CHAPTER THREE

JOB 28 WITHIN JOB 22-31

I. Introduction

In Chapter Two we saw how Job 28 makes sense as Job’s words, and how it is related to the whole book. Through an examination of plot development and Job’s characterization in the story, it was argued that Job 28 plays a key part in linking its preceding and subsequent chapters. In addition, Job 28 is also closely related to the rhetorical situation of the book—the exigency, the audience and the constraint—which motivates the author to tell the story of Job. Furthermore, Job 28 is also within the author’s overall rhetorical strategy—“from less to more adequate perspectives”—to achieve transformation of the exigency.

In this chapter it proceeds to examine how Job 28 functions within the immediate context of chapters 22-31. Many scholars reject 24:18-24, 26:5-14, 27:13-23 and Job 28 as Job’s words, because these passages are not quite like Job’s other sayings, but are instead rather similar to the friends’ arguments. Such discrepancy has prompted many scholars to claim that the third speech cycle has undergone disruptions and that Job 28 is a secondary addition. However, this study seeks to argue that the juxtaposition of Job’s contradictory sayings in chapters 22-31 is part of the author’s rhetorical strategy, intended to elicit a transformation of the exigency. Suffice it to say, this chapter aims at pointing out how Job 28 fits well in the context of chapters 22-31, which is frequently regarded as the most perplexing section in the book.

This chapter presents four major concerns. First, it introduces contradictory juxtaposition as part of the author’s rhetorical strategy. Special reference is made to Sternberg’s methodology. Secondly, it investigates how to discern the author’s intended impacts upon the audience by discussing the presuppositions needed for the audience to approach the story, the author’s guide to interpretation, the interpretation of dramatic presentation and God’s final verdict in 42:7b as the key to interpretation. Thirdly, it explores the rhe-
torical functions of Job’s contradictory sayings in chapters 22-31. Here rhetorical analysis is addressed to the rhetorical impacts of Job’s contradictory sayings in two respects: 1) the flow of argument in the story; and 2) the audience. Fourthly, after the study of each individual unit of speech, there are further discussions of how Job 28 is connected with its surrounding chapters by the common structure of contradictory juxtapositions in chapters 22-31, and how the gaps generated by such contradictions can be closed. As regards the gap-filling process, special attention is drawn to the relationship between Job 28 and the Yahweh speeches.

II. Contradictory Juxtaposition as Part of the Author’s Rhetorical Strategy

This section aims to define the notion of contradictory juxtaposition, underscoring its functions and paying attention to the positive and negative aspects of gapping.

A. Definition of Contradictory Juxtaposition

According to Sternberg, a literary work is a system of gaps which need to be filled. Contradictory juxtaposition appears when “the narrative juxtaposes two pieces of reality that bear on the same context but fail to harmonize either as variants of a situation or as phases in an action.” Its common phenomenon is that “event clashes with event, speech with event, speech with speech, or interior with vocal discourse.” In addition, the two opposite pieces are juxtaposed in such an abrupt succession that it widens their semantic distance. Semantically, “the fuller the opposition, the more incongruous the juxtaposition.” Therefore contradictory juxtaposition “opens gaps, gaps produce discontinuity, and discontinuity breeds ambiguity.” By definition, a gap is “a lack of information about the world”, which may be an event, motive, causal link, character trait,

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1 The term “contradictory juxtaposition” here is equivalent to Sternberg’s idea of “opposition in juxtaposition.” For further details, see Sternberg, Poetics of Biblical Narrative, 242-7.
2 Sternberg, Poetics of Biblical Narrative, 186.
3 Sternberg, Poetics of Biblical Narrative, 243.
4 Sternberg, Poetics of Biblical Narrative, 243.
5 Sternberg, Poetics of Biblical Narrative, 243.
6 Sternberg, Poetics of Biblical Narrative, 245.
7 Sternberg, Poetics of Biblical Narrative, 236.