On two bright spring days in Amsterdam, April 2002, not far away from the red light district, the drug scene, and people living on the edge, on the premises of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences, scholars from three research areas met to discuss the topic of cognitive linguistics, Hebrew semantics, and biblical studies of the book of Job. This prestigious institute, founded in 1808 and housed in an edifice with a neoclassical temple-like facade that hides a labyrinth of spaces, rooms, and offices, has a long historical development, and is in itself a metaphor of science and art. In the wood-timbered rooms, where once Rembrandt’s Nightwatch hung, and now pictures of famous scientists representing Dutch faces and views on knowledge and wisdom, Academy Colloquia are held to stimulate discussions in the front line of new scientific and scholarly developments. Although the style of the place does not show it, its location is justified: the meetings and discussions that take place inside represent a life under the volcano almost as much as outside.

Thus, on the Academy Colloquium ‘The Book of Job: Suffering and Cognition in Context’, a lava stream of new concepts and ideas from cognitive linguistics rolled over the biblical scholars. Discussion flourished and new insights were explored. The song of wisdom in Job 28, the chapter the colloquium focussed on, has as its main question “Wisdom, where can it be found?”, but, sadly, it cannot be answered with: “in Amsterdam, in the Academy of Sciences”. However, the question of “Who can seriously discuss it?”, can positively be answered: the cognitive linguists with their knowledge of how people conceptualise and relate to their conceptual worlds, the classical Hebrew lexicographers and linguists with their knowledge of the language and its semantic values, and the biblical scholars who are experienced in the human struggle for meaning and for understanding biblical texts. The premise of this conference and of this book is that all three disciplines are needed to get a glimpse of this quest for wisdom and to understand a little bit more about the interaction of language, cognition, biblical texts in general, and the book of Job in particular.
The idea for this Academy Colloquium started in Tilburg, where the research group *Knowing and Experiencing Job (KEJ)* in the department of Biblical Studies at the Faculty of Theology has been doing research on language and cognition in the Hebrew bible for some years. The planning and programming of the colloquium was based on the idea that academic research of the book of Job may benefit from insights reached in cognitive linguistics, particularly in cognitive semantics. The colloquium’s aim was formulated so as to bring together three disciplines, biblical studies, Hebrew semantics, and cognitive linguistics, in order to promote cross-fertilization. Thus, current research in the biblical exegesis of the book of Job could benefit from lexical semantics and cognitive linguistics, in particular, as concerns the contextual basis of experience and perception and the way this is expressed in language. It was felt that Hebrew semantics, which, until recently, had been very much focused on philological-comparative and historical-etymological discussions, but had expressed the need for change in the last decades, would benefit from the colloquium because cognitive semantics could contribute to a change in views on meaning and conceptualization within a cognitive and communicative model. Finally, the colloquium would be of interest for researchers within the field of cognitive linguistics, because the focus on a specific textual unit, such as the book of Job, provided them with suitable testing material for their explanatory models.

The aim and structure of the Academy Colloquium is reflected in the proceedings presented here, under title ‘Job 28. Cognition in Context’, which contain the papers of the speakers at the colloquium and two additional articles, by Prof. James Alfred Loader and Prof. Leo Noordman, who were invited to give their evaluations at the colloquium from the perspective of biblical exegesis and from a (psycho-)linguistic perspective, respectively. The sequence of the articles is that of the colloquium itself; the differences between the main lectures and the short papers presented in the workshops is reflected in the difference in the articles’ length.

Neither the colloquium nor the proceedings would have materialized without the stimulative, accurate, and energetic work of Dr. Albert Kamp. He not only contributed to the planning, programming, and fund raising, but also did an immense amount of work in the preparation of the manuscript of these proceedings. I wish to thank him from the bottom of my heart. And if only my name is mentioned as the editor of this volume,
it is because I am the only one who can be held responsible for any (editorial) mistakes it may contain.

Another name should be added to that of Albert Kamp, viz. Mrs. Martine Wagenaar of the Royal Netherlands Academy. She did a great job in taking care of the contributors’ and participants’ traveling and accommodation and of the practical organization on the premises of the Academy.

A colloquium like this cannot be held without the financial support of sponsors and I wish to express my gratitude to the Faculty of Theology at the University of Tilburg, The Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO), the Porticus Foundation, and the Netherlands School for Advanced Studies in Theology and Religion (NOSTER). And finally, I would like to thank the Tilburg Faculty of Theology, especially its dean, Prof. Wim Weren and the Board of Governors, because they offered the academic environment for scholarly biblical research and made the organization of this colloquium possible.

Ellen van Wolde

Tilburg, 2 September 2002