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SEEING THE BUDDHA IN THE BOOK OF JOB THROUGH MAIMONIDES'S  
THEORY OF PROVIDENCE AND ELIADE'S THEORY OF HIEROPHANY

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A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of Arts and Humanities

University of Denver

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Religious Studies

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by

Hoi Shan, Chong

June 2010

Advisor: Dr. Alison Schofield

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Title: SEEING THE BUDDHA IN THE BOOK OF JOB THROUGH MAIMONIDES' THEORY OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE AND ELIADE'S THEORY OF HIEROPHANY

Advisor: Dr. Alison Schofield

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### **Abstract**

The current study is an unusual reading of the book of Job with a focus on the intellectual transformation of Job. The reading is stimulated by Maimonides' theory of divine providence and facilitated by Eliade's theory of hierophany. The sequence of reading follows a reorganized order and is divided into three parts: the speeches of Job and his friends, the Lord's speech, and the comparison of Job before and after the Lord's speech. The study ends with a suggestion that the experience of Job's intellectual transformation corresponds to the experience of the Buddha's enlightenment. The reading ignores the enigmatic issues discussed in the book of Job and follows a new perspective of reading it as a whole. The fruit of the study is the suggestion of seeing the Buddha in the book of Job through Maimonides' theory of divine providence and Eliade's theory of hierophany.

## Acknowledgements

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I owe a great deal to Dr. Sarah Pessin. She led me to Maimonides and his great work, the *Guide of the Perplexed*. I was attracted by her passion for Maimonides and was benefited by her suggestions. She kept me on the right track and sharpened the focus of my thesis.

Finally, I am thankful to Dr. Gregory A. Robbins for his agreement to be the second reader of my thesis. I am indebted to him for his extra guidance. His guidance facilitates my revision and assists the construction of the current thesis in a new and complete way.

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### Flow of Ideas

The book of Job is an intellectual heritage and flourishes over many generations. It attracts numberless debates and various interpretations. As reader, I found one reason of its attraction comes from its enigmatic content and background. There is no concrete information available to tell its background. Instead, there are many unknowns such as the unknown provenance and the unknown author (Coogan 2001, 726). The complexity of its content is not aimed at providing direct answers to many difficult human issues such as suffering and justice. On the contrary, the author makes these issues into enigmas and invites readers to answer by themselves. The problem is that all these human issues are very complex. It is hard to find hints or answers by simply reading it as presented by the author. One such reading experience only brings me confusion and ignorance. However, the experience undoubtedly proves the power of the book's mystery and attraction.

In contrast to the mystic content and background, there is an obvious characteristic of the book of Job: it contains very rich elements of ancient Near Eastern cultures and traditions (726-7). The concrete information clearly contrasts to my confused experience. Furthermore, I was influenced by the innocent suffering image of Job and never try to think of anything to explain Job's suffering. However, after my reading of Maimonides' the *Guide of the Perplexed*, I was captured by two impressions:



Job's suffering is accountable and there is a way of looking at Job intellectually (1963, 487). In this connection, I shall try a different way of reading: Mine is a cross-cultural, post-modernist meditation on an ancient text, viz the biblical book of Job;

1. I intend to offer a "reading" that reflects certain hermeneutical strategies that go well beyond the usual, historical-critical approach common in biblical studies;
2. My reading of Job emphasizes Job's transformation in terms of intellect, i.e., a transformation of his way of knowing, of perceiving reality and himself;
3. My reading of Job is triggered by a notion I take away from my study of the Jewish philosopher of Maimonides (though it is not a "Maimonidian" reading);
4. My reading of Job engages, too, Mircea Eliade's idea of hierophany as a way of characterizing Job's transformation;
5. Finally, in the end, I wish to suggest how Job's transformation betrays parallels with the Buddha's experience of enlightenment.

### **Two Theories**

The current reading involves two theories: Maimonides' theory of divine providence and Eliade's theory of hierophany. Maimonides' theory of divine providence discussed in the *Guide of the Perplexed* helps me to focus on the intellectual aspect of Job. While the theory is too complex to lay out in its entirety, Sarah Pessin has provided a summary that is useful for the purpose of this thesis:

According to some, e.g. Maimonides, intellectual perfection is relevant to a discussion of providence. In fact, one way of reading Maimonides' view on Providence is that being 'watched out for' by God has to do mostly with our intellectually coming to recognize that neither God nor the universe works in such a way that it even makes sense to think that God is persecuting us. Analyzing Providence in part in terms of this kind of 'human shift in perspective' allows us to say that, in the end, Job never really underwent any 'persecutions' at all - and once his intellect comes to recognize this, he will no longer feel the kind of suffering he felt at the outset (i.e. he will no longer feel that God has forsaken him once he understands that this is not the way God or reality work). If we take that view (too complicated to address in greater details in the current thesis), then we might describe Job's own victory in the book of Job as his own intellectual

growth – his coming to better understand his situation, and in this way, coming to no longer feel persecuted.<sup>1</sup>

Eliade's theory of hierophany discussed in the *Sacred and the Profane* identifies hierophany as the manifestation of the sacred (1959, 11). The theory tells how reality is changed because of the manifestation of the sacred. The action of hierophany reveals the sovereignty of the absolute reality. It contains power and is able to change the world from chaos and confusion to order and real (10). It is able to transcend human situations and bring a new mode of existence (210). By extension, hierophany is the awakening of consciousness (198) and brings a new understanding to the reality. Job's encounter with the Lord brings his intellectual change and allows Job to have a new understanding of reality. Taking the extended understanding of hierophany, Job's enlightenment is the hierophany. Therefore, the idea of hierophany is used to explain the intellectual transformation of Job in this thesis. The change caused by hierophany is not applied to the outside world and the external world remains the same. On the contrary, the change is happened inside Job in his apprehension of the outside world. The effect of hierophany is on Job's intellect. Job changes intellectually from confusion to understanding. In the book of Job, hierophany causes the intellectual change of Job and brings him a new form of existence with freedom and order.

### **Three Premises**

The current study contains three premises. Firstly, I treat both Job and the Buddha as human beings. Even though there are different legends about the godly image of the Buddha, the position in this thesis is to focus on the enlightenment of the Buddha as the experience of a human being. This position aligns the Buddha to Job. Job is

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<sup>1</sup> Sarah Pessin, May 10, 2010, personal communication.

identified as a man (1:1 NRSV) and this information is clear enough for us to treat Job as a human being. Secondly, The exploration of some of the figurative meanings of some terms is useful to understand the overall meaning of the book of Job. Thirdly, the sequence of reading is not following the original order. The book of Job is read as a whole and the content is divided into three parts. The three parts are separated by two “Now” words. The first “Now” is in Job 2:11 and the second “Now” is in Job 37:21. Accordingly, the first part covers the longest portion of the book of Job from 2:11 to 37:20. The second part covers 37:21 to 42:6. The last part covers verses 1:1 to 2:10 and 42:7 to 42:17. In short, the three premises frame the current study and give the brief background of the current reading of the book of Job.

#### **Four Chapters**

The main body of the thesis is divided into four chapters. The first three chapters are the reading of the book of Job and the last chapter is the comparison. The titles of the four chapters are as follows:

1. The Process of Job’s Intellectual Search
2. Hierophany and Intellectual Transformation
3. The Old Job and the New Job
4. Job and the Buddha

The four chapters are going to present the details of the current reading of the book of Job. The final comparison between Job and the Buddha is going to present the fruit of this thesis: seeing the Buddha in the book of Job through Maimonides’ theory of divine providence and Eliade’s theory of hierophany.

## **CHAPTER TWO: THE PROCESS OF JOB'S INTELLECTUAL SEARCH**

### **Preface**

This chapter covers the longest portion of the book of Job from 2:11 to 37:20. It is the speeches of Job and his friends. Job's friends come to visit Job because of his suffering. Job's suffering is also the starting point of their conversations. The friends offer various suggestions to Job. The unfortunate fact is that no one is able to offer a satisfactory solution to Job's problem. Also, what they really talk about is much wider than the topic of suffering. Therefore, I am going to treat their conversations as the process of Job's intellectual search.

The way of reading is by making concise summaries of the speeches and focus on the intellectual searching process of Job. The implication of only focusing on Job is helpful to find a path in their conversations. However, the deficiency is that I will not address every opinion given during their conversations and some of their opposite expressions will not be explained in the current reading. On the contrary, I will try to find a coherent order in their speech and present it in a direct and simple way.

### **The Meanings of the Names of Job's Three Friends**

Job's three friends are "Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite" (2:11). The meanings of their names tell who they are. Eliphaz is the first-born and the Temanites are highly reputed for their wisdom (Pope 1973, 23). Therefore, Eliphaz may refer to the first and wisdom. Bildad is the derivative word of country or

countryman. The Shuhites refer to different relationships such as the son, the brother or the uncle of different persons (24). Eliphaz and Bildad are living in the same place or country (Coogan 2001, 729n). It implies that Bildad represents all people related in various relationships and shares a connection with Eliphaz. Zophar symbolizes the young bird, young dove, or the king (Pope 1973, 24). The Naamathites are possibly the Arabian nomads (Coogan 2001, 728-29n). Therefore, Zophar may represent a nomad dwelt in peace. These are the meanings of the names of Job's three friends. The meanings are helpful hints for the subsequent interpretation of their speeches.

### **Job's Lament and His Intellectual Darkness**

The three friends sit with Job without speaking for seven days (2:13). Job breaks the silence and starts to speak. He pours out his sorrows and uncovers his helplessness in chapter 3. From Job's expression, it is clear that Job is living in sadness and chaos. However, there is one thing clear to him. He is unable to solve his problem of living in suffering. The consciousness of his own situation drives him to suffer the most. He wants to leave this consciousness and go back to the state of inexistence or death. This is why he curses his birth (3:1-19) and longs for death (3:21). However, he is still alive by nature (3:21). There is no way for him to move forward. He is the one living in darkness and sees no way ahead (3:23). He is unable to rest and his mind is in chaos. There is no quiet inside (3:26). Job is unable to move back forward, to walk forward, or to stay at rest. He is consciously trapped by his sorrow and helplessness. His existence is definitely a torture to him.

## **Eliphaz and the First Wisdom**

Eliphaz answers Job and starts his three rounds of conversations with Job. Their conversations cover chapters 4-7, 15-17 and 22-24. The conversations between Eliphaz and Job reveal the first wisdom which is figuratively represented by the name of Eliphaz the Temanite.

There are two main parts included in the first wisdom: the life of Job and human wisdom. Regarding the life of Job, Eliphaz points out that Job supported and helped others in the past (4:3-4). Job will be prosperous in the future (4:24-27). However, Job adds that his life is short, hard and hopeless (7:1-10). Regarding human wisdom, Eliphaz explains that human wisdom is imperfect as compared to God's wisdom (4:17-21, 15:14-16, 22:2-3). Job is carried away by his heart (15:12). He suffers on the wrong path and will not find the true knowledge (15:20-35).

Eliphaz advises Job to be at peace and humble to God, and God will deliver him (22:21-30). Job does not understand (6:24) and is not silent (7:11). He is confused about himself and God. Job wants to die (6:8-9). However, he finds that there is nothing after death and death is a hopeless end (17:11-16). He does not know what he wants exactly. He attributes all his situations to God (7:17-21, 16:7-17, 23:13-14). All good and evil are belonged to God. God is the cause of suffering and prosperity (24:13-25). He tries to find God but God is nowhere (23:8-9). He is unable to distinguish among all these situations and his mind contains only chaos (17:1).

## **Bildad and the Second Wisdom**

Bildad continues the conversations with Job and their conversations cover chapters 8-10, 18-19, and 25-31. The conversations between Bildad and Job reveal the second wisdom. From the name of Bildad the Shuhite, it tells that the second wisdom is related to all people. It is also an extension of the first wisdom to a broader view.

There are two parts to be highlighted: human lives and the imbalance in power between human beings and God. Bildad directs the focus of conversations to others instead of Job. He points to Job's children (8:4), ancestors (8:8) and all people (18:20). He maintains that human lives are short and limited (8:8-10). On the contrary, God is powerful and righteous (26:14). God defeats chaos and maintains the order of the universe (26:6-14). Human beings are imperfect and inferior as compared to God (25:1-6). Job adds that the superiority of God is the problem. No one can charge God or contend with God (9:2-4). God is above all and out of the understanding of human beings (9:2-12). Job puts his own experience as the starting point to view God's power. God created Job and brought him prosperity. Job did not sin but God changed and aimed at destroying him (10:8-17). Job is despised by all people around him (19:13-19) and blames God for his suffering (19:6-12). Job finally makes his integrity his pledge to contend with God (31:1-40).

Job is angry and challenges the authority of Bildad's speech (26:1-4). Job's challenge about the authority and wisdom of Bildad may be the reason for the omission of Bildad's name in his subsequent speeches.

Bildad's opinion is right according to the obvious difference between human beings and God. However, it is not acceptable to Job with reference to his experience and his shortage of a proper understanding of reality. Bildad points out that Job is tortured by his own anger and is trying to overthrow the laws on the earth by one experience (18:4). Job is blocked by his personal experience and eagerness to plead his case (31:35-37). He is unable to catch the hint given for his search of wisdom: "Truly, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding" (28:28); and is moving even farther from the correct path of intellectual search. He is doing nothing proper but going astray. He rejects Bildad's opinions and allows himself to reach the dull end of intellectual apprehension.

### **Zophar and Silence**

The conversations between Zophar and Job give an end to Job's fruitless intellectual search. It covers chapters 11-14 and 20-21. The name of Zophar the Naamathite tells that Job stops to wander around and wants peace instead.

The ending contains two characteristics: fruitless and silence. Zophar points out that God's wrath destroys the wicked. The joy of the godless is short (20:5-29). Job contends Zophar's opinion with the prosperity and peace of the wicked (21:7-33). There is no conclusion on this argument. Zophar holds that God's wisdom is unlimited (11:6-7). God will disclose the wisdom to Job (11:6) if Job prepares himself and is calm in heart (11:12-13). On the contrary, Job contends that God is unlimited and both good and evil are by God (12:13-25). Job has prepared to contend with God (13:18-25). Job holds that he is not inferior and knows what others know (12:3 and 13:2). Job only wants



silence (13:5 and 21:5) from his friends. Job concludes that the conversations are fruitless and the opinions are false (21:34). Job desires to argue with God directly (13:3).

The conversations between Zophar and Job act as a pause to Job's search. It concludes the previous conversations as fruitless and gives the way to silence. After wandering for a long time, both Job and his three friends are silent. They find no answer to Job's intellectual search. Job challenges his friends' authority and knowledge. Job maintains his integrity and his pride of knowledge. Job is not prepared to give his submission to his friends at this point. Instead, silence becomes the winner.

### **Elihu and the Mediator**

During their silence, Elihu speaks. His speech covers chapters 32-37. Elihu is the "son of Barachel the Buzite, of the family of Ram" (32:2). Elihu means "He is my God" and Barachel means "God has blessed". The Buzite represents the brother of Uz and is "the presumed founder of Job's tribe". His homeland may have been located in the hinterland of an island. Ram is the name with Judahite connections and accordingly refers to the "ancestor of David and of Jesus Christ" (Pope 1973, 242). In this connection, Elihu is the one who has a close connection with both Job and God. His speech bridges the gap between the previous conversations and the Lord's revelation.

Elihu's speech is different from the previous conversations in two ways: position and directness. The name of Elihu gives a very good hint to his identity. Elihu is the mediator between God and Job. Elihu is different from the other three friends (32:15-17). The three friends act as the opponents of Job. On the contrary, Elihu presents himself as speaking for both Job and God. He is not an opponent of Job. He plays two roles. He

takes the same side as Job (34:4) and also identifies himself as speaking for God (36:2). Even though he stands for both sides, he makes his roles plain during his speech. Furthermore, Elihu is direct in his speech. He points out Job's problem and gives answers to some questions. He directs Job to his previous sayings and guides Job to review himself. He directly says that Job is not right to contend against God (33:10-13). Job is trapped by his own case (36:17-18). Elihu states that God is far from wickedness (34:10-15) and is a teacher instead (36:22). He explains that the pride of a human being is the reason of God's silence (35:9-13). There are some situations that God speaks but people do not perceive the answer (33:14). Elihu retells the general rule of justice (36:10-12) and reminds Job to stay away from iniquity (36:21).

Elihu points out the faults of Job frankly and restates the superiority of God. However, Job does not contend but remains silent. If no response from Job implies that Job agrees with Elihu, then the silence is the indication of Job's change from an angry and defensive position to a moderate and calm position. He closes his mouth and starts to reflect his situation and reality patiently. He is now walking in the right way in intellectual apprehension.

#### Prologue of the Lord's Speech

Chapter 37 is the prologue of the Lord's speech. The thunder comes first (37:2-8), then the whirlwind (37:9) and finally the lightning (37:10-20). The change of the meteorological phenomena is similar to the appearance of the Lord at Mount Sinai (Exod. 19:16). They are the indicators of God's manifestation. However, there is one unique characteristic in the change of the meteorological phenomena in chapter 37. The

sequence of meteorological change follows the order of season from autumn to winter and lastly summer (Coogan 2001, 766n). When the light comes (37:21), the Lord is ready to speak. The golden splendor of the Lord (37:22) ends the speech of Elihu and brings spring to Job.

### **The Fruitless End and Two Remaining Problems**

After listening to the long and complicated conversations and at the perspective of seeing the conversations as the process of Job's intellectual search, the conclusion is that that there is no answer to Job's search. Job starts from his lament of suffering and struggles with his three friends in the process of intellectual apprehension until they reach a dead end. Luckily, the dead end helps Job to stop. Job returns to a proper path and starts the intellectual apprehension again with silence. Job is now in silent and concentrates on his reflection.

The lengthy conversations between Job and his friends leave two problems: the authority and the answer. Job challenges the authority of Bildad and the knowledge of his friends. Therefore, if the author of the book of Job is going to end Job's intellectual search satisfactorily, the subsequent speaker must contain the elements of knowledge and authority. The task of the coming speaker is to gain Job's surrender and answer Job's intellectual search.

## **CHAPTER THREE: HIEROPHANY AND INTELLECTUAL TRANSFORMATION**

### **Preface**

Following the prologue of the Lord's speech in chapter 37 of Elihu's speech, it is time for the spring to come (Pope 1973, 300) and for the Lord to reveal the wisdom to Job. This section covers the content from 37:21 to 42:6.

The Lord comes (37:21) and answers Job from chapter 38 to chapter 41. The Lord's speech is the climax of the book of Job. The speech is the hierophany and the intellectual transformation of Job. The act of the Lord authorizes the content because the speaker is the sacred. It reveals the absolute reality and gives orientation. It purifies and paves the mind of Job to a new understanding of reality. It gives guidance and reveals the truth to Job.

The reading of this section is an apprehension of the speech. The focus is on the intellectual change of Job. The aim of this section is going to present how the Lord's speech is able to win Job's surrender.

### **Hierophany and the Lord**

Hierophany is the key term in Eliade's theory. By definition, hierophany is "the act of manifestation of the sacred". It refers to "something sacred shows itself to us" (1959, 11). The sacred is a power and a reality. It is saturated with being and efficacy (12). It reveals an absolute reality (21). It is the Supernature and the Most High (118). It

is the supreme divinity which reveals transcendence, infinite, force and eternity (119). The sacred is the “last resource in times of calamity” (124). For example, the Hebrews turned to Yahweh in cases of extreme distress and catastrophes (126) because Yahweh is the Supreme Being that contains strength and unlimited vital reserves (127). Therefore, when the author of the book of Job uses the Lord as the speaker, it facilitates us to link with the hierophany of the Most High and not the theophany in a historical time (110-111). The name “the Lord” is “yhwh” in Hebrew (Coogan 2001, 768n). It is not the name of other gods but the name of the Most High. Therefore, by using the name “the Lord”, it gives the absolute authority to the answer. The answer is given by the Creator and the Most High.

### **The Contrast between Job and the Lord**

In chapter 38, the Lord points out the contrast between Job and the Lord. The Lord is the Creator and Designer of the universe long before Job was born (38:4-7). The Lord sets the limits while Job is the one with limitation (38:8-11). Job does not know the depth of his darkness (38:16-19) and the providence of the Lord (38:22-24). Job cannot find the path to wisdom (38:19) while the Lord is the source of wisdom (38:35), new life (38:26), and providence (38:41). The huge differences between Job and the Lord reveal the truth: Job is inferior and ignorant while the Lord is supreme and wise. The distance between them makes Job unable to reach the Lord but only by the descending of the Lord, Job is able to receive wisdom.

### **The Lord's Judgment on Job's Problem**

In chapter 39, the Lord gives the judgment on the problem of Job. Job loses control and allows his mind to run wildly (39:5-8). Job is stupid as the ostrich (39:13-18) and wrongly believes that his stubbornness (39:9-12) and urgency can help him (39:19-25). Job is willing to danger himself for wisdom but does not know that he is giving up his life for nothing (39:26-30). The method Job used to search for wisdom is wrong and cruel. This is why Job suffers.

### **The Real Enemy of Human Beings**

In chapter 41, the Lord reveals to Job the real enemy of human beings: desire. Leviathan is the protagonist in chapter 41 and symbolizes cosmic chaos (Coogan 2001, 773n). The author uses the words "draw out" (41:1) to express the action of inducement and facilitates the linkage of Leviathan to the figurative meaning of desire. Once desire is induced, it releases power and is able to induce chaos. Desire is the king on the earth (41:33-34). There is no one on the earth who can control or defeat desire (41:1-11). Desire is so fierce and leaves no gap for attack (41:12-32). It seems to conclude that facing desire, human beings are undoubtedly losers. This is the fate and reality of human beings. However, this hopelessness is not the end of human beings or the aim of the Lord's manifestation.

### **The Cause and Solution**

In chapter 40, the Lord reveals the cause and solution to Job. The cause of desire is the evil inclination of human beings. It exists when human beings were born (40:15). Therefore, whenever one is alive as a human being, evil inclination and desire exist

simultaneously. By nature, human life and desire co-exist together. To defeat desire and evil inclination, the way is by good inclination (40:14). Therefore, the one who follows good inclination is able to defeat desire. The way to reach the victory is through the lotus plants (40:21). It is the position of meditation for the lotus position is sitting with both legs crossed (Cambridge International Dictionary of English, s.v. “lotus”) like the position of meditation (Walker 1988, 319). Meditation can cool down desire and bring one to the state of a calm and pure mind (40:21-22). The way gives human beings hope and direction. This is also the solution to Job.

### **States of the Lord and Job**

In chapter 40, the Lord also justifies the states of the Lord and Job. The Lord is not the cause of evil and injustice. On the contrary, the Lord is the enemy of evil. The sword the Lord brought is the indication of the opposite position between evil and the Lord. The differentiation is the first attribute of the Lord (40:19). The Lord knows that Job is righteous but the righteousness of Job is not a proof of the Lord’s injustice (40:8). Even though Job is ignorant, the Lord raises Job to a higher state. The Lord tells Job to be brave (40:7), cool down (40:11), give up pride (40:12), and accept guidance (40:14). The new wisdom can lead Job to victory (40:14) and bring Job glory (40:10).

### **Job’s Surrender**

Eventually, the Lord’s speech brings Job from chaos to order, purifies Job’s mind and refills it with new understanding. The hierophany brings the intellectual change of Job. The change transforms Job to a new state of existence even though the state of Job is much lower than the Lord. Through Eliade’s theory, the problem of authority is

solved. By Maimonides' theory, the shift of intellect allows Job to answer his intellectual search and understands the providence given by the Lord. The majesty of the Lord not only opens Job's mind to new wisdom. It also reveals Job's ignorance and the mistakes he made during the process of intellectual search. Job is certain about the answer given by the Lord and this is why he honors the superiority of the Lord (42:2) and says, "now my eye sees you" (42:5). The word "sees" shows that Job gained the insight and was certain about his apprehension. Job is also clear about his inferiority, ignorance and the incorrect searching process (42:2-4). This is why he answers, "I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (42:6). At this point, Job is transformed intellectually and is totally surrendered to the Lord.



## **CHAPTER FOUR: THE OLD JOB AND THE NEW JOB**

### **Preface**

The remaining content of the book of Job is the prologue and the epilogue. It covers verses 1:1 to 2:10 and 42:7 to 42:17. The reading of these two sections is by making direct comparisons. The focus is on the intellectual differences of Job. The comparisons of these two sections require the use of the figurative meanings of some terms. The extension of the literal meanings of some terms allows us to apprehend the intellectual scope of Job. However, it also implies that the interpretation is not apparent or literal. It requires a new perspective of looking at the terms. The problem is that a term may have many different meanings or definitions, therefore, it is hard to know which one is the exact meaning implied by the author of the book of Job. Therefore, I am going to make choices and choose the most appropriate one as possible based on my understanding of terms along the path of the current reading.

### **Overview**

Job, before and after his encounter with the Lord, is totally different. The difference is caused by the hierophany which is also the awakening of consciousness. Hierophany brings blessings and changes. It brings things into order and reveals the reality to Job. The act contains the quality of transparency (Eliade 1959, 117) and grants Job with new meaning. Job is Job but becomes something else (12) and is living in a real sense (23). The hierophany gives knowledge and guidance to Job. It helps Job to know

himself and understand his situation in a new view. From easy comparison, I choose to define Job in the prologue as the old Job before his encounter with the Lord, and Job in the epilogue as the new Job with a lot of changes.

The contrast reflected from the prologue (1:1 to 2:10) and the epilogue (42:7-17) is very obvious. Apparently, the old Job is rich and great before all the disasters. However, because of Satan, he loses everything and suffers painfully. Job sustains and finally, the Lord doubles his fortunes. The new Job is richer and greater than before. The Lord blesses him with a long life. By literal comparison, we can discover that there are many differences in the prologue and the epilogue. However, through the implication of the figurative meanings of some terms, we can discover the intellectual change occurred inside Job and his existence in two different states.

### **Satan and Job's Wife**

Satan and Job's wife appear in the prologue but do not come out in the epilogue. Instead, evil is mentioned (42:11). Therefore, we can know that evil replaces Satan and Job's wife. Satan and Job's wife represent two kinds of evil. They are the material and intellectual privations which refer to the evil inclinations existed in the old Job. Therefore, the phrase "all the evil that the Lord had brought upon him" (42:11) is not meant that the Lord brought all the evil to Job. It means that the Lord has created Job and Job has privations. The disappearance of Satan and Job's wife in the epilogue tells that the new Job is perfect and his privations are gone.

## **Seven Sons and Three Daughters**

The old Job has seven sons and three daughters. The new Job has the same number of children. The Lord doubles Job's fortunes except the number of his sons and daughters. Here, the same number means something and starting from now, we have to tackle with numbers.

Based on Vincent Foster Hopper's *Medieval Number Symbolism*, the number seven represents wisdom, magic, divination or godliness (2000, 15). The number three represents surface (35), all, the best, or holy (11). The number ten represents completeness, finality or perfection (11). The seven sons imply that the Lord creates Job perfectly and Job is endowed with perfect intellect. The three daughters refer to all Job's expressions, opinions or doctrines. The sum of ten children implies that the final form of Job in creation is complete and perfection. The Lord gave the perfect form to Job when Job was born. This is why "born" is used in the verse: "There were born to him seven sons and three daughters" (1:2). Job's inborn perfect form does not need to change but have to restore. This is why "also" is used when it is said: "He also had seven sons and three daughters" (42:13). It is clear now that the Lord does not double the number of Job's children for Job was born perfectly.

## **The Three Daughters**

Even though Job has the same number of children, there is one difference for the three daughters. Job named the three daughters in the epilogue: "the first Jemimah, the second Keziah, and the third Keren-happuch" (42:14).

## The Doctrine of the New Job

The meanings of these names are dove, cinnamon and horn of eye shadow respectively (Coogan 2001, 773n). The dove is a symbol of peace (Walker 1988, 490), harmony, gentle, and innocent (The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, s.v. “dove”). It can further be transformed to represent purity and spirituality (Walker 1988, 400). Cinnamon is the bark of a tropical tree (Cambridge, s.v. “cinnamon”). It “has a delicately fragrant aroma” and “was once more valuable than gold”. Its “oil is distilled for use in food” (Encyclopedia Britannica, s.v. “cinnamon”). The horn is a “hard permanent structure projecting from the head”. It is a container, or a device for producing or transmitting sound (The American, s.v. “horn”). It gives signals and figuratively represents holiness (Walker 1988, 82) or godliness (376). Eye shadow is a cosmetic applied to the eyelids to enhance the eyes (The American, s.v. “eye”). These are the meanings of dove, cinnamon, horn and eye shadow.

With a proper arrangement and interpretation, we are able to see the picture constructed by these three daughters and get the new opinion given by Job. Firstly, the dove tells that Job is at peace with himself, the Lord and all other people. Job is pure in his intellect. Secondly, cinnamon directs us to Job who is keeping his body straight. The reason is that cinnamon is the bark. It is the surface of a tree. It is feeble and cannot support weight. Therefore, Job is close to the surface of the tree. He is erect and is not relied on the bark of the tree to support his body. The fragrance and holiness expressed by Job is more precious than gold like the cinnamon. Thirdly, the horn of eye shadow radiates the splendor of Job who has his eyes closed and keeps his mind alert

intellectually. As a whole, the three daughters figuratively represent that the new Job is meditating peacefully and vigilantly. In short, the three daughters represent the doctrine of the new Job.

### The Land of Uz

Job is in the land of Uz (1:1) and his daughters are the most beautiful ones in all the land (42:15). The land refers to the ground or the realm everything grows, or the action of landing in a place or condition (The American, s.v. “land”). The three daughters did not have names in the prologue but were named in the epilogue. The connection between Job, the land and his three daughters tells the states of Job. In the prologue, Job was in the condition of meditation. However, Job did not have a proper method and this is why his daughters did not have names. In the epilogue, Job got the correct way and was in the best condition of meditation. This is why his three daughters were named.

### Inheritance

Job gave his inheritance to his children including his three daughters before his death. It is said: “their father gave them an inheritance along with their brothers” (42:15). “After this Job lived one hundred and forty years...” (42:16).

“Inheritance” refers to the act of inheriting or the things inherited (The American, s.v. “inheritance”) upon the death of its owner (Encyclopedia Britannica, s.v. “inheritance”). “Along” refers to parallel, continuously beside, in accordance with, forward, onward, or advanced to some degree (The American, s.v. “along”). Obviously, Job is alive after he gave the inheritance. This is the new Job and the death is referred to

the old Job. Therefore, the action of inheritance can be explained as follows: The old Job was dead after his encounter with the Lord. After hierophany which is also the intellectual transformation, Job continues to meditate (daughters) in accordance with (along) the capacity of his intellect (brothers).

### **Wine and Bread**

Job's children "were eating and drinking wine in the eldest brother's house" (1:13, 19). This situation occurred twice in the prologue and is in contrast to the eating in the epilogue: Job and others ate bread in his house (42:11).

Wine is "something that intoxicates or exhilarates" (The American, s.v. "wine"). It is manufactured from crashed grapes (Encyclopedia Britannica, s.v. "wine"). Wine symbolizes the blood of the earth (Walker 1988, 133). It has the "ability to cause drunkenness" (487). It is "supposed to bring about purification, spiritual regeneration, and a promise of immortality" (496). Bread is "something that nourishes" or sustains (The American, s.v. "bread"). It refers to the activity that keeps people happy (Cambridge, s.v. "bread"). Bread is an essential food (Walker 1988, 482) and represents fresh or body (177). It is figuratively linked to the power of putting out fires, cure sickness, fertile fields, gain freedom and charming love (482). With reference to the meanings of wine and bread, the states of Job become clear. The old Job was intoxicated by wine. His mind (the eldest brother's house) lost direction and was in chaos like a drunken person. The old Job was unable to regenerate new understanding for he had gone over his intellectual limit and had poisoned (wine) his own wisdom. The new Job

meditated within his intellectual limit (his house). His meditation nourished his intellect, and brought him intellectual growth and happiness (bread).

### **Servant**

The old Job had very many servants (1:3) while the new Job is the servant of the Lord (42:8). The servant is the one who performs services and expresses submission, recognition, or debt to the master (The American, s.v. “servant”). The servant is inferior as compared to the master. Therefore, even though there is a relationship or linkage existed between a servant and a master, the difference in their states is clear and permanent. The old Job “had very many servants” implies that Job was very knowledgeable and was in a superior position. He was the master of his intellect and his knowledge worked according to his intention. The intellectual connection to the sacred was not a part of the old Job’s knowledge. On the contrary, the new Job is called by the Lord as “my servant Job” (42:7-8). It means that Job is the messenger of the Lord. Job understands and acts according to the intentions of the Lord. The Lord is the master of Job and Job is inferior to the Lord.

### **Fortunes Lost**

Job lost all his fortunes after being accused by Satan in the prologue.

### **Oxen and Donkeys**

Firstly, the oxen and donkeys were carried off by the Sabeans while the oxen were plowing and the donkeys were feeding (1:14-15). Oxen are docile castrated males (Encyclopedia Britannica, s.v. “oxen”) used for pulling loads (Cambridge, s.v. “oxen”). Oxen represent dullness and burden. They symbolize hard working with a slow but

conscientious pattern (Walker 1988, 385). Plow means to break, cut through, or move forward with driving force (The American, s.v. “plow”). Sabeans are Arabian nomads (Coogan 2001, 728n) who had “attained a high degree of civilization” (Pope 1973, 13). Nomads are people without a fixed home. They roam from place to place like wanderers (The American, s.v. “nomad”). Donkeys “can carry heavy loads over rough terrain” (Encyclopedia Britannica, s.v. “donkey”) and figuratively refer to obstinate or stupid persons (The American, s.v. “donkey”). “Feed” means to be nourished or to be supplied “with something essential for growth, maintenance, or operation” (The American, s.v. “feed”). Making a combined apprehension, it tells that Job’s mind, the faculty of meditation and reflection, was working very hard for intellectual breakthrough (plowing) and knowledge increase (feeding). However, it was burdened by its own sophisticated knowledge and was moving from one point to another without reaching the target. This is why the oxen and donkeys were carried off by the Sabeans.

### Sheep

Secondly, the sheep were consumed by the fire of God (1:16). Sheep symbolizes a timid, weak or submissive person (The American, s.v. “sheep”). The person is unable or unwilling to act or think independently (Cambridge, s.v. “sheep”). Fire symbolizes a rapid change, an intensive burning of feeling, a torment, the detonation of an explosive, or being excited or dismissed (The American, s.v. “fire”). In this connection, it tells that Job was tortured by his passion for intellectual change. His mind was tired of being timid or submissive. It lost the gentleness and wanted to work independently. Job’s



consciousness was unable to control his own intellect. This is why the sheep were consumed by the fire of God.

### Camels

Thirdly, the camels were carried off by the Chaldeans (1:17). Camels have “double rows of eyelashes” and “can tolerate dehydration and high body temperatures”. They store fat for sustenance and water is produced by fat metabolism (Encyclopedia Britannica, s.v. “cinnamon”). Chaldeans are people versed in occult sciences (The American, s.v. “Chaldean”). Accordingly, it tells that Job continued his pursuit and his mind was still working. The mind was using its last resort to tolerate the very difficult situation. However, it was blocked by its own matter. Therefore, Job’s intellect was unable to reach the truth but instead was lost to falsehood such as occult sciences. The state was like the one who saw the mirage in the desert. This is why the camels were carried off by the Chaldeans.

When all of Job’s fortunes were destroyed, the servants were killed or consumed simultaneously (1:14-17). This tells that all of Job’s intellectual efforts and actions were not the intention of the Lord. The way of his reflection was wrong and this is why the servants were killed or consumed.

### **Fortunes Doubled**

Job’s fortunes were huge in the beginning and the Lord had doubled them at the end. It is said: “He had seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred donkeys” (1:3) in the prologue and “he had fourteen thousand

sheep, six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of oxen, a thousand donkeys” (42:12) in the epilogue.

Other than the symbolic meanings of seven, three and ten discussed previously, we have to know the meanings of five and six as well. The number five symbolizes nature, all living things or this world (Hopper 2000, 43) and the number six is defined as the first perfect number geometrically (36). With the indication of the number five, it tells that the old Job was knowledgeable about nature and worldly things. By doubling the number to ten, the new Job was endowed with new understanding and is able to apprehend reality perfectly. The number three tells that the old Job was able to tackle many difficult problems. However, he was not perfect. Job was perfect when he got the six thousand camels. He was able to tackle all difficulties intellectually. The number seven tells that Job was gentle with his old intellect. The new Job was also gentle with the possession of new wisdom. The biggest number of fourteen thousand sheep may imply that gentleness is the most important character for intellectual growth.

### **Money and Gold Ring**

People who had known Job before came to him and each gave the new Job “a piece of money and a gold ring” (42:11). Money is a symbol of power (Walker 1988, 146). It is the official currency and is a commodity legally established for the exchange of other commodities (The American, s.v. “money”). It is circulated “from person to person and country to country” and is universally accepted as a medium of exchange (Encyclopedia Britannica, s.v. “money”). Gold denotes “perfection, value or preciousness” (Whittick 1960, 191). It is linked with the idea of immortality or eternal

life. It symbolizes unchangeable and brightness (Walker 1988, 513). By Indian priesthoods, “the givers of gold would attain salvation (Nirvana) and ‘enjoy eternal life’” (511). A ring symbolizes the fetter of keeping the heart’s sentiments from escaping. It symbolizes a bond between two parties (12). Accordingly, the verse implies that the people came to the new Job for perfection. They gave gold in exchange for eternal life or intellectual brightness. Their action contains power and is legally accepted.

### **Overall Differences**

After a long process of comparisons, it is time to summarize the states of the old Job and the new Job. The old Job described in the prologue was the person who was endowed with excellent human intellect. He practiced meditation frequently. However, because of his privation, he acted without knowing the true reality of the Lord. His passion for intellectual growth was keen despite the situation that he did not know the way. He was in chaos and was intoxicated by his privation. Even though he suffered terribly, his effort was in vain. In the epilogue, Job was revived. He was in a perfect state. He was endowed with proper knowledge. His privation was gone. He saw the Lord and found his orientation. He meditated correctly and peacefully. He became the messenger of the Lord and was acting according to the intention of the Lord.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: JOB AND THE BUDDHA**

### **Preface**

Through the reading of the book of Job in the previous three chapters, we are able to see the intellectual struggle and change of Job. The journey of Job represents a human being who struggles intellectually and finally experiences the awakening of consciousness. The awakening changes Job from lamentation to the state of joy and peace. His experience shares many similarities with the awakening experience of Siddhartha Gautama, who is called the Buddha (D. Mitchell 2008, 9). In this chapter, we are going to see how Job's intellectual journey is similar to the Buddha's experience of enlightenment.

The premise here is that we are going to see both Job and the Buddha as human beings who gain awakening. Furthermore, I will make analogies with reference to their lives and experiences and have to state that the analogies are simple and primitive. The analogies are aimed at showing the similarities of their intellectual transformation experiences. Now, we have to turn the focus to the life of the Buddha before making the analogies.

### **The Buddha**

The legends about the Buddha are well-known stories. However, they are questioned by scholars about their historical accuracy (11). Therefore, it is important to state that the coming summary is not to prove the trustworthiness of the history of the

Buddha. On the contrary, it is aimed at giving a general idea about the life and the experience of awakening of the Buddha.

The life of the Buddha took place in the fifth century BCE (11). The Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama, is called the “Awakened One” (9). Chronologically, the Buddha was born on the full moon day between April and May (Geaves 2006, 86). He tasted the joy produced through meditation once during his childhood (D. Mitchell 2008, 14). He enjoyed many luxuries and pleasures during his youth (13) and had a son after his marriage (14). He saw the Four Sights during his four rides. The Four Sights were an old man, a diseased man, a corpse and a meditating hermit. After seeing these four sights, he decided to take renunciation as a hermit at the age of twenty-nine (14-15). He joined some ascetics and followed two gurus during his six years of spiritual search (16). Unfortunately, he only found that the ascetic path was not a correct path.

He recalled his joy of meditation in his childhood and turned to this moderate way of practice. He sat under the *Bodhi* Tree and vowed to remain there until he attained awakening (17). During the night of his enlightenment, he saw three watches. Firstly, he saw all his previous lives. Secondly, he saw the birth and death of all living beings. Thirdly, he found the answer to the dissatisfactory condition of life (19). Based on Chinese and Tibetan translations of the *Buddhacarita*, there are altogether four watches. The fourth watch took place at dawn (Asvaghosa 2008, 417) and he finally attained awakening at his thirty-fifth birthday (R. Mitchell 1989, 39).

After sitting under the tree for seven days, he finally agreed to preach his message because of the encouragement of the gods (Asvaghosa 2008, 418). He devoted his

remaining forty-five years in the preaching of his message attained by his Awakening (D. Mitchell 2008, 31).

### **Similarities between Job and the Buddha**

After having a general idea about the life and the enlightenment experience of the Buddha, it is time to put the experiences of Job and the Buddha in comparison. The sequence of comparison starts with their processes of intellectual search to the enlightenments and finally their overall changes.

During the process of intellectual search, they suffered and progressed in similar pattern. Both Job and the Buddha sat for seven days before they opened their mouths. The three friends and Job sat for seven days without speaking (2:13). The duration is the same as the Buddha who sat for seven days before he started to preach his message (Asvaghosa 2008, 418). Job concluded that the opinions of his three friends are falsehood (21:34). Similarly, the Buddha claimed that the path of his two gurus and other ascetics is wrong (D. Mitchell 2008, 16-17). After Job struggled with the friends for a long time, he found no answer. This is the same as the Buddha who had practiced the ascetic path for six years intensively but still found no answer. The fruitless end pushed Job to return to peace and gave way to the intercession of Elihu. The Buddha was also being pushed to return to peace and gave way to the intercession of his childhood meditative experience (17). Job returned to a moderate path with peace and concentration. The Buddha also went back to a moderate path and meditated in peace and concentration.

Turning to the night of the Buddha's enlightenment, the experience also shares similarities with the conversations between Job and his friends. Job cursed his birth before his friends' speeches. The curse shows the firmness of Job to put himself into a rest. This is similar to the Buddha who vowed to remain under the *Bodhi* Tree until he attained awakening (17). Eliphaz's conversations concentrate on the life of Job. This is similar to the first watch of the Buddha: he saw his previous lives. Bildad's words direct the focus to all people. This is like the Buddha's second watch: he saw the lives of all living beings. The intercession of Elihu leads to the light of the Lord. The light is similar to the sunlight of dawn when the Buddha became Awakened (Asvaghosa 2008, 417). From Elihu's prologue to the Lord's speech, it shows that Job heard the speech of the Lord in spring time. Similarly, the Buddha attained awakening at the night of his thirty-fifth birthday (R. Mitchell 1989, 39) which is between April and May (Geaves 2006, 86) of spring time.

After the speech of Elihu, we reach the different experience of Job: the Lord's speech. Taking a literal perspective, Job is enlightened by the Lord's speech. Even though the Buddha is called the "Awakened One" (D. Mitchell 2008, 9), there is no mention of any conversation between the Buddha and the Most High in the legends of the Buddha's enlightenment. Therefore, it is proper to say that the speech of the Lord is unique to Job. However, following the direction of the current reading, the Lord's speech is the hierophany and the intellectual transformation of Job. Furthermore, with reference to Eliade's theory that hierophany brings the awakening of consciousness (1959, 198), it is obvious that the Lord's speech is the intellectual awakening of Job. At this point, we

are able to make the analogy that both the Buddha and Job experienced the awakening of consciousness and gained enlightenment.

Because of hierophany, Job got his answer. Simultaneously, the Buddha also found his solution during his third watch. Job knew that the causes of suffering are desire and ignorance. Similarly, the Buddha viewed that ignorance and desire are impurities which cause human suffering. Job was told that good inclination and meditation are the solution. The Buddha also realized the solutions of the dependent arising or the Four Noble Truths during his third watch (D. Mitchell 2008, 19). In the Buddha's solutions, meditation and right paths are ways to erase impurities. Therefore, it shows that the answers Job and the Buddha perceived share a lot of similarities.

Recalling the fruitless intellectual searching experiences, it is true that both Job and the Buddha experienced similar intellectual struggles and delighted enlightenment. Both Job and the Buddha were eager for enlightenment. However, because of their privations, they both suffered deeply and were unable to achieve any intellectual growth. With reference to Eliade's theory, they finally passed their life initiations from suffering to death and then rebirth (1959, 196). They were transformed and reached the state of enlightenment. After the enlightenment, they both changed to a new form of existence and were able to apprehend reality peacefully. They both delivered their fruits of enlightenment to others on the earth.



## A Trial of Substitution

Based on the many similarities of Job and the Buddha, it is a trial here to put the Buddha in the place of Job and see how the substitution is able to construct a new understanding of Job.

It is said that “Job lived one hundred and forty years, and saw his children, and his children’s children, four generations” (42:16). The number “four” refers to earth (Hopper 2000, 11) or solid (35). The number “zero” means “nothing” (Cambridge, s.v. “zero”) or emptiness. “Zero” can figuratively refer to the state of Nirvana. One meaning of the term “children” is individuals strongly affected by another (The American, s.v. “child”). Therefore, children can symbolize disciples who are strongly affected by their teacher. In this connection, the verse can be interpreted as: Job is the one who achieved Nirvana on the earth and has many disciples on the earth. By putting the Buddha into the place of Job, the verse becomes: the Buddha is the one who achieved Nirvana on the earth and has many disciples on the earth. If we allow the figurative reading of this verse, it seems that the trial gives a more coherent explanation to the verse.

The trial is an illustration of how the experience of the Buddha can help the reading of Job. It is clear that the thing which brings Job and the Buddha together and makes them sharing the similarities is “intellect”. Because of their devotion in the search of intellect and their persistence during suffering, they finally gained enlightenment. The reading of Job along the path of his intellectual search and transformation parallels Job’s experience to the experience of the Buddha. The similarities not only show the linkages

between Job and the Buddha, they also help the reading of Job from a new perspective:  
reading Job as one who searched and was transformed intellectually.

## **CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION**

### **A New Perspective**

The choice of ignoring the enigmas presented by the author and making a cross-cultural reading of the book of Job as a whole allows an apprehension of Job in parallel with the awakening experience of the Buddha. The experiences of enlightenment of Job and the Buddha transform their intellects and allow them to have the clear and concrete understanding of themselves and reality. Their clearness is the opposite of the obscure content and background of the book of Job. Facing the uncertain background, we are similar to the old Job in the prologue who is ignorant and confused. However, through the current reading, we are able to see the transformation of Job and share his delighted enlightenment. Through Job's intellectual growth, he is able to construct a new understanding intellectually and reach a state of peace and calm. Similarly, the background information of the book of Job is not changed. The unknowns are still the unknowns. The current study is unable to provide answers to these unknowns such as who the author is. However, by taking a new perspective, we are like the new Job and are able to apprehend the book of Job differently. Even though the unknowns remain the same, my understanding of Job is different. I am not trapped by Job's image of innocent suffering as before. I see a new Job and am able to account for his suffering from a new perspective. The change is like Job's experience: the outside world remains the same

while the inside perception changes. If enlightenment is the act of bringing a new perspective into being, I think the current study is like the experience of enlightenment.

The current reading takes a simple and unusual approach. Therefore, one obvious deficiency is that I omit some contradictory opinions and leave them unaddressed. To cite an example, the opinions given by Eliphaz in chapter 22 are not in coherent with his previous speeches literally. The complexity of the content is one of the mystic elements of the book of Job and is impossible for me to explain clearly in the current study. Therefore, I choose to keep them unanswered and leave them under the original cover of enigma and mystery.

### **A Final Image**

Finally, I am going to conclude the thesis with an image of summarizing the experience of Job and the Buddha simultaneously. Job and the Buddha suffered painfully in their intellectual search. Unfortunately, they had struggled wrongly and were unable to find their answers. They lost their abilities and reached a dead end. They gave themselves up to silence and turned back to a proper and moderate way of mediation. In their silence and concentration, they found the truth and all things became clear to them. They were awakened and found their orientations. They were in peace and mindfulness. They became messengers on the earth until the end of their lives.

The above image is what I can offer in the current study. This image shows that by proper intellectual apprehension through Maimonides' theory of divine providence and Eliade's theory of hierophany, we are able to apprehend the insight of seeing the Buddha in the book of Job. Even though the book of Job is still obscured by many

unknowns, it is true that the ignorance is not an obstacle but an attraction for further exploration. The words from Nicholas Rescher can better explain the attraction: ignorance “facilitates life being a voyage to discovery. If ignorance were extinguished and everything knowable known, open horizons would be replaced by a walled enclosure. Important facets of life’s mystery and excitement would be lost forever” (2009, 151). Rescher’s words and the fruitful journey of seeing the Buddha in the book of Job may explain why the mystery or unknowns of the book of Job make it attractive to readers like me.

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