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## The Debate About the Almighty יְהוָה (*Saddai*) in the Book of Job

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### Abstract

*This study aims to fill the interpretive gap in the Book of Job by analysing the use of יְהוָה (*Saddai*) in the dialogues and debates in the Book of Job, and how this name becomes a bridge between the concept of divine justice and the human experience of suffering. The research method is qualitative with a hermeneutic approach, where the author compares the Masoretic and Septuagint (LXX) texts, where the author analyses the dynamics of the use of יְהוָה (*Saddai*) by various characters in the book of Job. The results show that the name יְהוָה *Saddai* reflects God's infinite power and permits suffering as a form of discipline. The discussion highlights the dynamics of dialogue between Job and his friends, as well as the theological implications of suffering as a space to experience God's love. The conclusion of this study asserts that an understanding of *Saddai* can provide new insights into biblical theology and human spiritual experience.*

Keywords: Almighty, יְהוָה (*Saddai*), Book of Job

### INTRODUCTION

The book of Job is an important piece of biblical literature known for its exploration of suffering and theodicy.<sup>1</sup> Baxter describes human suffering in the book of Job as reflecting a dramatic debate, filled with fluctuating human emotions and desires, as well as multiple interacting vested interests.<sup>2</sup> One interesting aspect of the Book of Job is the use of the divine name יְהוָה (*Saddai*), which is often associated with God's infinite

<sup>1</sup> Ragil Kristiawan, *Pengenalan Pada Perjanjian Lama* (Semarang: KAO Press, 2016), 214.

<sup>2</sup> J. Sidlow Baxter, *Menggali Isi Alkitab Ayub-Maleakhi*, ed. Sastro Soedirdjo G.M.A Nainggolan, H. A. Oppusunggu (Jakarta: Yayasan Bima Kasih / OMF, 1996), 25.

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and mysterious power.<sup>3</sup> The presence of this name in the midst of debates about justice and suffering opens up a discussion about the relationship between divine power and the human experience of justice.<sup>4</sup> Roy B. Zuck notes that the term יהוה occurs 31 times in the book of Job, while only seventeen times elsewhere in the OT. This data is very interesting where this name is more often used in all the books of the OT. In contrast, the name Yahweh is rarely used in this book. This raises further questions that will be answered in this research. In this book, Job uses the word fourteen times; Eliphaz uses it seven times in three speeches; Bildad twice; Zofar once; Elihu six times; and God once.<sup>5</sup> The numerous mentions of יהוה in the book of Job prove that the name יהוה is one of the major themes in this book.

Previous research has dealt extensively with the book of Job and the theological questions raised in it. J. Janzen highlights that Job moves from understanding God as a judge to God as a loving parent, with the name יהוה where the name represents aspects of God's life and providence.<sup>6</sup> This perspective is echoed by Subekti, who further underlines the providential aspect of God in Job, albeit without extensive exploration of the symbolic or contextual role of *Saddai* itself.<sup>7</sup> From a linguistic perspective, Mushayabasa provides valuable insights by analyzing the etymology and Peshitta translations of יהוה, uncovering layers of theological meaning hidden in semantic and textual nuances.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, Bryan Beeckman examines the theological differences between the Hebrew text and the Septuagint (LXX) regarding the use of God's names, such as *El* and *Saddai*. This analysis reveals the theological nuances that arise in translation and shows how different interpretations affect theological understanding.<sup>9</sup>

Chaya Halberstam contributes to the conversation by emphasizing procedural justice and the dialogical aspect between God and humans in Job, introducing justice theory into biblical interpretation. Her work hints at the relational dynamics of divine-human interaction, though it does not tie these concepts directly to the role of *Saddai* as a divine name.<sup>10</sup> In contrast, Im Minkyun developed a theology of hope based on the book of Job and the work of theologian Moltmann. Minkyun emphasizes that suffering is not a punishment, but rather a space where humans can experience God's love and reach

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<sup>3</sup> Ragil Kristiawan, "Pesan Teologis Penggunaan Nama Gabungan Allah אֱלֹהֵי יְהוָה ( El-Saddai ) Dalam Pentateukh" 1, no. 2 (2024): 93–109.

<sup>4</sup> Norman C Habel, "The Deus Absconditus of Elihu," *Lutheran theological journal* 50 (2016): 96.

<sup>5</sup> Roy B. Zuck, "Teologi Kitab-Kitab Hikmat Dan Kidung Agung," in *A Biblical Theology of the Old Testament*, ed. Roy B. Zuck (Malang: Gandum Mas, 2005), 397.

<sup>6</sup> J. Gerald Janzen, "Job's Oath," *Review & Expositor* 99, no. 4 (December 1, 2002): 597–605.

<sup>7</sup> Tri Subekti, "Providensia Allah Dalam Kitab Ayub," *REDOMINATE: Jurnal Teologi dan Pendidikan Kristiani* 4, no. 1 (July 5, 2022): 1.

<sup>8</sup> Godwin Mushayabasa, "The Effect of Etymology on the Rendering of the Divine Epithet (El) Saddai in the Peshitta Version," *Journal for Semitics* 19, no. 1 (2010): 19–35.

<sup>9</sup> Bryan Beeckman, "Absentia Nominum Sacrorum in Libro Iob (Part Ii): The Examination of the Minuses of, and in Lxx Job," in *Biblica*, vol. 103 (Salzburg, Austria, 2022), 481–498; Bryan Beeckman, "Variatio Theologica in Libro Iob? An Analysis of the Translation of 'Ēlōhīm by Kurios in LXX Job," *Journal for Semitics* 32, no. 1 (August 8, 2023): 12 pages.

<sup>10</sup> Warren Zev Harvey, "Rabbi Nissim of Girona on the Heavenly Court, Truth, and Justice," in *Biblical Interpretation Series*, vol. 132 (BRILL, 2015), 69–75.

spiritual maturity, and face the future with eschatological hope.<sup>11</sup> Meanwhile, X. Jibiliza explores the pastoral challenges faced by Job and develops a theology of suffering that emphasizes God's involvement in every stage of human suffering. This study highlights how the book of Job can provide theological and pastoral perspectives in addressing crises of faith and suffering.<sup>12</sup> While other studies highlight the role of Satan as the “accuser” of the righteous which is more clearly shown in Job than other OT books.<sup>13</sup> Andris Kiamani et al., only highlight the meaning of the word “regret” in the book of Job 42:6,<sup>14</sup> Bastanta Pradhana Bangun emphasizes the correlation of creation theology in Job 3:1-10 with Genesis 1:2-2:4a,<sup>15</sup> but remain narrowly scoped and do not intersect with the thematic thread of יְהוָה.

While past research has offered robust theological, linguistic, and pastoral readings of the Book of Job, a significant gap remains in the symbolic and contextual interpretation of the divine name יְהוָה. Few, if any, studies have systematically examined how יְהוָה functions as a theological anchor that bridges divine justice, human suffering, and relational dialogue within the narrative structure of Job. Therefore, this study addresses that void by proposing a symbolic-theological reading of יְהוָה as a narrative device that reframes theodicy, not simply as an abstract theological problem, but as an existential encounter. Unlike earlier works that treat יְהוָה as a peripheral or linguistic element, this research positions it as central to understanding how the book constructs divine-human relations amidst suffering. Furthermore, the novelty of this research lies in integrating symbolic language analysis with theological anthropology.

This study aims to address the deep understanding of the name יְהוָה in the book of Job, both contextually and symbolically. In addition, it aims to explain how the use of יְהוָה connects the concept of divine justice to the experience of human suffering, where it can provide new insights into the spiritual and theological dynamics contained in the text.

## METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with contextual analysis and theological hermeneutics to identify the meaning and role of the name Saddai in the Book of Job. The analysis begins by utilizing primary data in the form of biblical texts, namely the MT and LXX versions, focusing on verses that mention יְהוָה. Secondary data consisted of related literature and studies, including academic journals, theological articles, and biblical commentaries, as proposed in the study by Beeckman.<sup>16</sup> This stage aimed to discover the

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<sup>11</sup> Im Minkyun, “Theological Reflection on the Hope Found in Suffering: Focusing on the Book of Job and the Theology of J. Moltmann,” *The Journal of the Korea Contents Association* 20 (2020): 638–647.

<sup>12</sup> Xolisa Jibiliza, “Pastoral Challenges Experienced by the Biblical Character Job and a Brief ‘Theology of Suffering,’” *Pharos Journal of Theology* 102 (February 2021): 1–8.

<sup>13</sup> Djone Georges Nicolas, “Analisis Penyingkapan Rahasia Di Balik Penderitaan Ayub Di Dalam Kitab Ayub,” *Syntax Literate ; Jurnal Ilmiah Indonesia* 6, no. 3 (March 20, 2021): 1137.

<sup>14</sup> Andris Kiamani et al., “Studi Tematik Terhadap Makna Kata ‘Menyesal’ Dalam Kitab Ayub.42:6,” *Voice of HAMI: Jurnal Teologi dan Pendidikan Agama Kristen* 6, no. 1 (September 1, 2023): 24–36.

<sup>15</sup> Bastanta Pradhana Bangun, “Teologi Penciptaan Dan Kitab Ayub 3:1-10,” *Te Deum (Jurnal Teologi dan Pengembangan Pelayanan)* 11, no. 2 (June 25, 2022): 237–254.

<sup>16</sup> Beeckman, “Absentia Nominum Sacrorum in Libro Iob (Part Ii): The Examination of the Minuses of, and in Lxx Job,” 481–498.

main patterns and themes regarding God's power, suffering, and justice in Job's narrative through exploring the relationship of these concepts.

A theological hermeneutics approach is applied to interpret the text of Job in the historical and theological context of the times. The main focus is on how **יָדָבַר** is portrayed and debated in the dialog between Job and his friends, as well as by God himself. A comparative analysis between the Masoretic and Septuagint texts will be conducted to identify translation differences regarding the name **יָדָבַר**. Variations in translation have the potential to alter theological perceptions of God's power, as Beeckman points out.<sup>17</sup> This study will explore how terminological differences between the two versions of the text can affect people's understanding of God's nature and divine justice. The data collection and analysis process is conducted through literature study and thematic coding method to find patterns of meaning, followed by validation of findings through data triangulation and discussion with experts.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Usage **יָדָבַר** of Elifas

The first use of **יָדָבַר** is by Eliphaz in chapter 5:17. According to the context, Eliphaz recognizes that God has done great deeds that are not easily understood in governing the world (Job 5:9).<sup>18</sup> Verse 17 features the word **יָדָבַר** as a figure of reproof or chastening with the word *musar* referring to discipline. Eliphaz warns Job that the rebuke experienced by Job should be faced with a happy attitude, and His discipline through suffering should not be rejected. **יָדָבַר** in Eliphaz's view means God who rebukes and disciplines with suffering. This is corroborated by the previous context where God Himself would wound, but He would also bind up the wound, He would beat, but His hand would also heal (Job 5:18). From this view Eliphaz concluded that the “Almighty” was now doing things to Job because of his sin. The Almighty could not have acted carelessly upon Job. Every effect must have a cause. It was the sin committed by Job that caused Almighty God to do painful things to Job.

**יָדָבַר** is also mentioned in chapter 15:25. The context of this passage includes Eliphaz' words about the wicked. The existence of the wicked, according to Eliphaz, is that of individuals who always seek to oppose God. The existence of the wicked is to wander throughout his life (Job 15:20). The wicked cannot enjoy peace in his life<sup>19</sup> and this is described by the coming of the destroyer who will ruin his life (Job 15:21). The future of the wicked is only days of darkness (Job 15:23). His life is also filled with distress and hardship (15:24).

It is all because of their deeds against **יָדָבַר**. The existence of the wicked who dare to oppose the Almighty will be bad as described in the previous verses. However, the

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 486–491.

<sup>18</sup> T Keller, *Walking with God through Pain & Suffering: Berjalan Bersama Allah Melalui Kesulitan Dan Penderitaan*. (Malang: Literatur Perkantas Jatim., 2020).

<sup>19</sup> Kalis Stevanus, “Kesadaran Akan Allah Melalui Penderitaan Berdasarkan Ayub 1-2,” *Dunamis: Jurnal Teologi dan Pendidikan Kristiani* 3, no. 2 (2019): 130–132.

principle remains that the wicked cannot resist the Almighty.<sup>20</sup> The wicked who attempt to resist Saddai will not become rich (Job 15:29). Eliphaz wants to convey the theological value regarding the use of the Almighty, namely that God is a great Person who cannot be challenged or defeated by human existence, specifically the deeds of the wicked.<sup>21</sup> The person who dares to oppose Him will get a life filled with darkness. יְהוָה gives the impression of a warning that humans cannot overcome God's power. This is what Eliphaz may be emphasizing regarding the use of the Almighty. Whereas *παντοκράτορος* (*pantokratopos*) in the Septuagint text (LXX) affirms that the Pantokrator (or יְהוָה) cannot be challenged by prideful humans.

Eliphaz also mentions יְהוָה in chapter 22:3. The word יְהוָה in the verse is described as one who is not influenced by human righteousness. This shows God's non-reliance on human deeds, confirming the concept that Almighty God has a perfection that does not depend on His creatures. The LXX also emphasizes “*Pantokratōr*” for יְהוָה, in a similar vein that the Almighty God does not benefit from human righteousness, but maintains a just relationship with His people. The context of the entire passage is actually Eliphaz' words to Job to repent of his great sin. The mention of יְהוָה is in verse 3, where the message is that the Almighty is a just person, who will punish every offense with judgment. According to Eliphaz, the Almighty God will not punish and bring to justice those who fear Him (Job 22:4). Eliphaz believed that all the suffering that Job had endured was solely because of his great wickedness and endless guilt (Job 22:5).

According to Eliphaz, Job's faults were to take pawn arbitrarily, and to rob the poor of their clothes (Job 22:6). Job did not give water to the thirsty, nor food to the hungry (Job 7). Job had abandoned widows as well as orphans. And according to Eliphaz, this was the reason why the Almighty brought judgment upon him (v.10). Eliphaz still insisted that the suffering felt by Job must be due to the sin committed against Almighty God.<sup>22</sup> Job had to confess his sin immediately so that forgiveness from the Almighty would be immediately revealed to Him. According to Eliphaz, restoration occurred when Job was willing to confess before Almighty God.

Eliphaz again alludes to the word יְהוָה in the chapter Job 22:17. The context of this passage still shows Eliphaz' words about God. According to him, there are many people who do not believe in the omnipotence of יְהוָה. Although there are those who say so, it is He who fills their houses with all good things (Job 22:18). In the Masoretical Text (MT), *Saddai* is regarded as an important and valuable figure, even if ungodly men fail to appreciate Him. This verse shows Eliphaz's view that rejection of God is futile. The LXX highlights the helplessness of the wicked without *Pantokratōr*, adding the meaning that God remains Almighty despite the rejection of the wicked. Thus, the message Eliphaz wants to convey from the use of the Almighty in this passage is that even though there are those who doubt His omnipotence, He is still a God who is not influenced by the

<sup>20</sup> Herny Kongguasa, “Masalah Kejahatan Dan Pemeliharaan Allah,” *Jurnal Jaffray* 2, no. 2 (2005): 53.

<sup>21</sup> Elvin Atmaja Hidayat, “Iman Di Tengah Penderitaan: Suatu Inspirasi Teologis-Biblis Kristiani,” *Melintas* 32, no. 3 (2017): 285.

<sup>22</sup> Daniel S. Golberg, “Job and the Stigmatization of Chronic Pain. Perspectives in Biology and Medicine,” *Project MUSE* 53, no. 3 (2010): 425–438.

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opinions of others.<sup>23</sup> He still meets their needs with His mighty power. The omnipotence of יהוה is not influenced by the opinions of men, He is still the powerful God even though there are those who doubt Him.

Eliphaz mentions the use of יהוה three times in chapter 22, namely in verses 23, 25, and 26. The context of this passage is Eliphaz' exhortation for Job to repent. This passage tells of the Almighty's assurance of forgiveness for the wrongs Job had done. True repentance is directed to the Almighty (Job 22:24), and requires an attitude of humility. It also means putting away all deceit in life. The life of a repentant person should have the Almighty as the main part of his life (Job 22:25). Wealth is not the focus of his life, and לֹא שֵׁשׁ is the highlight of his life (Job 22:24).

A joyful life is possible because of the Almighty (Job 22:26). The guarantee for a truly repentant person is to obtain forgiveness from Him.<sup>24</sup> If one truly prays to Him, the Almighty will grant the prayer (Job 22:27). All the plans of those who have repented and made יהוה first, will be accomplished (Job 22:28). For those who are humble and repent before Him, God will provide salvation (Job 22:29). So the message that Eliphaz wants to convey from the use of the Almighty in this passage is that the Almighty is the One who will forgive, restore and provide salvation for those who repent and humble themselves. The tendency that Job's suffering was due to sin is not lost in this passage. Saddai in this context is portrayed as one who provides blessings and strength to those who turn to Him. This name is associated with the assurance of security and happiness for the righteous. While the LXX describes *Pantokratōr* as a sure source of blessings and security. The translation *Pantokratōr* implies that God not only provides strength but also providence in the lives of the faithful.<sup>25</sup>

Thus, overall, the word Saddai in Eliphaz's speech provides the following understanding: The Masoretic Text (MT) depicts Saddai as an all-powerful figure, a teacher, a rebuker, and a guarantor of security. Whereas the LXX describes *Pantokratōr* or *Saddai* with a focus on absolute power, providence, and the role of preserving the salvation of the righteous. Through the use of the word Saddai, Eliphaz tries to describe a just and loving God. However, this perspective tends to emphasize the punitive aspect, as Eliphaz sees rebuke as a form of divine education for humanity.

### **Bildad's use of יהוה**

In the conversation with Job and his friends, Bildad also mentioned the use of the Almighty. Bildad alludes to the word phrase יהוה in chapter 8:3. Based on the context, this passage is Bildad trying to defend God's justice.<sup>26</sup> Bildad specifically wants to counter

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<sup>23</sup> D. Z. Phillips, "The Problem of Evil and the Problem of God," *Philosophical Investigations* 29, no. 2 (2006): 212–215.

<sup>24</sup> Archbishop Desmond Tutu, "No Future Without Forgiveness," *New Perspectives Quarterly* 16, no. 5 (1999): 29–30.

<sup>25</sup> B. Becking, "Defending God: Biblical Responses to the Problem of Evil," *Choice Reviews Online* 43, no. 06 (2006): 43–3334.

<sup>26</sup> J. G. Williams, "'You Have Not Spoken Truth of Me' Mystery and Irony in Job," *Zeitschrift Für Die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 83, no. 2 (1971).

all of Job's words, where he wants to uphold God's justice over all people.<sup>27</sup> The message that Bildad wants to convey regarding the use of the word יְהוָה in this passage is that God is the One who always upholds the truth, and in Him there can be no bending of the truth (Job 8:3). The same is said by Barnes, where Bildad expressly maintains the view that God will do right. Bildad's rhetorical question must be answered with a no. This indicates that Bildad's doctrine of God will do right. This indicates Bildad's doctrine of יְהוָה that the Almighty God is a just God. The translation "*Pantokratōr*" in the LXX reinforces the idea that God is the source of absolute justice. The name *Pantokratōr* here emphasizes God's all-encompassing power, especially in guarding and upholding the truth. Bildad indirectly wants to say that the real guilty party in this case is Job himself. God could not have been gratuitous to Job by giving him all these bad things for no reason.<sup>28</sup> He is a righteous God. All His ways are straight. If Job is currently experiencing pain, it is solely because of his own mistakes. God's justice compelled Him to punish Job. For Bildad, God is a righteous Person and in Him there are no wrong motives.

In the context of the rest of the conversation, Bildad still alludes to God's name יְהוָה, and this can be seen in chapter 8:5. The context of this passage still emphasizes Bildad's words about the true God. The message that Bildad wants to convey in this passage about the Almighty is that God is the One who will listen to and restore His loved ones.<sup>29</sup> יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ is the God who will restore the people who cry out to Him. According to Bildad, this promise is a conditional promise that Job must fulfill. The conditions that must be fulfilled are that Job must seek God and ask for His mercy (Job 8:5), and Job must live a clean and honest life (Job 8:6). If this is done, then יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ will restore Job's condition and make him glorious (Job 8:7).<sup>30</sup> The Almighty is the God who will restore the condition of the people who cry out to Him. The name implies the hope that those who sincerely call upon Saddai will find the Lord to be a source of help and mercy. To Bildad, Saddai was a ruler who was not only just but also loving and ready to respond to the pleas of a humble and sincere heart.

Both verses above (Job 8:3 and 8:5) use the word Saddai in the context of Bildad's words to describe God as omnipotent, just, and responding to those who earnestly seek Him. The Masoretic Text (MT) retains Saddai as God's name associated with justice and love. Saddai in the MT indicates that God is a figure who upholds justice (Job 8:3) and is open to those who plead sincerely (Job 8:5). In the LXX, *Pantokratōr* asserts cosmic power and perfect presence in executing justice and hearing sincere prayers. Through the name Saddai, Bildad expresses his belief primarily through the use of this name that God is a figure of consistent justice, and that people will not find the truth if they act against His will.<sup>31</sup> Thus, Bildad's meaning of the name Saddai in the context of justice or mercy,

<sup>27</sup> Albert Barnes, "Job" in *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*. Quick Verse 2010.

<sup>28</sup> A Pinker, "Bildad's Contribution to the Debate—A New Interpretation of Job 8:17–19," *Vetus Testamentum* 66, no. 3 (2016): 406–432.

<sup>29</sup> J Carney, "Holding the Faith: Lessons on Suffering and Transformation in the Book of Job," *Review & Expositor* 111, no. 3 (2014): 281–286.

<sup>30</sup> Nidia Anggraini and Dicky Dominggus, "Memaknai Teguran Bildad Dalam Ayub 8 Sebagai Refleksi Terhadap Keadilan Allah Dalam Kehidupan Orang Percaya," *Jurnal Apokaliptis* 13, no. 2 (2023): 215–231.

<sup>31</sup> P Van Der Lugt, *Job's First Reply to Bildad* (BRILL, 1995).

יְהוָה or *Pantokratōr* shows God's steadfastness in His character who does not pervert justice and is ready to listen to those who seek Him with a sincere heart.

### Zofar's use of יְהוָה

In his conversation with Job, Zophar also alludes to the existence of יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים or the Almighty and this can be observed in chapter 11:7. Zophar uses only one occurrence of this word. The message that Zofar wants to convey in this passage is that El-Saddai is the Almighty One whose nature and existence cannot be comprehended by human thought. The use of the rhetorical word in this passage (can?) signifies that no human being can fathom God or the work that God is doing.<sup>32</sup> Meanwhile, the word Saddai in the LXX translated *Pantokrator* gives an understanding of God's infinite nature and reinforces Zofar's warning that humans cannot reach a full understanding of God.

Zofar continues his discussion by describing the nature of the Almighty person as high as the heavens and deeper than the world of the dead, so that man cannot fathom everything about Him (Job 11:8). He is a God who is longer than the earth and wider than the ocean (Job 11:9). These metaphors illustrate the incomprehensible nature of the Almighty God. Thus, Zofar argues that Job needs to humble himself before God because of His unfathomable existence (Job 11:13,14). In Zofar's statement, both the MT and LXX agree that Saddai or *Pantokratōr* is a figure beyond the limits of human knowledge. Zofar uses this name to emphasize human limitations in understanding the Almighty and mysterious God. In both the MT and LXX, יְהוָה or *Pantokratōr* is described as unapproachable by human knowledge, underscoring God's holiness and sovereignty.

### Elihu's use of יְהוָה

Elihu began to speak after his three friends reached a dead end in their conversation with Job. Eliphaz, Bildad and Zofar unilaterally judged that Job was guilty before God. However, Job rejected all their accusations. Elihu spoke last because he was probably the youngest of his friends.<sup>33</sup> The first use of יְהוָה by Elihu is in chapter 32:8.

In terms of context, Elihu argues that one's wisdom and understanding are not determined by one's age (Job 32:9). The wisdom that man possesses is solely from the Almighty Himself. True wisdom is not determined by how long a person has lived on this earth, but it is a gift that comes from the Almighty God.<sup>34</sup> The message that Elihu wants to convey regarding the use of the Almighty in this passage is that יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים is the one who provides understanding or wisdom in the lives of people. By using the term *Pantokratōr* to translate Saddai, the LXX reinforces God's role as the ruler of all things who also grants understanding to humans. *Pantokratōr* affirms that God is the source of all wisdom.

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<sup>32</sup> C. A. Newsom, "The Book of Job: A Contest of Moral Imaginations," *Choice Reviews Online* 41, no. 04 (2003): 41–2128.

<sup>33</sup> W. A. Irwin, "The Elihu Speeches in the Criticism of the Book of Job," *The Journal of Religion* 17, no. 1 (1937): 37–47.

<sup>34</sup> K. Seeskin, "Job and the Problem of Evil," *Philosophy and Literature* 11, no. 2 (1987): 226–241.



Furthermore, Elihu also uses the word אֱלֹהִים in chapter 33:4. The context of this passage is still part of Elihu's words in response to Job's rebuttal to the words of his three friends. This passage tells the story of Elihu's realization of his existence. Elihu realized that it was the Spirit of God that had made him and the breath of the Almighty that had made him alive (Job 33:4).<sup>35</sup> Elihu also realized his existence as God's creation formed from clay (Job 33:6). This was likely a reminder to Job that both he and Elihu were essentially God's creation, and it was not appropriate to argue with Him. The message Elihu wants to convey about the use of the Almighty from this passage is that אֱלֹהִים is the One who gives the breath of life to man. Man would never have lived without this Almighty handiwork. The LXX also emphasizes God's power in creating and giving life. Elihu was trying to satirize Job so that he would not continue to justify himself before God who had given him the breath of life.

Elihu continued to use the phrase Almighty in his conversation with Job. Elihu's use of אֱלֹהִים can still be observed in chapter 34:10, 12. The context of this passage specifically contains Elihu's words about justice. This is due to Job's view that he is righteous and God has taken away his right (Job 34:5). From Job's opinion, it is as if God is the One who has been unfair to Job.<sup>36</sup> Elihu wants to defend the justice of the Almighty, hence his words. Everything Elihu said about the Almighty was in defense of God's righteous and just nature.

The message Elihu wants to convey regarding the use of the Almighty in chapter 34:10 is that El-Saddai is the One who never cheats anyone. He is a God who is always just, and deceit is not in Him. His justice is evident in His actions where He rewards people according to their deeds (Job 34:11a). It is also evident in His actions where He makes each person experience what is appropriate for his or her behavior (Job 34:11b). The true God is the God who never cheats. The Septuagint (LXX) translates Saddai as *Pantokratōr*, emphasizing that the Almighty God is the source of true justice and will never cheat. Both verses reflect God's blameless nature.

The message Elihu wants to convey regarding the use of אֱלֹהִים in chapter 34:12 is that אֱלֹהִים is the One who does not bend justice. In other words, He is the God who always maintains justice. He is a just God, and righteousness is in Him. This seems to be closely related to the previous section, where the Almighty is the One who never cheats. The God who does not cheat is the God who never bends justice. Elihu wanted to warn Job that what was happening in his life was not because God was cheating him.<sup>37</sup> It was Job who needed to ask God for forgiveness so that God would restore his life.

Elihu continued to use אֱלֹהִים in his conversations. This can be observed in chapter 35:13. Elihu declared that the Almighty is the One who ignores the empty cries of His people. Elihu emphasized that Saddai will not listen to the proud. Saddai here indicates that God has no pleasure in pride and will not hear insincere prayers. While in the LXX, Saddai is translated as *Pantokratōr* which shows God as a ruler who is not only powerful

<sup>35</sup> C Smith, *Allusive and Elusive: Allusion and the Elihu Speeches of Job 32–37* (BRILL, 2022).

<sup>36</sup> Gammie, J. G. and R. Gordis, "The Book of Job: Commentary, New Translation and Special Studies. *Journal of Biblical Literature*," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 98, no. 4 (1979): 590–605.

<sup>37</sup> Choon-Leong Seow, "Elihu's Revelation," *Theology Today* 68, no. 3 (2011): 253–271.

but also selective in listening to earnest prayers. The passage begins with a man crying out because of the many oppressions, and cries for help because of the violence of the powerful (Job 35:9). The mistake this man made was that he did not ask where the God who made him was, and who gave him wisdom and understanding (Job 35:10). His cry was an empty cry because he did not come to God and did not seek Him.

The message that Elihu wants to convey regarding the use of the word **אלהים** or the Almighty in this passage is that the Almighty is the One who does not ignore unintentional prayers and supplications. **אלהים** requires seriousness in seeking Him. God wants all His people to seek Him wholeheartedly and hope in Him (Job 35:10). A serious heart in seeking God is emphasized in this text. Elihu was trying to satirize Job. Elihu wanted Job to show true repentance before God.<sup>38</sup> If Job truly repented, God would surely reveal His forgiveness and restoration. Job's struggling life proved that his regrets were nothing but nonsense.

The final use of the word **אלהים** by Elihu is next found in chapter 37:23. The context tells us that thunder came out of the mouth of **אלהים** or the Almighty (Job 37:2). He is the God who orchestrates the snow and rain on the earth (Job 37:5). Shadrach comes out of His treasury (Job 37:9). By His breath, the ice and the vast waters were frozen (Job 37:10). These things describe the glory of God that is incomprehensible to man. Man cannot be like Him, nor equal Him (Job 37:18).<sup>39</sup> Thus, in Elihu's words, both the MT and LXX consistently use **אלהים** or *Pantokratōr* to describe God as the creator, giver of understanding, and sustainer of life. This name also emphasizes God as the source of justice who will not listen to the prayers of a proud heart. However, one thing that needs to be addressed is that it is not only the name Saddai that does all of this. This quality is also related to another name for God in the Bible.

### **Job's Use of **אלהים****

Job's first use of **אלהים** is found in chapter 6:4. In his defense against Eliphaz's words, Job used **אלהים** included in Job's words in response to Eliphaz's words. According to Job, withholding compassion for one's neighbor is the same as neglecting the fear of the Almighty. Job saw that his brothers had no fear of the Almighty. The description of the unmerciful attitude is evident in the following verses (Job 6:15-20). Job believed that he had not sinned, therefore the one-sided judgment he felt amounted to an absence of fear of God El-Saddai. In this case, Job used the word **אלהים** to be a shield for his life that he had judged to be righteous.

Job's use of **אלהים** is also found in chapter 13:3. The context of this passage is Job's defense of what God has done. Job wanted to plead his case before Almighty God (Job 13:2). Job asserted his desire to speak directly to Saddai, demonstrating the intimacy and courage to approach God, even when feeling tested. Job sensed that the Almighty was

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<sup>38</sup> A. Mackerle, "Suffering As a Way to Knowing God: On the Interpretation of the Book of Job," *Caritas Et Veritas* 2, no. 1 (2012): 27–38.

<sup>39</sup> E Ellis, "Reconsidering the Fear of God in Job 37:14-24 and Qohelet 3:1-17 in the Light of Rudolf Otto's *Das Heilige*," *Old Testament Essays* 28, no. 1 (2015): 53–69.

punishing him, as if there was no hope for him (Job 13:15).<sup>40</sup> However, Job boldly said that everything he did and his life was completely right before God (Job 13:18), so he dared to defend his case before the Almighty.

The message Job wants to convey from the use of אֱלֹהִים in this passage is that God is the One who has disciplined Job. He claimed that the Almighty had done bitter things in his life, and that this was punishment for the wrongs he had committed in his youth (Job 13:26). The Almighty's form of discipline was likened to God's putting Job's feet in stocks, as well as the obstacles placed on the soles of his feet (Job 13:27). Job addresses his complaint to אֱלֹהִים next in chapter 21:15. The context of this passage is Job's lament over the prosperity of the wicked. Job sees that the lives of the wicked are fortunate, in that the older they get the stronger they become (Job 21:7). Their houses are secure and there is no fear (Job 21:9). The state of their livestock is so wonderfully blessed (Job 21:10). Even their days were full of prosperity (Job 21:13). Because of all this prosperity, they ignored the existence of the Almighty and felt no need for Him and did not want to worship Him (Job 21:15). This portrays Saddai as a person who is misunderstood by those who neglect faith.

However, any prosperity in the lives of the wicked is not of their own design (Job 21:16). There will be a time for the wicked to receive their reward from God (Job 21:17). There is a time when God will punish the wicked with destruction (Job 21:17), disaster (Job 21:19), and he will drink the wrath of the Almighty (Job 21:20). Although the existence of the wicked is both bad and good (Job 21:23-25), the end of the wicked's life is to "lie in the dust." From this, the message that Job wants to convey from the use of אֱלֹהִים in this passage is that God is a just Person who will repay the wicked with His justice. Given that Job felt righteous, he argued that what was happening in his life was unfair.

Next Job uses אֱלֹהִים in chapter 23:16. In the context of this passage, the Almighty is described as the One who has disciplined Job in his life. In his lament, Job confesses that it is God who has made him despair, and the Almighty has made his heart tremble (Job 23:16). Saddai is here identified as the one who causes trembling, demonstrating God's power to soften the human heart. Job considered that the suffering he experienced was not because of the darkness, nor was it because of the pitch darkness (Job 23:17). It is likely that Job blamed God for what happened in his life. Job believed that what happened in his life was by the Almighty's own design. God disciplined him even though he himself admitted that he had done nothing wrong to deserve this.<sup>41</sup>

In the next section, Job views אֱלֹהִים as unjust. This can be observed in chapter 24:1. Job felt that God allowed the wicked to live in abundance with all their faults, yet the Almighty did not hold judgment on their deeds. They had shifted the boundaries of the land and taken away other flocks (Job 24:3). They also tormented the poor and behaved like wild donkeys (Job 24:4,5). As a result of their deeds, many people groaned and were hurt because of the deeds of the wicked, yet it was as if the Almighty was silent about all

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<sup>40</sup> K. Southwood, "You Are All Quacks; If Only You Would Shut up' (Job 13.4b–5a): Sin and Illness in the Sacred and the Secular, the Ancient and the Modern," *Theology* 121, no. 2 (2018): 84–91.

<sup>41</sup> A Shveka and P Van Hecke, "The Metaphor of Criminal Charge as a Paradigm for the Conflict between Job and His Friends," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 90, no. 1 (2014): 99–119.

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their deeds (Job 24:12). However, Job's view of the Almighty is wrong, *אלהים* is a just One who will repay the wicked with His justice and reward the wicked with punishment (Job 21:15; 22:3; 31:2; 34:10,12).

In chapter 27, Job mentions *אלהים* 4 times. This can be observed in verses 2, 10, 11 and 13. In the context of this chapter, the Almighty is portrayed as the One who is disciplining Job by not giving him justice and grieving his heart (Job 27:2). This passage shows Job's pain at what the Almighty has done in his life.<sup>42</sup> In addition, Job's vow to Saddai demonstrates awe and trust in God's justice. The belief in Job that the Almighty will do justice by avenging the deeds of the wicked (Job 27:10,11). Verses 10 and 11 also show Job's dependence on Saddai as a source of knowledge about justice. This is closely related to chapter 27:13 which associates Saddai with the retribution that the wicked will receive.

The use of *אלהים* in Chapter 27:13 indicates God's justice. This passage contains Job's belief in the justice of God who will punish the wicked for what they have done. The Almighty will make the descendants of the wicked the food of the sword and their children and grandchildren will suffer famine (Job 27:14). This shows the bleakness of the lives of the wicked and their offspring because of God's powerful hand. The wealth of the wicked will not last forever, but will be enjoyed by the righteous (Job 27:16-17). From this passage, the Almighty is a just Person who will reward all forms of wickedness with punishment.

Job's words in chapter 29:5 also mention *אלהים*. The message of the use of Saddai in this passage is that Almighty God is the One who cares for and sustains the lives of His people. Job's life was cared for by God, so he acknowledged His provision (Job 29:5). This protection from the Almighty was already evident in the first verse, where Job acknowledged God's presence in his previous life (Job 29:2). Job also recognizes that it is the Almighty who is the light in the darkness (Job 29:3). And one important point is that God was intimate with Job (Job 29:4). These things further strengthen the opinion that *אלהים* is the one who is present, caring, protecting, nurturing the lives of His people, and a source of blessings, including Job's life.

The last use of *אלהים* in Job's mouth is in chapter 31:2. In this passage, Job also speaks about God, specifically the Almighty. Job believes that the Almighty has ordained all things from on high. The issue raised by Job regarding *אלהים* is in regards to God's justice and omniscience. Job contemplates that Saddai is the source of judgment, implying that God has the right to judge human actions.

Job realized that the Almighty would bring destruction to the deceitful, as well as misfortune to those who do evil (Job 31:3). The sentence Job uttered was rhetorical, as if what Job had said was a general truth about God. It was on this basis that Job gave a defense of himself. Job confidently said that he was innocent, because if there had been any fault in him, the Just God would have known all his faults (Job 31:6). It was this conviction of innocence that gave Job the courage to litigate with the Almighty (Job

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<sup>42</sup> M. S. Moore, "Ethical God-Talk in the Book of Job: Speaking to the Almighty by William C. Pohl IV.," *the Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 84, no. 1 (2022): 109–120.

31:35). The message that Job wants to convey in this passage is that the Almighty is the One who continues to maintain justice by avenging one's cheating and evil deeds. Thus, through Job's words and God Himself, Saddai or *Pantokratōr* is portrayed as the one who has the power to afflict trials, give life, and judge justly. Job sees God as one who inspires both awe and fear.

### **God's Own Use of יְהוָה**

At the end of this section of the book of Job, God Himself comes to Job to reckon with him. God does not come as a friend, rather He challenges Job to an argument with Him. God comes in a raging storm and holds Job accountable for what he has said (Job 38:1).<sup>43</sup> In a series of rhetorical questions posed by God, He uses יְהוָה to refer to Himself. This can be observed in chapter 39:35.

The context of this passage is a divine utterance from God Himself to Job for all his complaints (Job 39:34). God directly challenges Job by saying: does the critic want to argue with the Almighty? God challenged all the complaints that Job himself had been making. The message that God wants to convey from the use of the Almighty in this passage is that יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ is a great Being, whose ways cannot be disputed by man.<sup>44</sup>

Job really could not argue with God. He recognized that his lowly existence could not stand up to the great God. He realized that there was no answer he could give to God (Job 39:37). Job did not even continue his argument with God. This is evident from his words where he will not repeat his conversation (Job 39:38a), nor will he repeat any of the arguments he had previously made (Job 39:38b). So in this passage, El-Saddai is the One whose ways cannot be disputed by man.<sup>45</sup> Saddai describes God as a figure who is not only omnipotent but also mysterious, who is sovereign over humanity's suffering and justice. The use of the name Saddai for God portrays Him as a figure who is not only omnipotent but also authoritative in all His actions and decisions. Humans have no capacity or right to judge or litigate God's actions, as everything is within His plan and will. Man can only accept and trust His wisdom, even when human logic or experience cannot understand the reason behind suffering. Saddai wants to show that although man can struggle with Him, man ultimately needs to realize his limitations before the majesty of God.

### **Analysis of the Usage of יְהוָה in the Book of Job**

The evolving use of the divine name Saddai in the Book of Job offers a rich theological narrative that reflects not only the shifting perceptions of God's character among the book's various interlocutors but also deeper theological implications when examined in light of the textual traditions of the Masoretic Text (MT) and the Septuagint (LXX). Each character in Job presents a distinct theological lens through which Saddai is understood. Eliphaz views Saddai as a just disciplinarian who educates through suffering,

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<sup>43</sup> J. J. Kwon, "Divergence of the Book of Job from Deuteronomic/Priestly Torah: Intertextual Reading between Job and Torah," *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 32, no. 1 (2018): 49–71.

<sup>44</sup> I Kutz, "Job and His 'Doctors': Bedside Wisdom in the Book of Job," *BMJ* 321, no. 7276 (2000): 1613–1615.

<sup>45</sup> M. V. Fox, "The Meanings of the Book of Job," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 137, no. 1 (2018): 7–18.

thereby interpreting Job's affliction as a form of divine correction with spiritual purpose. Bildad emphasizes God's justice and mercy, portraying Saddai as a consistent and responsive deity who honors the prayers of the humble. Zophar, by contrast, underscores the transcendence and inscrutability of Saddai, highlighting the limitations of human understanding in grasping divine purposes. Elihu speaks of Saddai as a source of infinite wisdom who communicates through suffering, thus inviting a response of humility and attentiveness. Most significantly, Job himself engages Saddai in a dynamic and often conflicted relationship, at times affirming God's sovereignty, at other times questioning divine justice and lamenting the perceived disproportion between his suffering and his guilt.

This theological diversity underscores that Saddai is not portrayed with a monolithic identity, but rather with a complex and evolving character shaped by the existential and theological concerns of each speaker. When this internal biblical dynamism is set against the backdrop of textual translation, particularly between the MT and the LXX, further theological dimensions emerge. In the MT, אֱלֹהִים conveys a sense of overwhelming power and sovereignty that is both nurturing and fearsome. The term is deeply rooted in the Hebrew conceptual world, often linked with God's covenantal faithfulness, as seen in the patriarchal narratives and prophetic literature. In Job, the Hebrew term allows for a rich spectrum of meanings, God as both the giver of life and the one who permits or causes suffering for divine purposes. Job's invocation of Saddai, especially in moments of anguish, reflects this tension between reverence and protest, trust and bewilderment.

The Septuagint, however, introduces a significant shift by translating Saddai as *Pantokratōr*, meaning “All-Ruler” or “Almighty One.” This term, while preserving the sense of divine omnipotence, introduces a more metaphysical and universal dimension to the identity of God. Whereas the Hebrew Saddai can evoke covenantal intimacy and historical relationship, the Greek *Pantokratōr* leans toward an image of cosmic sovereignty that governs all creation. This shift has notable theological implications. In Jewish thought, particularly in post-exilic theology, Saddai continues to evoke the tension between divine justice and mercy within the framework of the covenant. God is understood as both protector and chastiser, a theme that resonates with Job's experience of divine absence and memory of past blessing. In Christian theology, especially influenced by the LXX and the writings of the early Church Fathers, *Pantokratōr* becomes a central Christological title. In the New Testament, particularly in Revelation, Christ is called the *Pantokratōr*, thus reorienting the figure of Saddai toward a messianic and eschatological fulfillment. From this perspective, Job's invocation of Saddai as *Pantokratōr* can be read typologically, pointing to Christ as the sovereign Lord who rules even amid suffering and apparent injustice.

The theological consequences of this translational shift are significant. The MT invites a theology of relationship, lament, and fidelity in the face of divine mystery, while the LXX opens the text to a universalist and Christocentric interpretation. Both traditions offer valuable insights, but together they form a more comprehensive theological

framework: one in which God's justice is both personal and cosmic, and in which divine sovereignty is both intimately involved in human suffering and transcendently sovereign over all creation. In conclusion, the character of Saddai in the Book of Job, viewed through both the Hebrew and Greek lenses, challenges simplistic understandings of divine power. Instead, it presents a multifaceted vision of God whose justice, presence, and purposes often defy human comprehension, yet remain the grounding hope of both Jewish and Christian faith.

## CONCLUSION

The use of the name יָהוָה in the book of Job shows that each character has a unique perspective on God's omnipotence. Eliphaz, Bildad, Zofar and Elihu emphasized that the suffering and discipline that Job experienced was part of God's just and edifying plan. They saw יָהוָה as not only powerful, but also full of wisdom and justice, aiming to draw His people closer to Him through difficult experiences. In this context, they invite Job to humble himself and accept that suffering has a deeper meaning in relationship with God.

On the other hand, Job himself used the name יָהוָה to express the dissatisfaction and injustice he felt in his suffering. Although he felt undeserving of punishment, his recognition of God's sovereignty remained, indicating that he struggled to understand God's plan behind his suffering. God's use of the name Saddai affirms His authority and power, reminding us that although humans cannot always understand His actions, God still has a greater purpose. Overall, this discussion illustrates the complex dynamic between God's omnipotence and human experience, and the importance of humility and trust in the face of suffering.

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