A New Interpretation of Job 19:26

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INTRODUCTION
The unit consisting of Job 19:25–28 reads:

25 אֶחֱזֶה אֱלוֹהַ וּמִבְשָרִי נִקְפוּ־זֹאת
וַאֲנִי יָדַעְתִי גֹאֲלִי חָי
וְאַחֲרוֹן עֵל־עָפָר יָקוּם

26 בּוֹאַי כִּי תֹאמְרוּ מַה־נִרְדָף־לוֹ
וּמִבְשָרִי נִקְפוּ־זֹאת
אָשֶר אֱשֶר אֵין אָחָד

27 אָשֶר אֱשֶר אֵין אָחָד
כִּי תֹאמְרוּ מַה־נִרְדָף־לוֹ
עֵינַי כִּלְכִיָּבְחֵקִי

כִּי תֹאמְרוּ מַה־נִרְדָף־לוֹ

28 שֹרֶש דָּבָר נִמְצָא־בִי
כִּי תֹאמְרוּ מַה־נִרְדָף־לוֹ

This unit is probably the most famous and obscure in the book of Job. The many different interpretations that have been offered for these verses attest to the challenges that the verses presented to the exegete.1 E.M. Good, for instance, states:

This passage gives everyone fits, both of furious activity and blank despair. In 35 years of trying to perceive sense in these verses, I have found it only in the first line. I can read each of the words. Except for v. 25a, I cannot with an acceptable degree of confidence construe the words in sensible sentences.2

Good’s confession of frustration is both poignant and telling. The interest in vv. 25–27 has been fueled to some degree by the perception that these verses express a belief in future redemption and resurrection. Indeed, this notion might have led to some tempering with the Urtext. T.K. Cheyne is confident that “The passage has plainly been edited and re-edited to gratify the very natural longing of a later age for references to the resurrection in body.”3 Moreover, understanding of the passage has also been thwarted by the uncertainty of what is averred confidently and what represents wishful thinking.

2 E.M. Good, In Turn of Tempest: A Reading of Job with a Translation (Stanford: Stanford University, 1990), 100.
D.J.A. Clines characterized vv. 25–28 as expressing Job’s conviction and desires. He says, “Basic to the interpretation . . . of these celebrated and much debated verses is a distinction between what Job knows or believes and what he desires.”

Among vv. 25–28, at least in an initial reading, stands out the enigmatic v. 26. D.B. Duhm mentions in this regard, “Bekanntlich ist v. 26 eine crux interpretum und unendlich verschieden von den Exegeten behandelt.” Understanding of this verse presented considerable difficulties to the ancient versions, and generations of exegetes that followed. E. Dhorme says, “Much ink has been spilt over this verse. A glance at the versions shows that the difficulties did not arise yesterday, and Knabenbauer is right in saying: versiculus brevis, septens constans voculis, at undeque difficilatibus septus.”

Understanding of this verse presented considerable difficulties to the ancient versions, and generations of exegetes that followed. E. Dhorme says, “Much ink has been spilt over this verse. A glance at the versions shows that the difficulties did not arise yesterday, and Knabenbauer is right in saying: versiculus brevis, septens constans voculis, at undeque difficilatibus septus.”

S.R. Driver and G.B. Gray characterize v. 26 as being “uncertain, ambiguous and difficult—especially the words תָּנְקוּ-זֹאת, which, however taken, seem so improbable that textual corruption at this point at least is almost certain.” Their discussion of this verse runs for four pages; an inordinate amount of space in their Philological Notes. Still, v. 26a is left untranslated in Volume I.

While each of the words in the verse is well attested in the Tanakh, and their meaning quite certain, the sense of the verse as a whole is not obvious. Is the verse a statement of knowledge? Does the verse express a desire? Is it a mystic vision? Does it refer to Job’s flesh and skin while alive, or to an awakening after death? What is the importance of seeing God and its ramifications? How should one understand תָּנְקוּ-זֹאת?

It has been noted that in v. 26, neither the temporal sense of the word גַם ("after, afterwards") nor its spatial sense (“behind, following”), fits the following עֹרִי (“my skin”). The root of נקף could be נקף I ("strike off") or נקף II ("go around"). However, the phrase formed by נקף I and זאת is awkward in context, and the intransitive נקף II obviously does not fit the demonstrative pronoun זאת. Moreover, the word מִבְּשָׂר was seen ambiguous. Some understood it as describing a state when Job has still flesh (“from my flesh”), others understood it as referring to his post-death state, when he does not have any flesh (“without my flesh”). This distinction led to

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5 D.B. Duhm, Das Buch Hiob erklärt (KHC; Tübingen: Mohr, 1897), 102.
8 Driver and Gray, Commentary on the Book of Job, 1:174.
9 In the Tanakh, גֵּרַשׁ is always local when it refers to an object, and temporal only when it refers to an action.
important theological conclusions regarding after-life. Finally, the phrase אֶחֱזֶהָאֱלוֹהַאֱלֹהַאֱלֹהַאֱלֹהַאֱלֹהַאֱלֹהַאֱלֹהַאֱלֹהַאֱלֹהַאֱלֹהַאֱלֹהַאֱלֹהַאֱלֹהַאֱלֹהַאֱלֹהַאֱלֹהַאֱלֹהַאֱלֹהַa ("I shall behold Eloah") is troublesome, because it is not clear how Job expects this to happen and the beholding of Eloah is not followed by any consequences.

No wonder that the thematic and textual difficulties of v. 26 convinced commentators that the verse is corrupt. Dhorme notes that “Moderns have not scrupled to correct the text, for it seems indeed that the 1st hemistich is hardly susceptible of a grammatical interpretation, whatever meaning is adopted for נַקְפַּה.” Moreover, some commentators found it necessary to rearrange the words in the verse, or the order of the verses. In M.H. Pope’s opinion “Various emendations have been proposed, but are scarcely worth discussing.”

This article proposes reading v. 26 (sans אֱלֹהַ) as the continuation of v. 25. It expresses Job’s conviction that God would eventually vindicate him and would heal his skin and flesh. From this perspective, vv. 25–28 could be paraphrased: “Job is certain that God exists and would eventually manifest himself on earth. He knows also, that this God would heal his wounds and attach his skin to the flesh. This is the God that he holds on to and his eyes will see. His innards pine in his bosom to hear his friends say: ‘Why do we persecute him? What evidence was found about him?’”

It will be shown that this perspective can be obtained with minor emendations of the MT and that it thematically fits the gist of Job’s reply and attitude.

**Analysis**

Commentators usually consider v. 26 in the context of the preceding and following verses. With regard to vv. 25–27, they focus on the following questions: a) who is the “redeemer” (גָאֵל); b) what is the redeemer’s function; and, c) when, during Job’s existence, would the redeemer assume his role? Within this framework of concerns, most of the interpretations of v. 26 essentially fall into three categories. These are distinguished by the perception that Job encounters God being dead, alive, or resurrected. On these fundamental distinctions is superimposed a wide range of exegetical nuances. Indeed, the extensive exegetical literature on v. 26 shows that numerous interpretative approaches have been suggested, which introduced significant differences of meaning. Consequently, the following discussion should be considered a bare summary.

**The Versions**

The ancient translations have obviously been baffled by v. 26. This is clear from the incoherent translation of the LXX, the

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10 Dhorme, *Commentary*, 284.
11 M.H. Pope, Job (AB 15; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1986), 147.
incomplete rendition of the Peshitta, the paraphrase of the Targum, and the theological allusions of the Vulgate.

The LXX attaches three words of the preceding v. 25 and reads, “to rise up upon the earth my skin that endures these: for these things have been accomplished to me of the Lord” (ἐπὶ γῆς ἀναστῆσαι τὸ δέρμα μου τὸ ἀναστλοῦν τούτα παρὰ γὰρ Κύριον ταῦτα μοι συνετελέσθη). This reading a) attaches יָעַר עֹפֶרֶךְ instead of יָעַר עֹפֶרֶךְ; b) reads לֹא אֲנָנס instead of לֹא אֲנָנס; and, c) it is not clear whether it read אוֹאֵל or אוֹאֵל, and if it did not read these words what it read instead. The LXX’s emendations do not result in a cogent translation. Consequently, it is doubtful that it had a text which differed from MT.

Peshitta translates v. 26, “Although devouring worms have covered my skin and my flesh.” This reading a) omits וַאֲחר; b) reads וַאֲחר instead of וַאֲחר; d) reads אוֹאֵל instead of אוֹאֵל; and, e) it is not clear whether it read אוֹאֵל or אוֹאֵל, and if it did not read these words what it read instead. The emendation results in an incomplete verse. The LXX’s emendations do not result in a cogent translation. Consequently, it is doubtful that it had a text which differed from MT.

Peshitta translates v. 26, “Altho devouring worms have covered my skin and my flesh.” This reading a) assumes that אוֹאֵל = “that will be” (גוֹדַה דָּה); b) takes אוֹאֵל = “swollen” (הַפָּרָה) and, adds “again” (דָּה). The meanings assigned to אוֹאֵל and אוֹאֵל are not attested in the Tanakh or Hebrew language. It is not clear why swelling of Job’s skin will make him see God again, since nothing so far stated that he has seen God.

Vulgate renders v. 26, “And I shall be clothed again with my skin, and in my flesh I will see my God” (et rursum circumdabor pelle mea et in carne mea videbo deum meum). This reading a) takes אוֹאֵל = “and again” (et rursum); b) apparently understands אוֹאֵל as being derived from אוֹאֵל II (“go around”) in the sense of “surround with flesh”; c) takes “in my flesh” in the sense of “bodily form”; and, d) adds “my” (אֶתְנָה). The plural of אוֹאֵל is, however, problematic. Driver and Gray note that “Hontheim has recently defended this interpretation; but he can account for the plural only by the very forced suggestion that its subject is אוֹאֵל used collectively of the bones of the body with the sense of I—at the last day I shall be (prophetic perfect) surrounded with my skin!”


15 Cf. KJV. Peshitta considers v. 27 as the complement of v. 26. It reads v. 27 as follows: “Yet, if my eyes shall see God, then my heart also will see the light; but now my body is consumed.” It is impossible to reconcile this translation with MT. Moreover, by itself it makes no sense.

16 Driver and Gray, Job II, 130.
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Later Exegesis

Dhorme felt that most of the translations of v. 26 can be reduced in the final analysis to just two. These are “that from the skeleton covered with its skin, that from my flesh, I shall see God” and “when this skin will have fallen into shreds, divested of my flesh, I shall see God.” In what follows, I present an overview of these two views, and for completeness sake, I include also attempts to view the verse as indication for resurrection.

1. Resurrection view: The verse expresses the conviction that Job will be resurrected in flesh, and will receive his vindication from God. This view has few modern followers. It has been recognized that were the notion of resurrection available to the author it would have obviated the entire theme of the book of Job. E.J. Kissane says: “If Job believed in the resurrection and the possibility of reward after death, he would have had an adequate solution of the problem of suffering, and the whole discussion would have been futile.” Similarly, G. Fohrer observes:


Moreover, it is also difficult to anchor this view in the MT. For instance, Luther translated v. 26, “und werde darnach mit dieser meiner Haut umgeben warden und in meinem Fleisch Gott sehen.” There is no way that בד מַעַר יָבָא could possibly mean “und werde darnach mit meiner Haut umgeben warden.” Moreover, “in meinem Fleisch Gott sehen” is not a complete sentence.

17 Dhorme, Job, 284. Note that these translations delete נקפו־זאת.
18 E.J. Kissane, The Book of Job (Dublin: Browne & Nolan, 1939), 120.
19 G. Fohrer, Das Buch Hiob (KAT 16; Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1963), 318.
This fundamental perspective is adopted by Vulgate, Clemens Romanus, Origen, Jerome, Augustine, Luther, Knabenbauer, Honthheim, Royer, Michaelis (both), Shultens, Hier, and more recently Ceuppens, Young, Schilling, Prado, Logan, Andersen, etc.

The resurrection view persisted in both the Catholic and Evangelical churches till the seventeenth century, where it was included in the Formula concordiae, catechisms, and church songs.\(^{21}\) M. Witte noted recently, “As for Job 19,25–26, an explicitly theological interpretation of resurrection can be found solely among Christian writers in late antiquity. This gives rise to the conclusion that it is a Christian gloss.”\(^{22}\)

2. Ante mortem view: The verse expresses the conviction that Job will see God while he is still alive. This view is based on the belief that hope for personal resurrection is not evident in at least the rest of the book, and that despite Job’s death-wishes he still expects to be vindicated in his life. It seems to echo what actually happens in the book, and suggests restoration of Job’s relation with God. Kissane observes

It is very difficult to reconcile this view with the view attributed to Job in the rest of the book. In the early speeches he was still hopeful of a respite from suffering before death; but in his recent speeches, nothing stands out so prominently as the hopelessness of his case . . . Job’s wish that his words were written on a scroll or engraved on a rock has no meaning if he expected to be alive for his vindication.\(^{23}\)

Fohrer remarks on the ante mortem view

Daher hat man häufig angenommen, daß Hiob das Eingreifen Gottes noch zu Lebzeiten erwarte. Aber in welcher Weise und mit welchem Ziel erwartet er es? Man hat im Text die Hoffnung ausgesprochen gefunden, daß Gott den Hiob auf Erden wieder gesund machen und von neuem beglücken werde. Doch gerade diese Hoffnung hat Hiob längst aufgegeben (7,6; 9,25; 17,15f.; 30,23).\(^{24}\)

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\(^{23}\) Kissane, *Job*, 120.

Moreover, it is also difficult to anchor this view in the MT. For instance, Dhorme renders v. 26, “And that, behind my skin, I shall stand up, and from my flesh I shall see Eloah.” This translation assumes that נִזְקַפְתּי is a corruption of נָקַפְתּי, the Niphal form of נָקַפּ to be erect, raise up. However, the root נָקַפּ occurs only twice in the Tanakh (Ps 145:14 and 146:8), never in the Niphal, and always as the opposite of כָּפַף (“to be bent, bend down”). The verb נִזְקַפְתּי does not convey the same notion as “I shall stand up” (א קוּם). Furthermore, the translation assumes that there is some significance to “behind my skin.” However, the image of standing behind one’s skin makes little sense. Finally, the relevance of Job’s “stand[ing] up” is not clear.

This fundamental perspective is adopted by Rashi, Ibn Ezra, Ralbag, Chrysostom, Eichhorn, Justi, Köstlin, Hirzel, Heiligelstedt, Hitzig, Stickel, Budde, Kautzsch, Hahn, Le Hir, Crampion, Devine, Ball, Brunston, Lindblom, Delitzsch, Dhorme, Peters, Rongy, Spadafora, Tur-Sinaï, Chaham, Sutcliffe, Meek, Gordis, Whybray, Habel, Hartley, Clines, etc.

3. Post mortem view: The verse expresses the conviction that Job will see God after his death. This perspective, held by many modern commentators, assumes that Job would be, after death, still able to sense God and appreciate this event. However, after his death Job cannot expect personal reconstitution as a man, since this notion started to filter into Judaism only at the end of the

logica 2 (1940), 65–77.

25 Dhorme, Job, 284–85. Dhorme understands נבשִׁיר as being “through my flesh.” However, seeing “through my flesh” is a physiologically strange notion; rather unlike the beloved gazing through the window (Song 2:9).

26 A. Erickson, “ ‘Without My Flesh I Will See God’: Job’s Rhetoric of the Body,” JBL 132/2 (2013), 295–313. Erickson comments in this regard: “Many interpreters who translate ‘in my flesh’ do so because they assert that ‘without flesh’ does not make sense in the context. However, many such arguments are based on an overly literal interpretation of Job’s words. They do not explore the metaphorical aspects of the expression” (ibid., 308). In Erickson’s view Job’s words in v. 26 allude to “an ironic fantasy that entails escaping the testimony he wears constantly: his flesh (as opposed to a robe of righteousness and a cloak of justice as in Job 29:14)” (ibid., 310).

27 H.H. Rowley (Job [Century Bible; Melbourne: Nelson, 1970], 174) states the following:

In 14.21f. Job had spoken of the ignorance of the dead of all that transpires on earth. Here he is borne by the inner logic of his faith in God, despite the suffering he believes to come from the hand of God, to look for a break in that ignorance, and the immense relief of knowing that his innocence has been vindicated. Though there is no full grasping of a belief in a worthwhile Afterlife with God, this passage is a notable landmark in the progress toward such a belief. Support for the ante mortem view is Jub 23:30–31, which is relatively late (100 BCE). One may well wonder why this notion would occur only in the much older Job. The belief of feeling after death, in particular that a person can still sense the pain of his deteriorating flesh and can mourn his fate, occurs in Berachot 18b.
bIBLICAL PERIOD.28 THE PARTICULARS OF SUCH POSSIBILITY ARE AT BEST NEBULOUS, SINCE NO ALLUSION TO IT OCCURS IN THE Tanakh. ROWLEY STATES IN THIS REGARD:

Two things seem to be clear. Job is assured that his Vindicator will arise to vindicate his innocence, and that he himself will see God. If, as seems probable, the Vindicator is God, this means that he will be aware of his vindication. That this vindication is not expected until after Job’s death is likely, since he has cried for his blood to demand satisfaction. But in what form Job will be conscious of vindication must remain obscure.29

However, it is not only the form but the consciousness that is at doubt. It is very difficult to reconcile this view with the notion of Sheol in this book and other books of the Tanakh.30 Indeed, Job says explicitly that after he dies God would not be able to find him anymore (7:21).31

Furthermore, it is also difficult to anchor this view in the MT. For instance, Pope understands v. 26 as saying: “Even after my skin is flayed, without my flesh I shall see God.”32 He adds “even”; takes נָקָפֵו = “is flayed,” though Job was not flayed alive or was expecting to be flayed; does not account for the plural of נָקָפֵו; omits זאת; and understands מִבָּשָרְיָי = “away from my flesh” (i.e., without my flesh). In Speer’s view “Überall wohin man sich wende, verstoße die Unsterblichkeitslehre gegen die Ökonomie der Schrift und bringe Widerspruch und Zerstörung in sie.”33

This fundamental perspective is adopted by Welte, Schlottmann, Ewald, Dillman, Wellhausen, Duhm, Renan, Hitzig, Segond, Smend, Driver and Gray, Steurnagel, Koenig, Peake, Kraeling, Hölscher, Oesterley and Robinson, Kaminka, Barton, Fohrer, Pope, Rowley, Davidson, Strauß, Weiser, Horst, Erickson, etc.

4. EMENDATIONS. Driver and Gray observe, “The uncertainties and difficulties of MT in this verse being so great, it is not surprising that attempts at emendation have been numerous and ingenious, if not convincing.”34

a. Emended Readings, for instance:

Cheyne emends v. 26 in order to produce the following reading: עֵדִיָי פִקָתַּאֲו תִיָוּמְשֹרְרֵיָיֹאחֲז הָא ל ה ("My Witness will bring to pass my desires, and a curse will take hold of my foes").35

29 Rowley, Job, 174.
32 Pope, Job, 139.
34 Driver and Gray, Job II, 130.
C. Siegfried reads, "and to revive my skin, which this, namely the leprosy, must endure, and from God was all this done to me". G. Bickell proposed two emended readings: "and after my witness marks this and from God I see these", and "My witness will take vengeance for this, but a curse would seize my adversaries" etc.

Duhm suggests for v. 26a the emendation: "Und aufstehen wird ein anderer als mein Zeuge. Und aufrichten wird der sein Zeichen." He attaches v. 26b to the following verse.

Typically, the emended readings present in awkward Hebrew notions that are harder to envision than those in MT. Driver and Gray observe, "but if the textual evidence is to be so largely disregarded, it would be easy to construct distichs in more exact parallelism," and it can be added, better Hebrew.

b. Emendation of particular words:

— omit (LXX), (Beer, Ball).

“mine adversaries” (Kennicott), (Bickell, Beer, Duhm, Gaster), (Cheyne), (Richter), (Terrien).

(Emended) (Bickell), (Bickell), (Beer, Gaster), (Richter).

(Beer, Gaster, Sicre Diaz, Rowley), (Targum, Stickel).

(Budde, Hölscher, Fohrer), (Beer), (Kissane), (Dohme).

— omit (Beer, Gaster, Duhm).

— omit (Dhorme).


57 G. Bickell, Das Buch Job Nach Anleitung der Septuaginta und der Septuaginta (Vienna: Karl Gerold, 1894), ad loc. Cf Driver and Gray, Job II, 131.

58 Duhm (Hiob, 103) explains, "Das Zeichen, das der Bluträcher aufrichtete, kennen wir nicht, aber es ist selbstverständlich, dass der Bluträcher an der Leiche des getöteten Mörder ein Zeichen hinterlassen musste, ähnlich wie es die Vollstrecker der Vehme thaten, um die Tötung von einem gemeinen Mord zu unterscheiden."

59 Driver and Gray, Job II, 132.

Many of these emendations are orthographically unlikely and result in linguistically awkward texts.

5. Unique interpretations.

I. B. Kennicott translates v. 26: “And after that my adversaries have mangled me thus, even in my flesh shall I see God.” He takes אֹחֲז ה = “after,” עורי = “mine adversaries,” זאת נקפו = “have mangled me thus,” and מבשרי = “even in my flesh.” However, the book states that Job was afflicted only by Satan. Moreover, Job could not have possible construed his disease coming from a number of sources representing various adversaries. More likely Job’s disease suggested to Job and ancient readers that he is being punished for sins committed.

II. N.H. Tur-Sinai: Tur-Sinai renders v. 26: “After my body let them break it up! Out of my flesh I want to see (my) God.” He believes that זאת נקפו refers to the inscription in stone (vv. 23–24), and Job asks in v. 26a that it be smashed upon his death, and that in his lifetime he would see God. Note that “after my body” is not a complete thought, and it is disconnected from the rest of the verse. Moreover, Driver and Gray mention Budde’s observation that

[W]hereas בּוּר by itself is often used for the entire body as contrasted with the פֶּשֶׁת or לָל (e.g. 14:22, Ps. 16:6 63:7), רוע is not, but is used strictly of the outside covering of the body, the skin (30:9, La. 4:8 5:11, Jer. 13:23), and combined with רֵרָנָה requires the latter to be used in its specific sense of the flesh under the skin (75).

III. Kissane has for v. 26, “And after my skin is stripped off, did I but see Him, without my flesh were I to behold God.” He considers v. 26 a conditional clause; such sentences, without a conditional particle occur in the book of Job and elsewhere (5:24; 19:18; 23:10). Kissane says that Job “does not assert that he will see God, but that if he were to see God, he

41 Kennicott MS 311 has וַאֲחַזְוָה אֱלֹהִים; MS 200 omits עורי; MS 48 omits אֲחַזְוָה אֱלֹהִים.

42 B. Kennicott, Remarks on Select Passages in the Old Testament: To Which Are Added Eight Sermons (Oxford: Prince and Cooke, 1787), 222.

43 A. Chaham, Sepher ʾyob (Jerusalem: Mossad HaRav Kook, 1981), 150. Chaham also takes זאת נקפו as referring to the carving of his words. He explains that v. 26 expresses a change in Job’s desire: he wants his words to be carved in the flesh under his skin, rather than in stone. The practicality of this request is questionable.

44 N.H. Tur-Sinai, The Book of Job (revised edition; Jerusalem: Kirya-th Sepher, 1967), 306. Tur-Sinai’s contention (ibid., 302) that vv. 23–24 are challenging questions does not fit the tenor of Job’s argument and is contextually doubtful.

45 Driver and Gray, Job II, 129.
would see Him as friendly and no longer hostile.”

However, the conditional does not resolve the problems with v. 26. One may well ask why seeing God resolves Job’s complaint. Indeed, Job eventually sees God, still most commentators agree that he obtained no answer. Moreover, why would seeing God change his attitude toward God from hostile to friendly?

Kissane’s interpretation is obtained by a) taking אחרא = “after”; b) emending נקפוָזאתָ to נקפוָא; c) linking v. 26 to v. 27; and understanding “from my flesh” = “without my flesh,” as a “disembodied spirit.” His emendation consists of a revocalization, rearrangement of letters, and assumption of 1/7 and 1/1 confusions. The notion of a human becoming a “disembodied spirit” capable of seeing and feeling “friendliness” or “hostility” is inconceivable. In Kissane’s own words “Such a thought would have been impossible to the writer considering his idea of Sheol.”

IV. A. Kaminka paraphrases vv. 25–27, “After my suffering has already annihilated my skin and flesh, after my flesh is gone, when a redeemer of my righteousness and a recognizer of my innocence would arise, I will see God agree with him, as I see it now but no one else, and my innards waste from loneliness (in my bosom) because there is no empathy.” This poignant paraphrase cannot be anchored in the MT.

V. Stier translates v. 26, “Und dann mein Helfer sich aufrichtet, meinen Zeugen shau ich: Gott.” He takes אחרא = dann, רועי = mein Helfer, נקפוָא = sich aufrichtet, and מָכָּשׂ = meinen Zeugen. However, it is difficult to comprehend, without elaborate additional explanation, why seeing God would be equivalent to seeing “meinen Zeugen.” Indeed, Job insists that there could be no “Zeugen” (witness).

VI. N.C. Habel translates v. 26, “After, that is, my skin is peeled off! But from my flesh I will behold Eloah.” He splits v. 26 into two parts, and attaches v. 26a to v. 25 and v. 26b to v. 27. Habel comments:

It seems best, especially in view of the literary design, to link v. 26a with the preceding verse and simply recognize that Job believes his defender will rise at the end to plead his cause even though his skin has peeled off in death.

46 Kissane, Job, 114 and 121. Kissane finds support for taking v. 26 as a conditional clause Peshitta’s “If my eyes were to see God, they would see light.”

47 C. Bruston, “Pour l’exégèse de Job 19,25–29,” ZAW 26 (1906), 143–47. Bruston suggests that Job sees in a vision what God would do after his death. God would intervene only after Job’s skin has been battered (26a). Still, in his flesh and while alive he would see this intervention. This view seems to be too artificial.

48 The 1/7 confusion is attested, e.g., in 1 Sam 14:47 where we find יִשְׁתַּי instead of יִשְׁתֵּי. Neither of the two confusions is attested in the Ketib-Qere apparatus.

49 Kissane, Job, 120.

50 A. Kaminka, Peirush Hegioni le-Sepher Job (Tel Aviv: Yavneh, 1949), 37.

51 F. Stier, Das Buch Ijjob (München: Kösel Verlag, 1954), 96.
Thus the two terms "אחרון" ‘at the last’ (v. 25b), and the related preposition "אחר", ‘after’ (v. 26a), complement each other and point to a time ‘after’ death when Job’s vindication happens (cf. 14:13).\(^{52}\) Habel’s translation implies that: a) he reads "אחרון"; b) he takes "אחר" to mean “that is”; c) he does not account for the plural "נקפו"; and, d) does not explain the consequent triple repetition of seeing God.

About five decades ago, H.H. Rowley said about vv. 25–27, “In fact this is one of the most cryptic passages in the book, and both text and interpretation are far from sure.”\(^{53}\) Most commentators would concur with this statement even today. In the following section a new interpretation of v. 26 is suggested, which exploits some likely scribal omissions for obtaining a coherent sense of this verse.

**Proposed Solution**

The approach that is adopted in this study for understanding the difficult v. 26 rests on an appreciation of Job’s immediate and concrete source of suffering—the grievous sores from the sole of his foot unto the crown of his head (2:7) and the blackened peeling skin (30:30). While identification of Job’s affliction is disputed, it is obvious from the text that Job’s body was covered with sores, the sores were visible to others, and that Job was in pain (2:13).\(^{54}\) In terms of disability studies, Job is afflicted with a disease (שחין), he is impaired (חרש), and he is disabled (ישב).\(^{55}\) L.J.M. Classen says:

> We see, for instance, harrowing self-descriptions of his diseased and disabled body (30:16–19), as well as the social and physical isolation Job is experiencing due to his disability (30:1–15). One text, Job 19:13–20, is representative of Job’s anguish. In this description, something of the


\(^{55}\) R. Raphael, “Things Too Wonderful: A Disabled Reading of Job,” *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 31/4 (2004), 399–424. Raphael explains (399–400) that “disability studies focus on the disabled body in its manifold locations in time and space: the history of disability, the metaphysics or theologies that attempt to place deviant bodies in a cosmic order, the social construction of disability by the able-bodied, and the lived experience of people with disabilities.” S. Olyan (*Disability in the Hebrew Bible: Interpreting Mental and Physical Differences* [New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008], 3) defines human “disability” in the Tanakh as being “a physical or mental condition or state impacting negatively on affected categories of persons especially on account of the social meaning and significance attributed to the condition or state in the biblical context.”
dehumanisation and rejection that people living with disability may experience is evident.⁵⁶

From Job’s perspective, his physical affliction caused him constant suffering; he refers to his intense physical and emotional pain repeatedly in his speeches (e.g., 1:20a; 2:8, 13, 3:24; 6:2–4, 10; 7:20b; 9:17, 28a; 11:16a; 16:6a, 9b–c, 12–16a 20a; 17:7a; 19:10–12, 22; 23:2; 30:16b, 18, 27b, 30–31). It also continually manifested to him and any observer his obvious guilt. Thus, while he might have wanted to be considered and related to on a human level (i.e., that being human entails having diseases), he was acutely aware of the theological perspective.⁵⁷

In antiquity, the causes for diseases of individuals were assumed to be personal sin, invasion of demons and evil spirits, witchcraft, inadequate diet and regime, or some combination of these.⁵⁸ Usually illness was perceived as a punitive instrument for transgressions against or breached promises to one of the divinities.⁵⁹ This attitude is also reflected in the Tanakh. Like their ancient Near Eastern neighbors, the authors of the Tanakh believed that physical and mental disabilities most often resulted from divine agency.⁶⁰ For instance, non-obser-


⁵⁹ G. Eknayan, “The Kidneys in the Bible: What Happened?” JBIN 16/12 (2005), 3464–71. Eknayan notes that, “Only in later periods did a special group of healers who were not members of priesthood arise. Even then, sickness continued to be attributed to hostile spirits or the anger of a deity, so medications, no matter how powerful or effective, were expected only to alleviate symptoms. It was the incantations, spells, and prayers recited conjointly that could remove the cause of the disease and cure it.”

⁶⁰ Needless to say, while physical and mental disabilities were often seen in antiquity as resulting from divine agency, they were nonetheless part of societal constructs whereby social hierarchies and inequalities were created, negotiated and maintained. See Olyan,
vance of the commandments of the Torah would result in being hit by a slew of severe diseases (Ex 15:26; Deut 28:22, 27–29, 35) one of which is שחתָרע. For instance, H. Avalos argues that Deut 28:15, 22 make clear that “Yahweh used illness to enforce covenants made with humans. Such covenants promised health and longevity to those who followed Yahweh’s stipulations, but illness and death to those who did not.” He adds that repeatedly “Yahweh employs illnesses to . . . punish evildoers in DtrH and in the Chronicler, and to test Job.”

J. Wilkinson extends this idea to include passages from Exodus, Leviticus, Psalms, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Hosea.

In Job’s case, both he and any observer would consider the sudden affliction with a שחתָרע to be punishment for some transgression. A. Erickson remarks, Job’s language assumes a relationship between divine law and disease and disability, evident in numerous biblical and Mesopotamian texts.

In the ancient Near East, suffering was often understood as evidence of divine judgment on sinful human behavior. Leprosy or a similar skin disease (garābu and saḥaršubbȗ) was ‘one of the most unambiguous sanctions’ for sin in the ancient world. Job’s body, clothed in disintegrating skin (see 7:5), would likely have suggested to ancient readers divine sanction for sin.

F.R. Magdalene argues that the thought pattern emerging from this worldview is as follows: “If the gods and their law are perfect, and, if disability, disease, and disaster are divine punishment for sin committed, then such traumas and tragedies must be the moral responsibility of those who experience them. The sufferer’s punishment is always deserved.” Job’s dilemma is seeing obvious evidence of sin on his skin, but knowing in his mind that there could be no sin. Thus, the healing of Job’s


62 E. Ebeling, Keilschrifttexte aus Assur religiösen Inhalts (2 vols.; WUANT, 28; Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1915), 1:31–32. The texts indicate that a human’s suffering constitutes legal judgment for his or her guilt.

63 K. van der Toorn, Sin and Sanction in Israel and Mesopotamia: A Comparative Study (SSN 22; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1985), 73.


66 Classen (“Job, Theology and Disability,” 57) detects in the book of Job “glimpses of a counter narrative that moves toward a new kind
sores would have removed the stigma of being a sinner, and restored his position vis-à-vis God and society. Healing of Job’s skin would be a clear and visible sign of his vindication. In v. 26 Job expresses the certainty that his redeemer would heal him.

This understanding is obtained by reading נקְפָר נָהָר “and he would unite” instead MT נָהָר נַקְפָּר “and afterwards.” Such reading assumes a ר/ו confusion and revocalization. The ר/ו confusion is, however, well attested in the Tanakh, and the vocalization of the text in the Tanakh is rather late, occurring after the original text was probably already corrupted. In particular, it is notable that in Isa 66:17 some read נָהָר נָהָר instead of נָהָר נָהָר. The verbal form of נָהָר is rare; it occurs only in Ezra 21:21. In later Hebrew, Jastrow mentions examples of the participle passive שָרְוָהַדָּו in Yalkut Genesis 62 (in the sense closed up) and Genesis Rabba sec. 38 (in the sense joined, united). The rarity of the verb might have been the cause of the ר/ו confusion in our verse.

The problematic phrase נקְפָר נָהָר is taken as being an aside, directed to the friends and meaning “mark this, note this.” The verb נקְפָר is the 3d person masculine plural Pri’el perfect of נָהָר I. This verbal form occurs only here. Lexica mention only three instances of occurrences in the Tanakh (Isa 10:34; 24:13; Job 19:26). However, it is possible that Isa 29:1 and Lev 19:27 are also instances of נָהָר I, if they are understood to refer to marking off. Mandelkern observes that the root נקְפָר I is kindred to נָהָרֶה, which could have the meaning “mark, note” (Am 6:1), and it is notable that the Pri’el of נָהָר is associated of speech regarding disability and theology, particularly to what it means to be human.”

67. One finds in the Ketib-Leqen apparatus this confusion in 2 Sam 13:37 (Keil) but נָהָר נָהָר נָהָר (Qere); 2 Kgs 16:6 (K) but נָהָר נָהָר נָהָר (Q); Prov 19:19 (K) but נָהָר נָהָר נָהָר (Q); Jer 2:2 (K) but נָהָר נָהָר נָהָר (Q); Jer 31:39 (K) but נָהָר נָהָר נָהָר (Q); and Ezra 8:14 (K) but נָהָר נָהָר נָהָר (Q). In Hab 3:12 LXX reads “you will bring low” (διώκεσθαι), probably reading נָהָר instead of נָהָר, in Hab 3:13 LXX translates נָהָר as “bands or bonds” (διώκεσθαι), implying a reading נָהָר or נָהָר, and in Hab 3:16 LXX translates נָהָר as “of my sojourning” (παράκρατον). This may be a late interpretation, made in the Diaspora, based on the common ר/ו confusion. In his commentary on 1 Chr 1:7, Kimchi notes, “Since the ר and ר are similar in appearance, and among the readers of the genealogies which were written in ancient times, some read a ר and some read a ר, some names were preserved for posterity in two forms with either a ר or a ר.” Kimchi explains that the Tanakh preserved both traditions by recording these names one way in certain locations and the other way in others. For instance, נָהָר (Num 1:14; 7:42; 47; 10:20)/רָהָר (Num 2:14); נָהָר (Gen. 10:4)/רָהָר (1 Chr 1:7, 6), נָהָר (2 Kgs 23:33; 25:21; Jer 39:6; 52:26)/רָהָר (Ezra 16:14), נָהָר (Gen 10:3)/רָהָר (1 Chr 1:6).

68. S. Mandelkern, Veteri Testiamenti Consolationis Hebraicae Alique Chaldaicae (Lipsiae: Viet et Comp., 1896), 29d.

69. M. Jastrow, A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and Midrashic Literature (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Traditional Press, 1903), 38b.
with marking by name (Num 1:17; Ezra 8:20; 1 Chr 12:31; 16:41; 2 Chr 28:15; 31:19). As we shall see, Job is convinced that God would eventually vindicate him and would heal his skin and flesh. This is something that is to happen in the future and therefore could be forgotten. Job believes that it should be noted and recorded in a non-perishable way (vv. 23–24), and serve as a retroactive vindication and manifestation of his trust in God.

Our analysis clearly shows that the phrase עםבשרי והध is problematic, because it suggests that Job would see God but does not mention any consequences of such an encounter. R. Gordis rightly observed: “As has been often noted, the verse cannot refer to Job seeing God after his body decays. Nor, coming after the vision of God, can the passage refer to his present sufferings.” The only other time where עםבשרי occurs is Job 19:22 where the phrase עםבשרי ולא תשבעו literally means “and (eating) from my flesh you are not sated.” However, “from my flesh I will see” makes no sense.

These dilemmas are resolved by not having Job see God at all. Such an understanding can be obtained if v. 26b is read יֹאחֵז וּבֵשֶרֶי אוֹל̣ וּבֵשֶרֶי אָל̣ והָך̣ is relegated to the following verse. The proposed emendation assumes that a י following עםבשרי should be vocalized אָל̣ and יֹאחֵז will be held; a ה̣ in וה� is dropped out by haplography; originally וה� followed אָל̣ and, finally, אָל̣ belongs to the following verse. While this detailing of assumed emendations might appear extensive, it actually does minimal violence to the consonantal text.

The parallelism of עור andبشر in the two cola of v. 26 requires a verb that is synonymous with אחד in the second half of the verse. It seems obvious that יֹאחֵז offers the best option. Absence of the י in the MT can be justified by haplography or by cases of a missing י at the beginning of a word attested to in the Ketib-Qere apparatus (1 Sam 20:2 יעש [Ketib] but"העש [Qere]).

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70 R. Gordis, The Book of Job: Commentary, New Translation, and Special Notes (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1978), 206. Gordis rightly sensed that "نكפו means "mark off." He says, "نكפו is difficult whether derived from נקף I 'strike out' (Ibn Ezra, Wright) whence 'after my skin which they struck off' (BDB), or 'if my skin be crushed' (Hölscher), or from נקף II 'go around off.' The latter root in the Hiphil (Lev. 19:27) has the meaning 'round off,' which suggests for our passage 'mark off'" (ibid.).

71 Some commentators felt that there is a discontinuity between vv. 23–24 and the text that follows. For instance, J.E. Hartley comments that in v. 25, “Job abruptly breaks off his wishful thinking and proclaims his deepest conviction. With the heading אניָידעתי Job affirms that his conviction is firm and decisive. Whereas he has just been speaking hypothetically, he now speaks with assurance as he proclaims: I know that my redeemer lives; in the end he will stand on the dust.” Cf. J.E. Hartley, The Book of Job (NICOT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1988), 292.

72 Gordis, Job, 206.
A NEW INTERPRETATION OF JOB 19:26

[Qere], Isa 28:15 [K] but יבּוּר [Q], Jer 50:8 [K] but יבּוּר [Q], Ezra 47:10 [K] but יבּוּר [Q]. V. 27 has a demonstrative tenor. The demonstrative זה occurs thirteen times in Job and the phrase X + זה, where X a name of the deity, occurs frequently in the Tanakh (Ex 15:2; Isa 23:13; 25:9; Ps 24:8–10; 48:15; Neh 9:18; 1 Sam 6:20). Finally, in v. 27 the form ל + זה is attested in 2 Sam 2:21. The suggested text critical approach essentially relies on the typical scribal error of haplography. However, it is possible that already in antiquity this typical scribal error served as rationalization for making tendentious changes that resulted in the MT.

In the interpretation proposed here, the emended v. 26 reads יהוה וּמָבָרִי (נקפו−זה) עָורִי וְאִיחֵד “and he will unite my skin (note this) and from my flesh will it be held.” This reading makes eminent sense. Job, expresses in v. 26 his certainty that his redeemer would heal his wounds and attach his hanging skin to his flesh. He wants his friends to note what he said, and perhaps bring about a change in their attitude, as will be shown in the following section. The proposed reading also explains a notable omission in the epilogue, which does not mention Job’s restored health. If the proposed reading is correct, then the author did not have to mention the restoration of Job’s health. Any ancient reader would have understood that God’s manifestation to Job would have automatically included a full restoration of his health as Job describes in v. 26.


74 In contrast to v. 20 where the skin hangs on the bones or flesh without skin sticks to the bones. Cf. 7:5.


For the Babylonians the aetiology of disease and sickness was situated in the realm of the gods. Falling ill was seen as a sign that the patient had lost the equilibrium he ideally lived in. Either some god had turned against him and through physical contact had placed the sickness directly inside the human body, or the personal protective god had left the person open to attacks by demons or ill-wishing human beings . . . The reconciliation of the patient with the god is, therefore, essential for healing the patient . . .

Chaham (Sepher ʾyob, 331 n. 108) notes that the phrase (שבה) שבית, which is used several times with respect to nations that have been exiled and then returned to their homeland, indicates that Job was cured and able to return to his home. The phrase means literally “returned the captives,” but could also mean in a more general sense “restore fortunes,” which would logically also include his healing.
CONTEXT

In v. 25, just before v. 26, Job refers to a “redeemer” who would make a dramatic change in his condition. Who is Job’s redeemer (נְפָלָה)? Commentators were misled by the forensic function of the נְפָלָה to the point of attributing to him appearance in a court. However, the function of the נְפָלָה, as described in the emended v. 26, makes it abundantly clear that the redeemer in v. 25 who will heal Job can be only God. The sequence of disasters that befell Job could be only perceived as being a heavenly punishment and consequently his healing could also be only a heavenly act. Indeed, the strictly mono-


77 Some consider v. 25b using legal language. Clines (Job 1–20, 460) notes, “The ‘last’ (גאֲלִי) to rise in a lawsuit is presumably the winner of the dispute; we have no real parallels to this usage, and it is true that in the dispute with God in this book, it is Job himself who literally has the last word (42:2–6).” Cf. S. Mowinckel, “Hiobs gōʾēl und Zeuge im Himmel,” in K. Budde (ed.), Vom Alten Testament: Festschrift Karl Marti (BZAW 41; Giessen: Verlag Alfred Töpelmann, 1925), 207–22 (208). Traditional interpretation assumed that Job is identifying God as his redeemer. Several modern interpreters found it illogical that God would defend Job against God. They identify the redeemer in this passage as the heavenly witness that Job believed would testify for him (16:19). The redeemer is an arbiter, one other than God, who will arise to defend Job before God. The proposed emendation circumvents this difficulty.

78 The assumption that Job’s “redeemer” pleads his case, led to the following main interpretations: a) Job’s “words” in v. 23 would metaphorically argue his case; b) some heavenly being, other than God, will plead Job’s case before God; and, c) God is the “redeemer.” There are obvious problems with each of the three interpretations. The proposed emendation of v. 26 eliminates the difficulties associated with the nature of the “redeemer,” since it views the redeemer as a healer rather than a litigant. Also, as H. Strauss (Hiob, 2. Teilband, 191–42,17 [2 vols.; BKAT, 16; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2000], 2:17) observes, “Alle diejenigen, die in irgendeiner Weise den נפָלָה als von Gott unterschieden verstehen
theistic book of Job could but see God as the healer (Ex 15:26; Deut 32:39). Moreover, this divine monopoly on healing perhaps explains the hostile view of physicians, who are sanctioned and enjoined throughout most of the Tanakh, and even Job calls them “physicians of no value” (Job 13:4).79

The term נאֵל also functions as one of God’s titles. This notion is rooted in the interpretation of Israel’s deliverance from Egyptian bondage (e.g., Ex 6:6; 15:13; Ps 74:2; 77:16). It rests on the theological rationale: since God brought Israel into existence as a nation, he recognizes his obligation to deliver them from all hostile foes.80 Thus, God is considered to be the redeemer from Babylonian Exile (Isa 41:14; 43:1–7, 14; 44:22, 23, 24; 49:7–9, 26) and in personal relations the avenger of wrong (Ps 19:15; 119:154; Prov 23:11). Gordis rightly comments, “In view of the uncompromising monotheism of the Book of Job, there is no basis for postulating a third, intermediate being either as a kinsman in our passage, or as an arbiter (9:33), or as a witness (6:1). . . It is God to whom Job appeals and whom he sees rising to vindicate even in the distant future.”81 Indeed, as F.I. Andersen says, “verses 25–27 are so tightly knit that there should be no doubt that the redeemer is God.”82

Job knows that God exists and is active (גאֵל), and that He will eventually heal him.83 He wants this knowledge noted by his friends (גאֵלָךְ) and recorded (vv. 23–24). Weiser observes, “Während in V. 25 der entscheidende Akt der erhofften Erhörung Rechtfertigung Hiobs in der göttlichen Perspektive, d. h. von Gott her gesehen wird, ist in V. 26–27 dasselbe Ereignis unter dem menschlichen Gesichtswinkel als die Begegnung Hiobs mit Gott dargestellt.”84

In v. 27 Job goes on to describe the God that he holds on to. This meaning is obtained by repointing MT אֶחֱזֶה־לִי “I will see for myself” and reading instead אֹחֵז ה־לי “I will hold on
Twice in the book of Psalms God is depicted as metaphorically holding on to the righteous in a gesture of support (Ps 73:23; 139:10). Job reverses this metaphor by stating that he holds on to God in this plea for vindication, and perhaps has in mind the same notion as in אֱחָזֶה לִי אֶל רֵאֵי מַרְתִּי (23:11; see also 17:9).

The minor emendation of MT אֱחָזֶה לִי into אֹחֵז הָּלִי echoes the holding of the skin by the flesh (יֹאחֵז וְמַבָּשָּׂרִי) in v. 26. The author, by cleverly choosing the verb אֹחֵז in both places, succeeded in indicating that Job holds on to a healing and vindicating God. Moreover, the God that he holds on to is understandable and apparent (וּיִרְאֵה וְעֵינַי) and does not require attestation by anyone else (זָרְפָּן). It is a God that is immediately sensed and understood (as when he heals Job of his affliction), not one that is described by the teaching of tradition and testimony of the ancients.

MT v. 27b, כִּלֶּה מָרְגִּילָה בְּחַקִּי, “my kidneys are spent in my bosom,” dealing with Job’s desires by means of a kidneys metaphor, naturally belongs to v. 28. The emended v. 28, reading כִּלֶּה מָרְגִּילָה בְּחַקִּי וּמַרְגִּיָּה דְּרָפְרִי, echoes vv. 21–22. The kidneys, always used in the plural (כִּלֶּה), are mentioned more than 30 times in the Bible, and twice in Job (16:13; 19:27). In ancient Hebrew “psychology” they were considered the seat of conscience (Jer 11:20; 17:10; 20:12; Ps 7:10; 16:7; 26:2), temperament, desire, emotions, prudence, vigor, and wisdom (Ps 16:7; 73:21; Prov 23:16; Isa 34:6; Jer 12:2). Thus, the phrase כִּלֶּה מָרְגִּילָה בְּחַקִּי should be understood as describing Job’s deep sorrow that his friends continue to prosecute him (v. 22). He pines that they become friendlier and less doctrinaire. He strongly desires that they do a “reality check,” and say: מַרְגִּיָּה דְּרָפְרִי וּמַרְגִּיָּה דְּרָפְרִי, “Why do we pursue him? Has any root of fault been found in him?”

Chaham observes that any time הדּוֹל is followed by the imperfect some deliberation or doubt is expressed. The language of v. 28 requires that it should be understood as an expression of hesitance or reconsideration by Job’s friends. Job desires that his friends confront the reality of his innocence and see the senselessness in their relentless pursuit. The proposed

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85 In MT אֱחָזֶה לִי repeats וּרָמָה by haplography, harmonizes the tenses of the last three verbs. Job’s eyes will see God’s action when his skin is cured.
86 This minor emendation, assuming omission of the ו in יָרָמָה by haplography, harmonizes the tenses of the last three verbs. Job’s eyes will see God’s action when his skin is cured.
87 A. Merx, Das Gedicht von Hiob (Jena: Mauke’s Verlag, 1871), 96. Merx also attaches v. 27b to v. 28.
89 Chaham, Sepher ʾyob, 151 n.33.
90 A.B. Ehrlich, Randglossen zur hebräischen Bibel, VI. Psalmen, Sprüche, und Hiob (7 vols.; Leipzig: J.C. Hinricks, 1918), 258. With regard
reading of v. 28, ב instead of ב, contains the assumption of י/ו confusion, which occurs many times in the Tanakh and is well attested in the Ketib-Qere apparatus.91

The logical flow of vv. 21–28 is apparent. Job begins with a plea to his friends for compassion (vv. 21–22) and concludes with a similar reference to his friends (v. 28), delineating by this inclusio the thematic unit. He would like his words to become a permanent record for humanity (vv. 23–24). What these words are is spelled out in vv. 25–26:

ואני ידעתי גאלי חי ואחרון על עפר
וְיֹאחֵז וּבְמֵאֵשׁי עורי
וְאִחֵד יקום.

The message is short, but says it all. Job expresses his steadfast belief in an involved (חי) God and his eventual personal vindication, manifested by being healed. This, he states to his friends, is the God that he holds on to. Job concludes by addressing his friends with his deep seated wish (v. 28); that they ask themselves honestly “Why do we pursue him? Has any root of fault been found in him?”

Job’s speech ends with a warning to his friends (v. 29), which is poignant in its skepticism. Since he is innocent, they are false accusers; and that is a crime deserving severe punishment (Deut 19:16–21).92 They should know that there is a Judge and that they are not immune to judgment.

CONCLUSION

Gordis notes that:

It is impossible to summarize, let alone discuss, the vast variety of emendations and interpretations of this passage [vv. 23–29]. Virtually the only element of consensus among moderns, as against older exegetes, is that the passage does not refer to resurrection after death in view of Job’s clear-cut rejection of the doctrine in 14:7–23.93

Perhaps, another consensus can be detected in commentators’ implicit or explicit indication that the original text is corrupt or

91 Chaham, Sepher ʾyob, 151 n. 33. Chaham implicitly suggests that MT reading might be a scribe’s interpretative correction. The reading ב is in accord with the Versions (except Peshitta) and about 100 MSS; it is also in harmony with the preceding ו. There are at least 294 י/ו confusions in the Ketib-Qere apparatus.

92 This understanding requires reading יקָם instead of יֵקֵם. In the early square script, י and ק differed only in the extension of the top bar. The Ketib-Qere apparatus attests to the י/ק confusion in 2 Sam 13:37 where עָמְרָת (Ketib) but עָמַרָת (Qere); Prov 20:21 where מַעְבָּדֵה (Q) but מַעֲבָּדָה (K); Song 1:17 where מַעֲבָּדֵה (Q) but מַעֲבָּדָה (K); Dan 9:29 where מַעֲבָּדֵה (Q) but מַעֲבָּדָה (K); and, 2 Sam 23:25 which has פְּרָיָה (K) but פְּרָיָה (Q); and, 1 Chr 11:27 has פְּרָיָה but פְּרָיָה. Also, Gen 2:14 MT has חֲדֵלָה but the Samaritan Pentateuch has חֲדֵלָה, etc.

93 Gordis, Job, 528.
has been tampered with, and that is why “to look for total logical consistency in these verses is unrealistic.”

This sentiment has guided the text-critical approach to the interpretation of v. 26 in the current study. The proposed reading יֹאחֵז וּמְבּשֵרִי (נקפו־זאת) עורי וְאִחֵד “and he will unite my skin (note this) and from my flesh will it be held,” is obtained by making few minor consonantal emendations in the MT. These emendations can be easily rationalized as being omissions caused by haplography or confusions of similar letters, which occurred in the transcription of the text.

The restored text gives an eminently good intra-verse sense and a solid contextual logic. Job’s declaration would read:

And I know that my redeemer lives, 25
ואני ידעתי גאלי חי
And at last will manifest his self. 26
ואחרון על עפר קום
And he will unite my skin (mark this),
ימְבּשֵרִי יֹאחֵז
And from my flesh will it be held. 27
וְאִחֵד וּמְבּשֵרִי
This is the God that I will hold on to, 28
הָלָךְ אָלָה אָשֶׁר אֲתָחוֹד
And my eyes will see, and not a stranger.
וֹרֵא יִרְאוּ עַד וְאֵל יִרְאוּ
Kidneys in my bosom are longing,
כָּל מְלִית בַּהֲכָן
For you to say: “Why do we pursue him? 29
כִּי תָּאָמַר מְדִינְרְדִּירָל וֹרֵשׁ דַּבָּר נְמַנְאָּב
Has any root of fault been found in him? 30
לֹא זָר יִרְאוּ עַד וְאֵל יִרְאוּ

This text can be paraphrased: “Job is certain that God exists and would eventually manifest himself on earth in his favor. This God would heal his wounds and attach his skin to the flesh. This is the God that he holds on to and his eyes will see (the healing). His innards pine in his bosom to hear his

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94 Whybray, Job, 94.
95 It is possible that the minor changes, which can be rationalized as being scribal errors, have been intentionally introduced to obtain a text that supports a particular theological view. However, whether the changes that were made in the original text were accidental or tendentious they were obviously minimal from the text-critical perspective.
friends say: ‘Why do we persecute him? What evidence was found about him?’”

Delitzsch felt that in vv. 25–28 Job’s “faith is here on the direct road to the hope of a resurrection; we see it germinating and struggling towards the light.”

The emended unit (vv. 25–28), which is consonantally almost identical with MT, shows that no metaphysical connotations can be entertained.

In this unit v. 26 plays a central role. Job expresses in this verse the conviction that God will manifest his vindication by healing him of his affliction. This position is in accord with the views that were current in antiquity.

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97 Such as resurrection in flesh, seeing God in an instant before death, seeing God after death, etc.

98 Erickson (“‘Without My Flesh I Will See God,’ ” 296) argues that, Job overturns traditional images of the disintegrated body, known from the biblical laments, in order to distance his body’s appearance of guilt from the testimony of innocence, in contrast to the psalmists, who petition God to restore them to health, Job uses images of disembodiment and bodily disintegration to separate his broken body from his contention that he is innocent.