Manifestations in the form of theophanies were later replaced by the prophetic oracle, which occurred in the form of visions and dreams, during which God communicated with chosen recipients. While the theophany could be initiated only by the deity, dreams and visions could be called upon by believers through certain cultic rituals such as the lot, sacrifices, fasting, meditation or prayer. In the latest literature of the Old Testament epiphanic events reoccur in the visions and dreams of ordained people, together with heavenly guides who could interpret the contents of these phenomena for the recipient.

From a theological perspective the development of manifestations of the deity can be described in three successive stages of the theophany (temporary manifestations of the deity in nature), the temple (Yahweh's glory occasionally descends on the cult of Israel) and the believer (who is filled with the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit).

Consequently, what we find in the text of the Old Testament is various degrees of the involvement of the deity on a devolutionary scale - from the earliest myths related to Ancient Near Eastern literature, to the sacred acts of Yahweh in the life of Israel, to secular stories wherein the divine presence is known but not experienced directly as such<sup>5</sup>.

When the findings of the diachronic development of the phenomena of manifestation in biblical texts are applied to *Job*, some ironic conclusions may be made. The final redaction of the *BHS* text of *Job* was relatively late in the Old Testament period, according to the majority of scholars<sup>6</sup>. Yet, this late Old Testament text exhibits the oldest form of manifestation of the deity in its reported form as a theophany type-scene, to provide an answer from Yahweh to Job. The theophany of *Job* in its second register (as a

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<sup>4</sup> Theologians of the priesthood of the post-exilic times stressed the absolute transcendence of Yahweh, according to which man can see God and survive the experience.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Deist (1983:8). The best example of this last stage can be found in the book of Eshter, where the presence of Yahweh is clearly felt, although his Name is not mentioned once in the text.

<sup>6</sup> It is the opinion of this scholar that the final redaction of the text of *Job* coincides with that of Daniel around 300BC, under the hands of a group of scholars not directly related to the priesthood.

narrative type-scene) is part of a late text, but contains the oldest form of manifestation as a key to the suffering Job. The reason why the author of *Job* employed an older setting in this late text lies primarily in the disclosure of an authentic perspective of God<sup>7</sup>.

Some scholars would probably argue that the late text of *Job* has an ancient *Sitz im Leben*, i.e. that of patriarchal Israel, which explains the usage of the oldest type of divine manifestation to coincide with the context of the narrative. This cannot be the case, as the sapiential arguments, or theologies of wisdom, portrayed in this narrative make use of post-exilic developments of scepticism. Our analysis of the text of *Job* revealed conflicting and various forms of manifestation of the deity among the characters of *Job* in line with the later sapiential tradition in Israel.

There is a very specific reason why the late text of *Job* includes the oldest form of divine communication between God and man: Theophany is the most authentic form of the divine manifestation, solely because it cannot be imitated by mankind, unlike the dream and vision of the prophetic oracle (cf. Dt. 18:20-2 and Eccl. 5:1-2). In *Job* 38-42 Yahweh himself takes the initiative to break into human history by means of a manifestation that cannot be falsified by human sages, whose methods of argumentation left them in the lurch.

*Job*'s cosmic theophany also has an eschatological purpose: That believers of Yahweh in New Testament times should learn not to misunderstand our objectives by simply giving them divine sanction. Our function is to interpret the revealed will of God in modern

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<sup>7</sup> Israel utilised the Canaanite storm theophany until the 10th century, when it disappeared during the time of the monarchy from the official-religious scene. Forms of the epiphany and theophany returned to popularity only in the six century after the exile. It were then included in the Old Testament as part of apocalyptic texts like Zechariah 9-14 and Daniel 7-12, as well as in the sapiential text of *Job* 38-42 in the revelation from the stormwind with the divine kingship and a new creation as dominant themes (cf. Cross 1973:169-70). When Yahweh appeared to Job in similar ways as he did to Abraham and Moses, it was to show that the "God of the heroic past is not an otiose high god who has retired into oblivion" (Habel 1985:527). The Rabbis taught that the theophany ended with the laying of Temple, and that it reoccurred only again in the apocalyptic visions (Eicher 1977:33-4).

times under the guidance of the Spirit, and not to consider ourselves the sources of divine inspiration. A creative tension does exist concerning God's will in the various texts of the Bible, but it promotes our understanding of the fact that God's will is always to be applied to specific historical situations, in biblical times and today. If a believer is able to discern God's will in a specific situation, then the Lord through the Holy Spirit has vouchsafed it to him, and definitely not because that believer is of a divine nature. Good (1981) warns about the misunderstanding of faith as magical retribution, and this has remained our biggest mistake since the times of Job and his friends: Religious leaders, like magicians, often shift the focus away from the divine presence to themselves.

### 5.3 Theophany and the Sapiential Literature of the Old Testament.

Although numerous approaches to the study of Old Testament texts exist<sup>8</sup>, scholars have never been able to agree on the issues of the origin, place and function of the sapiential books in the canon of the Old Testament. These wisdom books have been studied primarily from four points of departure<sup>9</sup>:

- i. Anthropology: The human quest and experience of mastering life  
(Brueggemann, Zimmerli, Rankin).
- ii. Theodicy: The justice of God as the central, dark side of the covenant  
(Crenshaw, Mack).
- iii. Cosmology: Divine principles order the world  
(Gese, Preuss, HH Schmidt).
- iv. Cosmology and Anthropology: Form earlier experiences to a theology in 600BC  
(Von Rad, Westermann).

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<sup>8</sup> Terrien (1978:9-14) mentions three approaches to biblical science which substantially influenced Old Testament hermeneutics during the past century, to which we may add our own approach:

- i. Literary criticism (with its diachronic emphasis on the Documentary Hypothesis)
- ii. Form-critical analysis (concentrating on the texts's synchronic *Gattung und Sitz im Leben*)
- iii. Traditio-historical methods (on its diachronic oral traditions and cultic legends).
- iv. Literary studies (which focus on texts as literature, while reviewing the previous methods).

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Perdue (1991:12-7) and Brown (1996:1-4).

These four approaches may be narrowed down to two poles, according to their pre-suppositions: Firstly, the anthropocentric pole of human experience as the basis for sapiential thought (cf. Von Rad, Priest, Brueggemann, Zimmerli, Crenshaw). Secondly, the theocentric pole of creation theology as the basis for sapiential thought (cf. Gese, HH Schmidt, Perdue, Terrien, Murphy).

Are we able to attribute the origin of the wisdom books of the Old Testament to a form of divine manifestation which revealed their content, or is it based solely on human experience? Once again the way in which scholars read the Bible contributes mainly to the answers they provide for this question<sup>10</sup>. The traditionalists would answer “yes” definitely, the sceptics “no” definitely. According to the dogmatic proponents the situation of suffering, even in wisdom literature, can only be solved from revelation (Eichrodt in Crenshaw 1970:381<sup>11</sup>). According to the sceptics the themes of salvation history and election are lacking from the sapiential literature of the Old Testament. The same can be said of manifestations of the divine in the form of theophanies: Knight (1977:159) mentions that in wisdom we do not find revelation in the direct sense as in theophanies, “although theophanic imagery occurs in numerous places”.

The theophany of *Job* contradicts the way in which biblical scholars describe the origin and function of the wisdom books of the Old Testament. For this reason some scholars question the legitimacy of the divine discourses as a theophany in both its structure and

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<sup>10</sup> “As is commonly known, Christian theologians, on the whole, do not have a good record of dealing critically and imaginatively with the Hebrew Scriptures, ... the debate between historical-critical and systematic theologians is deep down a debate about the proper reading of the Bible” (Jeanron 1998:244).

<sup>11</sup> Thirty years ago Crenshaw wrote that the theophany is a “distinctive wisdom motive” (Clements 1978:78) and that *Job* is “steeped in the language of theophany” (Crenshaw 1967:51). Why? “Is the current emphasis on wisdom literature indicative of our inability to take revelation seriously any more? Now that we can no longer say *ko 'amar 'adonai* (“Thus hath the Lord spoken”) are we reduced to *šemâ beni mušar 'abika* (“My son, listen to your father’s advice”)? Has the crisis that confronted Job and Qoheleth invaded the ranks of Old Testament scholarship?” (1970:395). Since then he has changed his mind: Wisdom literature limits itself to observable phenomena, or perhaps we should acknowledge different forms of wisdom, one in which revelation plays a role. “In any event, one would expect sages to stress communication by means of an inner still voice rather than one associated with great commotion” (1992:79)!

content (i.e. in its reported form as a type-scene)<sup>12</sup>. The theophany breaks ranks with the ordinary wisdom scripts of the Old Testament. *Job* 38-42 is an 'unscripted' theophany, because there is no place for a theophany in the script of Old Testament literature. Yet, this is precisely the function of Yahweh's theophany as a key to *Job*.

Among the wisdom texts of the Old Testament, the theophany of *Job* comes as a startling novelty when one realises that, as part of the theophany type-scene, the author had implemented in this sapiential text something that is quite alien to a wisdom book. In the Yahweh speeches the role of his friends in the dialogue of *Job* 3-37 are reversed as the formerly inaccessible divinity draws near in the form and contents of a new answer. The cosmic theophany creates in the character of Job "virtual faith" of Yahweh in his universe. The divine discourse serves as a corrective to those approaches to wisdom which rely on human reason and experience alone<sup>13</sup>. The author of *Job* brought into play a new perspective of God that is not part of the traditional theology of wisdom, in fact it subverts it. But how does he achieves it? This is the acme of creativity to construct a dialogical text (which is almost dramatic in nature), and then allows God himself (as Character) to reveal new information through a theophany - the most authentic mode of manifestation<sup>14</sup>.

"Nowhere does the crisis of modern theology find a more critical centre than in the controversy over the reality and nature of divine disclosure. The time has therefore come for a comprehensive overview of revelation in biblical terms, in terms of the living God who speaks and shows, the God who gains and merits his own audibility and visibility. God is not the Great Perhaps, a clueless shadow character in a Scotland Yard mystery.

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<sup>12</sup> Cox disregarded the divine discourses, as the "theophanies have no real function in wisdom literature, where reason and experience, not revelation, are normative" (in Dailey 1993b:187-8). Cf. also Gibson (1985:222,226), Habel (1985:36-7), and Gowan (1992:85-96).

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Gowan (1992:95) and Dailey (1999:283, 1993b:194).

<sup>14</sup> *Job* "pushes wisdom to a limit and provides a corrective insight to the prevailing perspective of this biblical tradition. Wisdom is not gained simply by the secular development of one's reasoning faculties;... To possess it, profit from it, and lead others to it, the one who would be 'wise' must share in the experience of an ongoing, personal relationship with God" (Dailey 1993a:68). In this manner the text of *Job* differs from Ecclesiastes, who chose the empirical mode of investigation to test rationally the assumption of reality experience.

For less is He a nameless spirit awaiting post-mortem examination in some theological morgue. He is a very particular and specific divinity, known from the beginning solely on the basis of his works and self-declaration as the one living God. Only theorists who ignore divine self-disclosure are prone to identify God as the nondescript John Doe of religious philosophy" (Henry 1979:7).

#### 5.4 Theophany and Spirituality.

In the third chapter we have discussed the different approaches to the origin and context of the Old Testament theophany. We have shown how the theophany is regarded as a genre (Jeremias), a tradition (Westermann) or as part of the call narratives (Habel). This study proposed a fourth legitimate form, namely the theophanic type-scene which can be identified as a religious phenomenon in its reported form in some texts of the Old Testament. We shall now ponder the function of this type-scene in the cult of Israel.

Was the *deus absconditus* waxed in the cultus into the *deus revelatus*? Is there any experience of God during the cult? Although some scholars deny this probability<sup>15</sup>, others showed the way to the interpretation of a cultic theophany in ancient Israel. The Western Semites of the second millennium BC based their faith on the acts of divine intervention in the history of the people of Israel<sup>16</sup>. This faith in the God of history was experienced in the cult of Israel<sup>17</sup>.

Initially the cult was anchored in the narratives of divine visits to Israel's patriarchs. According to Von Rad the pre-Israelite clans recited the *Gesta Dei per Hebraeos* at various shrines and feasts. Israel's ancestors visited several cultic places: Shechem,

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<sup>15</sup> Jeremias (1965:118-22ff) finds no theophany portrayals which originated from cultic life. Hunter (1987:125) also denies this, as the theophany in the psalms "should rather be seen as part of literary creations which are used as literary form to reach certain literary functions".

<sup>16</sup> According to Westermann (1981:97,101) God's appearances to his people were not anchored in history or cult, but in the experience of divine intervention, as it first happened at the Red Sea. But this does not explain the manifestations of Elohim to Israel's patriarchs before Ex.14.

<sup>17</sup> Weiser (1959:114-5), Terrien (1978:19-24), Schmidt (1983:27), Preuss (1996:215-7).



Mamre, Beerlahai-roi, Beersheba and Bethel in Genesis 12-35. The different sanctuary legends of the individual patriarchs led to the establishment of a cult via the altar.

Theophanies were the centre of these legends in Canaan, as every sanctuary required such a legitimisation pointing to that place as the site of divine revelation (Schmidt 1983:23).

The pre-Israelite sanctuary legends were reinterpreted profoundly by the earlier biblical authors, thereby totally altering its meaning.

The culmination of these manifestations was the Sinai tradition of the theophany. During these events Moses was ordered to manufacture cultic symbols - the ark, tent, tabernacle as well as instruments to be used during worship - that would implicate the presence of Yahweh who was otherwise to be worshipped as an imageless God, according to the 2nd commandment. The Sinai covenant was later renewed at Shechem under the leadership of Joshua (cf. Jos.5). After the conquest of the land, the tribes worshipped Yahweh at several sanctuaries such as Shechem, Shiloh, Gilgal, Bethel, Mizpah, Gibeon, Ophrah and Dan. At that time there was no cultic centre in existence, and only the faith in Yahweh bound the tribes together.

During the Monarchy the Zion-tradition was developed by David in the centralisation of Israel's cult: Yahweh, the one God, was to be worshipped in one cult, at one cultic centre, altar and city (Preuss 1996:218-21). The mountain of Zion as the cultic source of revelation was identified with the mountain of Sinai / Horeb<sup>18</sup> and the manifestations of the divine that were experienced there. The ancient theophanies were drawn into the cultic sphere, they were remembered, relived and probably also re-enacted in cultic dramas<sup>19</sup>. Nevertheless, the theophany became institutionalised in the shrine, as worshippers could "seek the face of God" in the temple of Jerusalem (Smith 1997:100-9). Revelation still only came about by the divine initiative, but was gracefully given to those who would seek with an open sensitivity to receive it. This way manifestations of the

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<sup>18</sup> The Mountain of God was variously called Sinai (by J and P) or Horeb (by E and D), as an ancient pilgrimage site for various tribes and peoples (cf. Zimmerli 1978:71, Booij 1984:6,9).

<sup>19</sup> According to Martens (1981:126) Israel adopted the Ancient Near Eastern re-enactment of the divine in drama form, as part of "God's demonstrable presence" in the cult.

divine became part of the theology of the cult, as it was described by Mowinkel's *Thronbesteigungsfest*, Weiser's *Bundeserneuerungsfest* and Kraus's *konigliches Zionfest* (cf. Pax 1955:116-7). According to Weiser (1950) Israel's cult kept the theophanic tradition actual and alive. Müller (1964:148), in contrast to Weiser, combined the *Theophaniebeschreibungen* with the *Gotteserscheinung im Heiligen Kriege* in texts like Joshua 6, Judges 7 and 1Samuel 4. Lindblom (1961) suggested a link between the theophany and the holy place<sup>20</sup>.

According to Gottwald (1980:96) the theophany is a divine manifestation to a community in such a way that God is able to communicate directly with his people in the cultic experience, during which reports of theophanies become literary products of the event<sup>21</sup>. As the base experience of religious authority the theophany found its way back in cultic acts which projected the phenomenon. The Sinai themes of theophany, covenant and law were enacted in Israel in a definite program of events<sup>22</sup>.

How was the theophany ritually experienced and celebrated in the cult? Central to the cult in Ancient Israel were the two elements of the *Actio Dei* and the *Reactio Hominum*<sup>23</sup>. The theophany of Yahweh was seen as the central cultic act or the divine indicative, while the people reacted accordingly to the theophany as the divine imperative. These events were assumed by Israel under the form of the cultic theophany, during which her history of salvation was liturgically re-enacted as a new event during the covenant festival (Weiser 1996:28-32, 1950:524-30). By means of the dramatic enactment of the theophany as part of the cultic program, the dialogical aspects between God and Israel were realised and

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<sup>20</sup> Kuntz (1967:216) has reservations on the conclusions of these scholars which are based on indirect and incomplete allusions in Old Testament texts. Yet, their observations suggest something of what Fishbane (1986:74) has called the "ongoing process of revitalizing" of Israel's traditions of faith in later biblical texts.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. 5.1. for our transformation of the religious phenomenon into a narrative type-scene.

<sup>22</sup> Gottwald (1980:94,91) distinguishes the theophany, covenant and law as themes of the tradition and structure of the cult. Israel's centralised cultic program had 4 elements: (1) The manifestation of the deity (Sinai theme, theophany sub-theme). (2) The constitution or reconstitution of the community (Sinai theme, covenant sub-theme). (3) Recital of actions of the deity (basic historical theme). (4) Declaration of the will of God for the community (Sinai theme, law sub-theme).

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Weiser (1950:516-7), Kuntz (1967:219).

kept alive by means of the *Bekentnis* (or *toda*), *Gebet*, *Gehorsam* and the *Führung Gottes* as main elements of this festival which placed the theophany central in the divine salvation.

The cultic theophany was practised in at least four rituals in Israel's congregation: Firstly, in the theophany and the manifestation of God's will for his people<sup>24</sup>. God was represented in the cult by means of the spoken word in contemporary Israel. Theophanic descriptions were no longer reportorial accounts but testimonies to what people have previously perceived or experienced in divine encounters. Reactions to these cultic testimonies were similar as during the theophanic encounter itself. The *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* became part of the cultic experience. In this way the theophany type-scene was established also as part of the cult's liturgy<sup>25</sup>.

Secondly, the glory theophany was likewise enacted in the cult by the burning of smoke and incense. In chapter three Exodus 19-34, Numbers 12 and Deuteronomy 31 were analysed as theophanies of the כבוד of Yahweh in the cult of Israel. Examples of this phenomenon from the time of the journey through the desert to the post-exilic period are rife in the texts of the Old Testament<sup>26</sup>. What were once real acts of mediation from the divine initiative, were later dramatically re-enacted during worship in the cult<sup>27</sup>. The rehearsal of the *Urtheophanie* at Sinai became the model for present disclosure. The cultic representation of the theophany was symbolised from the cloud of glory and the

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<sup>24</sup> Cf. Weiser (1950:515) and Knight (1977:157-9).

<sup>25</sup> "God's saving activity does not take place in worship. It is attributed to the epiphany, not to the theophany. Nonetheless, the word which pledges that saving - to be distinguished from the announcement of saving - does belong in the worship service" (Westermann 1982:199). According to Westermann (1981:99) Ex.19-34 displays the self-revelation of God in the basic features of a cultic occurrence, in terms of three elements: (1) The locality a specific place / sacred boundary, (2) The time is a specific day / preparation for the sanctification, (3) Cultic personnel / Moses as mediator God's activity towards his people.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Num.14,16, Lev.9,1Ki.8 and Ezek.1 among others. In Ezek.11 the glory of God abandons the Temple *en route* to the exiles in Babylon.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Weiser (1950:518-9) and Kuntz (1967:221-31). According to Smith (1997:107) the mountain was also conceptualised in the temple's divisions, and by the hierarchy of Moses, the priests and the people, who were restricted to the entrance of the holy place in terms of the divine order.

blowing of the horn, as experienced by Israel in Exodus 19 (cf. Müller 1964). Rituals of smoke and the burning of incense portrayed the glory of Yahweh descending on the temple, thereby both presenting and concealing the presence of the divine. According to Heger (1997:215,278) the fire and smoke created during the incense-ceremony matched the types of theophany already prevalent in Israel's past, now as a form of direct contact with the divine in worship. The cloud of Exodus 19:9 was distinct from the deity, it served as a medium to conceal God from human gaze but allowed man to hear his voice. The blowing of the horn symbolised the storm theophany, and the rising of the sun in the east a solar theophany<sup>28</sup>.

Thirdly, iconographical detail functioned as part of the portrayal of the presence of the divine. Shorter (1985:64) relates images of the cherubim or protection figures (in Mesopotamia as symbol of winds and storm-clouds) to motifs of divine presence with the ark in the temple. Weiser (1950:520) identified the *kapporet* and *keruben* as presentations of the clouds during the Sinai theophany. Consequently the natural phenomena of the theophany were ritualised iconographically as presenting the dwelling of the divine in the tabernacle and temple<sup>29</sup>.

Fourthly, the presence of Yahweh may also have been identified by other means: Würthwein (1994:152-4) interprets the "sound of a gentle (wind) stillness" in 1Kings 19:11-4 as a cultic celebration of the theophany. Whereas the Assyrians carried their gods during cultic processions, this silence may have been a way of experiencing the passing by of the imageless God of Israel. Other acts implying the presence of the divine in the cult were the pilgrimage to the feasts at Jerusalem, participation in the covenant meal, the worship of Yahweh, as well as the enthronement of the king during the New Year Feast.

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<sup>28</sup> Cf. Smith (1997:102-9), who explains the "seeing of God" in the temple in terms of the solar theophany as in Ps.29. Later this visual experience became a more general experience of God in the temple during Israel's three great cultic feasts. For other discussions of the solar theophany, cf. Taylor (1993) and Laubsher (1994).

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Hiebert (1992:509). "The Temple rituals and iconography and the people's liturgical experience of Yahweh reinforced one another" (Smith 1997:106).

Gibson (1989:312-3) describes the text of *Job* as a dramatised lament which was not derived from some radical source at the fringe of the Old Testament, but from central liturgical practices from the area of the public worship. Terrien (1978:13-4,361) interprets *Job* as a play, a Masque of Revolt dating from the 6th century, that was acted out in Babylon during the early years of the exile as a "theatrical representation of the New Year theophany"<sup>30</sup>. If this is the case it might well be that the author not only used the theophany as an authentic medium of revelation, but that he combined it with a practice not unfamiliar to the people of Israel as well. Job's 'spiritual journey' proclaims the necessity of a personal encounter with God for true faith to emerge<sup>31</sup>. Yahweh's speeches open a unique dimension in the theological process, a new horizon of meaning which includes a spiritual and mystical dimension (Dailey 1993b:194). Pertaining to the divine presence, man has the option to accept or to reject it. This happens first and foremost during cultic events.

We already mentioned how Deist (1983) described the divine involvement in Old Testament narratives in terms of a devolutionary scale - from myth to sacred to secular stories. Because of this desacralization, man became a secularised creature who no longer perceived himself as *homo religiosus* (Eliade 1961:14-5). But this is precisely where the cultic function of *Job* has something to say to our secularised world: Whereas the cultic space was once limited to a centralised holy place at Jerusalem, the cosmic theophany proclaims the whole universe as sacred space from the perspective of God. Israel's cultic perceptions of a holy place with holy events undertaken at holy times<sup>32</sup>, are transcended to what Eliade (1961:12) calls a 'cosmic sacrality' in which the universe in its entirety becomes a hierophany. This is the case in *Job*'s theophany! The sacred and profane, two

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<sup>30</sup> *Job* constitutes "a scathing critique of religious subjectivism in all its manifestations, of egocentric flattery, either through the lull of ritual or the business of moral activism... The *Masque of Job* began in revolt, but it ended in faith without the old illusion about the self and with a new lucidity about God" (Terrien 1978:373).

<sup>31</sup> According to Williams (1978:63) Job's journey consists of four acts:

1. Once upon a time (the prologue)
2. Once in time (the dialogues)
3. Once out of time (the divine discourses)
4. Twice upon a time (the epilogue).

<sup>32</sup> This is the way Westermann (1982:194-8) described Israel's elements of worship, in terms of the holy event (words and actions), holy place (pilgrimage), and holy time (festive calendars).

existential modes of being dependent upon the position mankind has conquered in the cosmos, are cancelled<sup>33</sup>. From a bird's eye view Job is given the opportunity to look through Yahweh's eyes at his creation. Yahweh's words proclaim the creation as sacred space because of his immanent presence even in the most unusual places. Job must take heed of the way he is 'playing in the fields of the Lord', for as Moses and Joshua have once stood on holy ground, Job is part of God's holy cosmos.

Can we still practise the presence of God in the universe in our time? The origin of our spiritual experiences stem from the narratives of the Bible, wherein humans encountered the divine in their daily lives. By stating this we do not mean to fall back into the mythical traps of the Ancient Near East, according to which the acts of the gods were seen as cycles to be repeated in each season of nature. The historical acts of Yahweh were not cyclically repeatable, but they were relived in remembrance and anticipation as future encounters with the divine. The book of Deuteronomy, for example, is a sermon-like representation, realisation and remembrance of salvific acts of Yahweh, as well as a new testimony to continuing actuality of what was narrated (Preuss 1996:213). Hab.3 also reflects the actual experiences of a believer during festival worship as a ritual of inner faith. As the past and present meet in the here and now of worship, the classic revelation of the divine is contemplated to gain hope as a promise for God's intervention in the future. A present event thus signifies the renewal of ancient salvation as well as the promise of a future outworking of divine victory (Eaton 1964:164-5)<sup>34</sup>.

In New Testament times the cultic theophany of Ancient Israel was acted out in rituals that combined the person of Christ and the proleptic experience of the eschatological epiphany, as the community of faith extend from "the theophanic past to the epiphanic end

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<sup>33</sup> The contrast between the sacred and profane can be illustrated by the space of a church in a modern city, constituting the threshold as a separation of the two modes of being, but "where passage from the profane to the sacred world becomes possible", cf. the gate in Genesis 28, which linked the heaven and the earth (Eliade 1961:25,27).

<sup>34</sup> "The task of exegetical interpretation and also of biblical theology is not to restate the meaning of the Old Testament texts in ways which would be appropriate and meaningful to the ancient Israelites - but to us" (Knight 1977:164).

of history" (Terrien 1978:41). Churches with a biblical message of the God who acts continue to celebrate God's presence<sup>35</sup>. While they await the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, they spend time in his presence<sup>36</sup>. Because of the retention of the numinous in our secularised world, the gap is widening between those who experience God's presence and those who choose not to<sup>37</sup>. Jeanron (1998:254) states that biblical texts simultaneously offer two levels of manifestation to contemporary readers - the communication of a past testimony of a manifestation of God in history, as well as a manifestation of the deity for the reader during the act of reading. "Therefore, dealing with the question of divine revelation in any interpretation of the Bible means to run the risk of being transformed in the act of reading itself" (1998:257).

We have showed the relation between the direct presence of the deity in theophanies and its indirect mediation in the cult. The *Deus Absconditus* ("self-concealing God", cf. Isa.45:15) was both present and evasive in cultic ceremonies. Because faith and cult is integral there can be no knowledge of God (*Theologia*) without service of God (*Theolatreia*) (Terrien 1978:1,4)<sup>38</sup>. The human experience to the divine manifestation is a spiritual experience according to the human senses, most often in terms of hearing but sometimes also in seeing. Ignatius of Loyola (cf. Schökel 1988:139) quoted this the 'application of senses' in spiritual exercises. Terrien (1978:8) shows the way in which the presence of the divine has been variously experienced by the different churches of Jesus Christ<sup>39</sup>:

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<sup>35</sup> "The Hebraic theology of presence leads to the Christian theology of the eucharistic presence" (Terrien 1978:42-3,31).

<sup>36</sup> "Until that day we must wait patiently. And as we wait, we can also spend time in his presence. With unveiled faces we may reflect his glory and be transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit" (Niehaus 1995:382).

<sup>37</sup> The language of theophany "is foreign to all except some mystics and charismatics who manage to perpetuate it". Post-modern science might rediscover its mystery (Gowan 1994:51,52). The search for meaningful life is a search for God, anticipated in "the quest for authentic spirituality amid the collective disillusionment and anxiety shared by Generation X" (Dailey 1999:276).

<sup>38</sup> Worship is the dialogue between the God who acts, and man who responds to the divine in devotion and theological reflection (Westermann 1982:194-9).

<sup>39</sup> The current popularity of the Charismatic movements may be attributed to their holistic approaches, which combines both faith and sacrament in worship, among other cultic acts.

<p><b>The faith of the Protestants:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Proclamation of the Word</li> <li>* Preaching in the Spirit</li> <li>* Ethical experience</li> <li>* Remember acts of God</li> </ul>	<p><b>The sacrament of the Catholics:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Manifestation of the Word</li> <li>* Sacrament of the Spirit</li> <li>* Mystical experience</li> <li>* Relive acts of God</li> </ul>
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In conclusion we state three ways in which the church of Christ should react to the biblical theophanies in our time, under the continued presence and guidance of God's Holy Spirit:

- i. Remember the divine actions of the past (from the Word)
- ii. Relive these acts in the present (through the Sacrament)
- iii. Renew our faith in anticipation of God's acts in the future (in terms of Faith).

“In a day when religious experience has been reduced to the scope of our jaded feelings, it is well to remember this biblical truth: God is the absolutely real one; when he enters a person's life, it is we who are suddenly aware of our tentative and fragile existence. At the same time, an encounter with God calls for a fully human response. In fact, in their response to God people realise their true nature and freedom” (Dyrness 1979:37).

### 5.5 Theophany and Theodicy.

In the religious world the issue of undeserved suffering is described by the concept of theodicy, a combination of the Greek terms Θεός (“God”) and δικη (“divine justice”)<sup>40</sup>. Theodicy asks the question why the just God would allow unjust things to happen to the righteous. The issue of Job's situation should be studied within the context of undeserved suffering<sup>41</sup>. The theodicy in Old Testament texts and in *Job* is explained in terms of monotheism, dualism or humanism<sup>42</sup>.

<sup>40</sup> “Leer van die Godskennis volgens die natuurlike reg” (Odendaal et al 1983:1141).

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Loader (1984:1). Some scholars disregard issue of the suffering of the innocent in *Job*: According to Andersen (1977:64) the theodicy cannot be applied to *Job*, which deals with the story of one man. Goodman (1988) disagree: In his interpretation of the work of Saadia Ben Joseph Al-Fayyumi, the character of Job is seen as metaphysical, exemplary, figural or fabular. For Fohrer



Paul Ricoeur (1960:18-109) described the development of evil in history in five phases:

- i. Cosmic chaos as the initial evil in the creation myths of Sumer-Akkad (cf. Gen. 1:1-2).
- ii. Greek tragedies on the “boosaardige God” or the *Diabolus*.
- iii. The *Adamitische* (anthropological) events and the “drama der verleiding” (Gen. 3).
- iv. Myths on the “verbanne ziel, en het heil door de kennis” by Plato and the philosophy.
- v. The dynamic cycle of myths of evil in the modern world.

Ricoeur therefore treats the symbolism of evil from the beginning of history to its end, in terms of the monistic or dualistic alternatives. Its origin is either from the Creator as in the creation drama of the chaos battle (monotheism), or from evil itself as in the Adamic story of the fall of mankind (dualism). Biblical books testify to both explanations of the origin of evil, in terms of cosmological eschatology (the world under dominion of evil) and forensic apocalyptic eschatology (people are accountable for the consequences of sin). According to Tate (1992:471-2) Old Testament texts place the emphasis on the evil of mankind, while New Testament texts focus on the acts of the Devil / Satan.

Ricoeur’s “symbolism of evil” was applied to *Job* by Mettinger who identified the probable presence of evil in three forms in the text (1992:40-9, 1997:14-5):

- i. The monistic view of the two-sided Godhead as source and cause of good and evil<sup>43</sup>. Behemoth and Leviathan as symbols of evil are part of the unexpected dark side of God.

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(1963:548-50) *Job* is not concerned with an explanation of suffering, but with the correct attitude in the midst of suffering. Good (1981:196ff) interprets *Job* as the irony of reconciliation, with faith as its main theme, and not theodicy: “All the participants, ..., assume that they know how God acts. Job does not want God’s self-justification; he wants God to justify him (1981:213-4). Westermann (1977:27-31) denies that *Job* is about the problem of suffering, but that it is about suffering. Steinmann (1996) disregards suffering in *Job* in favour of integrity and faith in suffering, as trust in God makes questions of theodicy irrelevant. “All that is relevant is trust that God can sustain a righteous person’s integrity and faith throughout the most severe crisis” (Steinmann 1996:100).

<sup>42</sup> Foley mentions eleven popular explanations of the theodicy (cf. Spangenberg 1994:1001). For other Ancient Near Eastern views on the theodicy, cf. Crenshaw (1970:387), Stek (1997:446-7). Vanhoutte shows two tendencies in recent publications on the theodicy: (1) Polarising God and suffering, or (2) unifying God and suffering (cf. Spangenberg 1994:994).

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Tsevat (1966:102), Habel (1985:65-6), Brenner (1981), Goldin (1996:3830). “Israel had only one God for life and death” (De Moor 1997:374-5). Van Unen (1987:32-5) views the prologue in terms of two *godsvoorstellingen*, the one from above and the other from beneath.

- ii. The dualistic view wherein Yahweh and the Satan are polar forces in creation. In the divine discourses God mounts a battle against the forces of evil<sup>44</sup>.
- iii. Evil remains a mystery which is beyond all human comprehension of good and evil<sup>45</sup>.  
Yahweh is an amoral God.

We now investigate the relations between God and suffering man as they are explained by scholars from the perspectives of monotheism, dualism or humanism. After an evaluation of the different views, the theophany of *Job*'s divine discourses is used to provide a fresh approach to the problem of evil in our world.

In the narrative frame of *Job*, God is implicated as being responsible for the situation of Job, both in the prologue (1:21,2:10) and epilogue (42:11). Yahweh gave permission for Job to be tested, which means clearly the Satan cannot be held solely responsible for what happened to Job. As one of the בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים ("sons of God") הַשָּׂטָן ("the Satan") came to visit God in heaven, and persuades God to allow him to bring suffering on a pious man. After *Job* 1-2 the Satan is never mentioned again in the rest of the book. Job never saw the origin of his suffering as the work of the Satan, as he kept on casting the blame for his misery on God. The Satan therefore has the function of heavenly prosecutor, not acting independently but as a divine representative under the authority of Yahweh. The text of *Job* in general portrays God in terms of practical monotheism<sup>46</sup>. But this does not mean that Yahweh's 'dark side' can be presented as being immoral, amoral or uncaring, in terms of two unresolved sides in his own divine being. This psycho-analytic perspective on God

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<sup>44</sup> Cf. Keel (1978), Gibson (1988:417-8) and Kushner (1988).

<sup>45</sup> Nietzsche (in Mettinger 1997:3). "The mystery of human suffering is not reduced to anything less than mystery. If the Book of Job is short on answers to suffering, it is long on example. Job is described as faithful in the beginning and at the end" (Are 1999:297,296).

<sup>46</sup> Monotheism is the worship of one God. According to Hill and Walton (1990:100) the Bible provides two dimensions of monotheism: (1) Philosophical monotheism believes in the existence of one God, other divinities are reduced to either idols or demons (cf. Isa. and the New Testament). (2). Practical monotheism is the exclusive worship of one God among many gods (cf. the second commandment).

was first provided by Jung, and has been followed by some scholars<sup>47</sup>. Jung's approach to *Job* is much more of a psychological than of an exegetical nature<sup>48</sup>. His *Answer to Job* (1965) discussed the problem of evil<sup>49</sup>: How can man come to terms with God if He allows all the evil and suffering in the world? Jung (1965:93-109) finds Yahweh's answer to Job unsatisfactorily and amoral, because the personality of God is seen as an archetype of the "Gottes Sein ist im Werden": "God contains the opposites of good and evil within himself, and since he is in a process of evolving, man's protest against suffering changes God and influences him" (Scheffler 1991:327). The Satan is developed from the character of Yahweh, whose evil makes Job suffer and testifies to the divine unconsciousness as being amoral. Job is morally superior to God. Later, Christ reveals the good side of God, while Satan remains his shadow, according to Jung's quaternary view of the divine as Yahweh, Sophia, Christ and Satan (cf. Scheffler 1991:330-4). The divine discourses thus reveal the "crisis in the psychic side of the God-figure, which eventuates in the dark side of his nature being brought to consciousness" (Williams 1971:235).

While scholars, concentrating on the unity of the divine being ultimately, conclude that God is unjust (as Job did in the dialogues), those emphasizing a dualistic theodicy fare no better: If good comes from God and evil from the Satan, then God can no longer be either omnipotent or absolutely good<sup>50</sup>. The fact that evil still exists thousands of years after *Job* can only imply that God has not been able to overcome evil. Kushner (1988) agrees to this in his interpretation of *Job* 40:9-14 as a divine confession of inability to control evil at all times. Not everything that happens in our lives should or can be ascribed to the divine will. It should, however be ascribed to the divine inability, as Yahweh himself is limited by evil and fate (1988:51-4). Retribution only teaches people to blame and hate

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<sup>47</sup> Cf. Williams (1971:235-6), Brenner (1981:131-5), Habel (1985:27), Wolfers (1995:209-10), Whybray (1996:103-12).

<sup>48</sup> Jung's lack of knowledge of the Hebrew vocabulary is correctly criticised by Williams (1971:253-4). He would have profited by the consultation of a commentary or concordance.

<sup>49</sup> It is important to note that this book was written in the aftermath of World War II and a long sickbed of Jung, and with the technological advance of mankind in mind (Scheffler 1991:328-9).

<sup>50</sup> According to Gibson (1989:309) "there is larger presence of evil in God's world than cannot be explained by the slide-rule ethics of the friends, that in the real sense he is a victim of that evil, and that God is fighting against that evil and hastening to his rescue".

themselves, as these explanations on suffering primarily defend God, but neither help the sufferer nor liberate or lead him to better places (1988:18,31-5). Rather than excusing God and blaming mankind, could it be that God does not cause bad things to happen to good people? *Job* 40:9-14 states that it is "too difficult even for God to keep cruelty and chaos from claiming their innocent victims. But could man, without God, do it better?" (Kushner 1988:51). This philosophical Jewish interpretation is questioned by Spangenberg (1994:997) who shows how the passage from the second divine discourse speaks rather about God's ability and Job's inability (1994:995)<sup>51</sup>. God's power is illustrated in his containment of the Behemoth.

A view scholars saw the failure of the monotheistic and dualistic views of theodicy, and turned to man as the source of undeserved suffering. Theodicy is replaced by anthropodicy, wherein man became the agent of evil on earth. Job's friends continue the work of the Satan by worsening his sorry state with subtle arguments. According to Girard (1992) the cause of Job's suffering is not divine, satanic nor physical, but merely human. Girard sees Job as the scapegoat of his community<sup>52</sup>. Job's friends make the classic shift away from theodicy to anthropodicy by relating his suffering to his sin, and not to God's responsibility (Nicholson 1995:76). This is characteristic of theological debate: When social evil is committed, our perceptions of theodicy becomes a "speculative theological issue" (Brueggemann 1985:4-5)<sup>53</sup>. This debate becomes part of Israel's countertestimony: Job is an answer to the crisis of theodicy. Yahweh is never defeated nor captivated by cross-examining (Brueggemann 1997:357-8). According to Good (1981:213-4) Job did not ask not for a theodicy but for an anthropodicy, but this is in the end, cancelled out on the grounds Job sought it for. Job is reconciled with God, but on

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<sup>51</sup> For a description of his method by himself, cf. Kushner (1988:54). According to Spangenberg not all suffering can be attributed to the divine, as God became a co-sufferer with Job at the cross of his Son (1994:996-7).

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Pippin (1999:300). Girard (1992:204) distinguishes two types of evil in *Job*: Evil coming from God (loss of children, wealth and health) and evil coming from human beings (Job's ostracism): "The evils due to human agency are the most terrible and must engage our attention more than the evil produced by nature".

<sup>53</sup> The Old Testament theodicy stems from the exile crisis in sapiential, apocalyptic and creation faith; as responses to the (then) inadequate historical traditions (Brueggemann 1985:3).

God's terms and not on man's: "God finds man guilty and acquits him. That is the fundamental irony of the Book of Job and of Biblical faith" (Good 1981:240).

Job's situation of undeserved suffering can only be partially explained from the perspective of monotheism, dualism and humanism. In the end we have to refrain from simplistic answers (cf. Mettinger 1992:48-9)<sup>54</sup>. By using the theophany as a religious phenomenon in the divine discourses, the author brought some relief to Job's life in the midst of his suffering, but without remedying it. But from the author's transformation of the theophany in its reported form into a type-scene, we are able to shed some light onto the situation of undeserved suffering in the life of man<sup>55</sup>. This is possible, because the author of *Job* used the divine discourses to refute the traditional understanding of wisdom and creation theology to explain suffering. *Job* 38-42 portrays Yahweh from an authentic perspective of the divine side, amidst the creatures and monsters of chaos, and not opposed to them as in the rest of the Bible. Yahweh delights in these forces of chaos, Behemoth is even described as the "first of creation", a position which was previously reserved for man. Leviathan is described as "chief over the animals", a position which was also previously attributed to man alone (cf. Ps.8:4-9 for the subversion of man's positions in *Job* 38-42)<sup>56</sup>.

Job is provided by Yahweh in the divine discourses with a cosmic theophany from the perspective of God. According to this divine view on the implementation of order and justice on the universe, man is no longer regarded as the crown of the creation. In fact,

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<sup>54</sup> *Job* insists "on the meaningfulness of life in all its vicissitudes. Suffering, the book says, is not always a sign of sin; it may even be a sign of honour. We are allowed this insight as readers, but in the world of our lives, we are limited to Job's perspective, and we can do no more than look up from our travails and live with the possibility of a meaning beyond our grasp" (Fox 2000:8).

<sup>55</sup> All the traditional explanations to suffering - (1) punishment for wickedness, (2) a disciplinary warning, (3) a test intended to shape true character, (4) as means of purifying one's innermost being, (5) it will vanish when God acts, (6) it reveals hidden truths of human and divine - are excluded from the divine discourses: "The poet's silence about suffering in the divine speeches probably amounts to an admission that none of these explanations satisfactorily unveils the mystery of suffering" (Crenshaw 1992:77).

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Behemoth in 40:14[Heb.40:19]: "He is the first of the works of God; let him who made him bring near his sword!" (RSV), as well as Leviathan in 41:25[Heb.41:26]: "He beholds everything that is high; he is king over all the sons of pride" (RSV).

because the role of man in the ongoing processes of creation has been minimised and relativized by Yahweh himself, man is no longer in the position to ask the questions he could have asked while being the firstborn and ruler of the cosmos. People have to accept this order of Yahweh to be transformed in their faith to new levels of insight into the authenticity of God's dimensions and the subversion of our own dogmas. In this sense, Job becomes, to us, an example of true faith - he accepts his position in the universe among the other creatures of chaos, as his responses clearly testify. When he is compensated by Yahweh, it is not because of some magical act of manipulating God (as the Satan has prophesied), but because Yahweh cares for mankind the same way He does for every other creature in the universe.

The prologue of *Job* reveals the dualistic belief after 586BC, but in the rest of the text there is only one God. And in the theophany the dualistic view on theodicy is put into perspective, as God has the final say. Symbols of evil occur in all the theophany type-scenes we have analysed: The snake (Gen.3), the pharaoh (Ex.3-4), Israel's sinful behaviour (Ex.19-34, Dt.31-2), the levites (Num.12), Balak (Num.20-2), Jericho (Jos.5-6), the people of Amalek (Jdg.6-7), Jezebel (1Ki.19), as well as Behemoth and Leviathan (*Job* 38-42). God has subdued both monsters, but at the same time they are said to be created by himself. Leviathan and Behemoth symbolically portray the enormity of evil on the one hand, but on the other hand also God's dominion and delight over them<sup>57</sup>. *Job* confirms that God is protector and sustainer of a world full of suffering, and in this cosmic theophany Job accepts his situation before he is relieved of it.

Yahweh has the ability to annihilate evil from his created order if He wishes so, but has not done so yet. Perhaps this will only happen as part of the final theophany and the coming of Jesus Christ to his kingdom, as it is described in the last chapters at the end of the Bible in Revelations 19-22.

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<sup>57</sup> "Any perception of God's righteousness must convey both aspects simultaneously", as the proximity of evil within the realm of God (Nel 1991:222).

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## SUMMARY

The divine discourses of *Job* 38-42 are usually interpreted from one of two points of view. The traditional reader understands the effect of it as a moment of repentance in the life of the main character, which can be proved from his final reaction in 42:6. In contrast to this, the sceptical reader uses the same evidence but from a different perspective to show how the way in which God handles Job had the opposite effect when Job rejects the Lord. A literary study on the divine discourses proposes that it should be explained as an Old Testament theophany in two senses: As religious phenomenon the true nature and character of the theophany is studied, by distinguishing it from other phenomena of divine manifestations, like the epiphany and the prophetic oracle which usually is reported in the form of dreams and visions. The theophany is also analysed as a literary report which can be identified in some texts of the Old Testament. This literary report of the theophany type-scene consists of five elements: (i) The background to the manifestation, (ii) the manifestation of the divine and the way the human recipient reacts to it, (iii) the dialogue and contents of the theophany report as the aim of the divine manifestation, (vi) the element of intrigue which is present in every theophany in some mysterious aspect of the divine, as well as (v) the conclusion to the theophany type-scene. The literary type-scene of the theophany is used as a framework to be applied to the divine discourses of *Job*. When the divine discourses is explained as a theophany in both senses as a religious phenomenon and literary report of the type-scene of the theophany, the findings show both the traditional and sceptical interpretations of the divine discourses to be of a one-sided nature. After the Lord had revealed his order and justice in creation to Job by means of the theophany and it the specific way of the theophany type-scene, Job reacts to the divine neither in terms of repentance nor in rejection. The existing faith of Job is instead strengthened by the Lord, because of the character of the divine discourses as theophanic phenomena and the dramatic report thereof that provides Job of a new and revolutionary form of insight about the greatness of the Creator as well as the contingency and insignificance of man in the creation of the Lord.

## OPSOMMING

Die Godsredes van *Job* 38-42 word gewoonlik uit een van twee hoeke geïnterpreteer. Die tradisionele leser verstaan die effek daarvan as 'n bekeringsmoment in die lewe van die narratiewe hoofkarakter, waarvan bewys gelewer word in sy finale reaksie in 42:6. Daarteenoor wend die skeptiese leser dieselfde gegewens aan vanuit 'n ander gesigspunt, om dan te meen dat die wyse waarop God met Job omgaan hom eerder tot die verwerping van die Here noep. 'n Literêre aanpak met betrekking tot die Godsredes stel voor dat dit in tweërlei sin as 'n Ou-Testamentiese teofanie verstaan moet word: As religieuse fenomeen word die ware aard en karakter van die teofanie in die Ou Testament ondersoek, deur dit van ander fenomene van die goddelike manifestasie te onderskei, soos die epifanie en die profetiese orakel wat meesal in die vorm van drome en visioene gerapporteer word. Verder word die teofanie ook bestudeer as 'n vorm van literêre beriggewing wat vanuit sekere teofaniese tekste in die Ou Testament afgelei kan word. 'n Tipiese vorm van beriggewing van die teofanie in tekste van die Ou Testament word geanaliseer. Dit bestaan uit die vyf dele: (i) Die agtergrond daarvan, (ii) die wyse waarop die manifestasie van God plaasvind en die betrokke persoon daarop reageer, (iii) die inhoud van die beriggewing wat plaasvind om die doel van die manifestasie oor te dra, (iv) die intrige wat in elke teofaniese rapport waarneembaar is uit misterieuse aspekte van die goddelike, asook (v) die afsluiting van die teofaniese episode. Hierdie literêre vorm van beriggewing word aangewend as teofaniese raamwerk met betrekking tot die Godsredes van *Job*.

Wanneer die Godsredes as teofanie in terme van beide die religieuse fenomeen daarin en die literêre beriggewing daarvan bestudeer word, wys die bevindinge daarop dat beide die tradisionele en skeptiese interpretasies van *Job* se Godsredes eensydig is. Omdat die Here deur die teofanie en op 'n spesifieke teofaniese wyse sy unieke orde en geregtigheid aan Job openbaar, reageer laasgenoemde nie daarop met reaksies van bekering óf verwerping van die Here nie. Intendeel, Job se bestaande geloof in die Here word versterk omdat hy deur die Godsredes as teofaniese fenomeen en die dramatiese beriggewing daarvan tot 'n nuwe en subversiewe insigte gelei word met betrekking tot die grootheid van die Skepper en sy eie kontingente weglaatbaarheid tussen die ander skepsels van God se skepping.

## KEY WORDS

<b>Christophany</b>	A manifestation of Jesus Christ
<b>Cult</b>	The organisation of the religious society of ancient Israel according to certain rituals, personnel and liturgical events
<b>Epiphany</b>	A manifestation of the acts of the divine with the purpose of saving or punishing people
<b>Hierophany</b>	The manifestation of the Holy as an umbrella term created by Mircea Eliade to denote various divine manifestations
<b>Prophetic Oracle</b>	A way of establishing communication between God and his people which took place in the form of dreams and visions
<b>Sapiential Literature</b>	The Old Testament books of Proverbs, Job and Ecclesiastics consisting entirely of the aspects of wisdom
<b>Spirituality</b>	A life of devotion in the presence of God wherein believers seek the face of God according to specific spiritual exercises
<b>Theodicy</b>	The justification of God in reaction to the reality of suffering of innocent and righteous people
<b>Theophany</b>	A direct and concrete manifestation of God with the purpose of communication with recipients
<b>Type-Scene</b>	A narrative portrayal of events according to a fixed sequence of familiar schema and motifs