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**DAVID KUMMEROW, JOB, HOPEFUL OR
HOPELESS? THE SIGNIFICANCE OF מָוֹת IN JOB
16:19 AND JOB'S CHANGING CONCEPTIONS OF
DEATH**

JOB, HOPEFUL OR HOPELESS? THE SIGNIFICANCE OF **קג** IN JOB 16:19 AND JOB'S CHANGING CONCEPTIONS OF DEATH

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1. INTRODUCTION¹

1.1. Is Job hopeful or hopeless? Judging from the seemingly disparate and incompatible views of the *kethib*- and *qere*-readings of Job 13:15, this is a question that has divided over a long period of time and cuts to the heart of the book of Job:

הן יקטלני לא איחל אֶךְ־דרכי אל־פניו אוכיח (*kethib*)

הן יקטלני לו איחל אֶךְ־דרכי אל־פניו אוכיח (*qere*)

“See, he will kill me; I have no hope” (NRSV following *kethib*).

“Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him” (NIV following *qere*).

¹ I am grateful for the comments of Kirk Patston on an earlier form of this article and for the comments of the anonymous *JHS* reviewer(s); any errors, however, remain my sole responsibility.

Central to each of these two paradoxical statements is Job's understanding of God as it relates to his foreseen future, i.e. does Job's eschatology involve God, or is God absent from any formulation of present hope for the future?

1.2. Certainly, there have been those who have defended the claim that Job declares his trust in God in the midst of his despair.² However, there are those who understand Job to have abandoned hope in God, either for "a personal private deity who is distinct from the high god and who is humanity's advocate against the high god";³ or for his own "protestation of innocence and his formal deposition that requires God to give an account of himself."⁴ For Clines, Job "embarks on the most radical restatement of Israelite theology to be found in the pages of the Hebrew Bible." In this regard, he states:

Job's new theology is that God is a monster, motivated by cruelty and spite, who has not only attacked the innocent Job, but is also guilty of negligence and injustice on a universal scale. Job has no doubt that there is a god, for it is he who is wrongfully assaulting him; but he denies the goodness of that god.⁵

² E.g., Francis I. Andersen, *Job* (TOTC; Leicester: IVP, 1976); Edouard Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1967); Robert Gordis, *The Book of Job: Commentary, New Translation and Special Studies* (Moreshet; New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1978); John E. Hartley, *The Book of Job* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988).

³ John Briggs Curtis, "On Job's Witness in Heaven," *JBL* 102 (1983), 549.

⁴ David J.A. Clines, *Job 1–20* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1989), 390; cf. also 459–462.

⁵ David J.A. Clines, "Job's God," *Concilium* 4 (2004), 44.

1.3. Not too long ago, Wilson proposed something of a mediating position.⁶ He argued that Job's witness is not God, but some other hypothetical figure. In this view, Job's agony has driven him "to reach out to an imaginary figure, grasping at even the most remote possibilities."⁷ For Wilson, Job explores possibilities and pushes the bounds, since Job ultimately desires a restored relationship with God. Consequently, he argues that "despite the fact that Job's arbiter is not to be identified as God, it is true that Job's desire for a restored relationship with God actually undergirds these imaginative cries."⁸

1.4. Initially, Wilson's proposal seems attractive: he has dealt with the paradoxical statements that have pushed Curtis and Clines to their extremes; and he has systematically shown how his interpretation fits with the all-important passages 9:32-35; 16:18-22; 19:23-27; and 31:35-37. Regarding his proposal, he says that it "can best account for all the text, and does most justice to difficult verses like 16:21 and 17:3."⁹

1.5. Nevertheless, I said that Wilson's proposal *initially* seemed attractive. I say this for I am not yet convinced that Job's hope of a witness in heaven is someone other than God, even if that someone is said to be "hypothetical". Indeed, Wilson argued for a "re-examination of the text" to decide the issue; and it is just such an examination I wish to conduct in the remainder of this article, since I judge Wilson to have (1) failed to interpret Job 16:19-21 in light of the initial **□3**; and (2) missed the import of Job's changing conception of death. It is, in fact, these two points that allow us to be certain that Job indeed has a hope in

⁶ Lindsay Wilson, "Realistic Hope or Imaginative Exploration? The Identity of Job's Arbiter," *Pacifica* 9 (1996), 243-252.

⁷ Wilson, "Realistic Hope", 248.

⁸ Wilson, "Realistic Hope", 251.

⁹ Wilson, "Realistic Hope", 248.

God. Failing to take these issues into account has unfortunately led many to deny such a hope for Job.

2. ׀ AND JOB 16:19-21

2.1. Job 16:19-21 is important for the present argument for the reason that the passage begins with the particle ׀, a word which we can now understand in the present context due to research having now been conducted on its usage,¹⁰ but which has not figured in any analysis of which I am aware. Harley, for one, notices the deployment of the particle here, but unhelpfully says that it is “somewhat redundant.”¹¹ However, despite Harley’s claim, I assert that an appreciation of this particle reveals that its utilisation here is extremely important in the present context, since it leads the reader to the correct interpretation of the passage.

¹⁰ See Christo H.J. van der Merwe, *The Old Hebrew Particle gam: A Syntactic-Semantic Description of gam in Gn-2Kg* (ATS 34; St. Ottilien: EOS Verlag, 1990); idem, “Old Hebrew Particles and the Interpretation of Old Testament Texts,” *JSOT* 60 (1993), 35-37; Christo H.J. van der Merwe, Jackie A. Naudé, and Jan H. Kroeze, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar* (BLH 3; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), §41.4.5.

¹¹ Hartley, *Job*, 262,n.2. J.P. Fokkelman, in a different vein, writes: “[t]he importance of the witness is indicated in v.19 by a special signal, the long chain of no fewer than three words, *gam ‘atta binne’*” (*Major Poems of the Hebrew Bible: At the Interface of Prosody and Structural Analysis. Volume IV: Job 15–42* [SSN 47; Assen: Van Gorcum, 2004], 42); beyond this he says no more.

2.2. At the outset it is necessary to notice that **גם** may modify a word, a constituent, or a clause. van der Merwe, for example, presents the following examples:¹²

(1) **גם** modifying a word:

פְּנֵי־יָמוֹת גַּם־הוּא כְּאֶחָיו “Otherwise, *be too* will die, like his brothers!” (Gen 38:11)

(2) **גם** modifying a constituent:

וַיִּמַּת גַּם־אֹתוֹ And he slew *him also* (Gen 38:10)

(3) **גם** modifying a clause:

וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֶל־יְהוֹשֻׁעַ כִּי־נָתַן יְהוָה בְּיָדֵנוּ אֶת־כָּל־הָאָרֶץ וְגַם־נִמְגְּו כל־יֹשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ מִפְּנֵינוּ And they said to Joshua, “Certainly Yahweh has given all the land into our hand, and, *also, the inhabitants of the land melt away before us*” (Josh 2:24)¹³

The last example is particularly instructive, since it suggests that **גם** need not modify simply the following word or two; that is, **גם** can have a much larger expression within its scope. In this vein, van der Merwe writes of **גם** used to modify the clause in Josh. 2:24:

גם is used to constrain the interpretation of the first of two propositions concerning a particular topic by the fact that it must be supplemented by a second proposition.¹⁴

2.3. And so it would seem in chapter 16 that Job boldly realises that his characterisation of God as his violent enemy (16:7-18) needs to be radically supplemented by a second proposition.

¹² van der Merwe, Naudé, and Kroeze, *Biblical Hebrew*, §41.4.5; van der Merwe, “Old Hebrew Particles”, 37.

¹³ On the problematic use of **כִּי** here beginning a direct quotation, see Cynthia L. Miller, *The Representation of Speech in Biblical Hebrew Narrative: A Linguistic Analysis* (HSM 55; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 113.

¹⁴ van der Merwe, “Old Hebrew Particles”, 37.

This second proposition, supplementing the first, is naturally introduced by **גם**:¹⁵

גם־עתה הנה־בשמים עדי ושהדי במרומים
מליצי רעי אל־אלוה דלפה עיני
ויוכח לגבר עם־אלוה ובן־אדם לרעהו

“But what is more, presently – look! – my witness is in heaven,
and my advocate is on high.
He who scorns me (מליצי) is my friend (רעי);
to God my eyes pour out tears
so that he might plead for man with God
as a human pleads for his friend” (16:19-21).

2.4. Job asserts that even as he has declared God as enemy (16:7-18) he should just as quickly proclaim God as רַע (16:20).¹⁶ Indeed, the implication of עתה (16:16), heightened by the appearance of הנה, is that this is preeminently the case now.¹⁷ The God who is מליץ is also רַע; the God of perplexing anguish is also the God of deep friendship. A number of considerations have led to the conclusion that God is the “scorner” in verse 20: (1) as mentioned above, the employment of **גם** strongly suggests that what follows supplements his

¹⁵ Using the Stuttgart Electronic Study Bible software (SESB) which utilises the phrase- and clause-level tagging of the *Werkgroep Informatika* database of the *Vrije Universiteit* (WIVU database), I retrieved other examples of **גם** deployed in this manner: Gen 20:12; 48:19; Exod 4:14; 2 Sam 19:44[43]; 1Kgs 7:31; and Ruth 3:12. See David Kummerow, “Review Article: Stuttgart Electronic Study Bible,” *SEE-J Hiphil* 2 (2005), 6 <http://see-j.net/Default.aspx?alias=see-j.net/hiphil>].

¹⁶ This is what Norman Habel’s (“‘Only the Jackal is my Friend’: On Friends and Redeemers in Job,” *Int* 31 [1977], 232-235) interpretation misses as he fails to take into account the use of **גם** beginning v.19. Similarly, *inter alios*, Clines, *Job*, 389-391.

¹⁷ On עתה see van der Merwe, Naudé, and Kroeze, *Biblical Hebrew*, §41.2.6; van der Merwe, “Old Hebrew Particles”, 32-35.

previous statements concerning a particular topic, in this case God; (2) the larger shift between enemy and friend seems summed up in this statement; (3) previously, God has been cast in the role of mocker/scorner (e.g. 9:23); (4) this interpretation does not rely on significant emendation nor connection with more obscure meanings but on a small revocalisation, i.e. the plurals מְלִיצִי and רָעִי (pausal form of רָעִי) with singular suffixes are repointed מְלִיצִי and רָעִי; (5) given the paradoxical nature of the statement, it is easy to see how the Masoretes preferred to point the consonantal רעי מליצי, מליצי רעי; (6) a reference to the friends as scorers is out of place,¹⁸ especially with the use of גַּם beginning the thought, which in context suggests that the referent is not the friends but God, since he has been the continuing topic of discussion; (7) it is more naturally taken as “scorner”, especially in the context of expressed grievous emotions such that negative connotations associated with the לִיץ-root carry naturally into this context;¹⁹ and (8) it explains Job’s torment and his otherwise ambiguous cry: “to God my eyes pour out tears, so that he might plead for man with God as a human pleads for his friend.”

2.5. Although Job is certainly not happy with the paradox, he is plainly aware that there is only one God.²⁰ Thus Job in a breath sums up the paradox which he cannot resolve—מליץ-רע—and simply pleads to God that he, God, would plead for man עַם-אלוה (16:20-21) as absurd as this may sound

¹⁸ See Clines, *Job*, 371, n.20.b.

¹⁹ Tim Poell, “ליץ,” in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* (ed. Willem A. VanGemeren; 5 vols.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 2:799.

²⁰ Cf. Meredith G. Kline, “Job,” in *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary* (ed. Charles F. Pfeiffer and Everett F. Harrison; Chicago: Moody, 1962), 475.

(cf. also 17:3).²¹ The God Job knows as friend, whom he is presently experiencing as enemy, realises Job's longing for mediation.²² Job believes God himself represents him; indeed, for Job, there is no one else suitably qualified to perform this function, since only God can plead with God as man pleads as man for man (16:21).²³ Job continues to plead, for even now God is his witness.²⁴ Job recognises that at the most basic level—a level to which he has been stripped back—God himself must play the role of mediator with God—for Job has no other friend.²⁵

2.6. Paying attention to the words and syntax actually used means that I have been able to constrain the interpretation(s) of the passage. For those who claim that Job places his hope in something other than God—be it a hypothetical possibility, a lesser deity, or his own plea of innocence—must in the end grapple with the use of **אֱלֹהִים** here also, which unfortunately nobody has done. Nevertheless, I assert that **אֱלֹהִים** here functions as something of a hinge, standing between Job's two conceptions of God: the proposition that God is a ravenous

²¹ Cf. Derek Kidner, *The Wisdom of Proverbs, Job and Ecclesiastes* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1985), 68; also Kline, "Job," 475; Andersen, *Job*, 182-183; Hartley, *Job*, 264; Walther Zimmerli, *Man and his Hope in the Old Testament* (SBTSS 20; London: SCM, 1968), 23; Paul R. House, *Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1998), 433-434.

²² Clines' understanding of God and Job's contention with God in the book means that he cannot accept such a paradox (*Job*, 389-391). For a critique of Clines, see Robert S. Fyall, *Now My Eyes have Seen You: Images of Creation and Evil in the Book of Job* (NSBT 12; Leicester: Apollos, 2002), 42-43.

²³ I take it that this comparison is meant by the use of the phrase **אֱלֹהִים** (cf. 25:6).

²⁴ Cf. Fyall, *Now My Eyes*, 43.

²⁵ Cf. House, *Old Testament Theology*, 434.

beast etc. needs to be supplemented—**וְ**—with the proposition that God is a witness, advocate, and friend. It is hard to see what other topic in the present context **וְ** is modifying other than the immediately preceding portrayal of God.

2.7. Now if I am correct in my analysis of this passage, then I see it affecting two other important issues: (1) the other passages which in the past were said to be showing Job placing his confidence in God but which have been increasingly seen as evidence to the contrary (as chapter 16 had); and (2) Job’s changing conception of death. I shall (re-)examine these two issues in §§3 and 4 below.

3. RE-EXAMINING JOB’S EXPRESSIONS OF HOPE IN GOD

3.1. As stated above, if it is true that Job expresses a hope in, and dependence on, God in Job 16:19-21, then at the very least this opens the possibility that Job expresses similar affirmations elsewhere. Indeed, Wilson makes the following observation:

[I]t [is] likely that there are not several different figures being called upon by Job [in the first three “redeemer passages”], but the one “hope” is variously described.²⁶

Now if Wilson is correct in this observation, then it means that if the referent of the “figure” could convincingly be identified in one of the three passages—even if it goes against his own positing of a “hypothetical figure”—then the referent of the other passages could be established. Since I have established

²⁶ Wilson, “Realistic Hope”, 249.

that God is the figure of hope in 16:19-21, then it remains to be seen whether this is also the case in the other passages.

3.2. First Text Job 9:3-34

This passage is difficult, not least because some manuscripts, the LXX, and the Peshitta point to a text reading לֹא לִי or לֹא יֵשׁ for MT לֹא יֵשׁ beginning verse 33. I agree with Fokkelman that the clear jussives יִשָּׁת and יִסָּר point to the unreal conditional particle.²⁷ And Clines' observation that לֹא יֵשׁ is not found elsewhere in the OT probably confirms it.²⁸ Consequently, here the intimation of someone to arbitrate (מוֹכִיחַ) is raised (9:33-34), someone who effectively removes God's disciplinary rod (שִׁבְטֵי). Thus life is the realm where Job longs for a mediator. However, the referent is clearly unexpressed, and it is simply the fact that he longs for a mediator which is described. But if God is the mediator in chapter 16, then it would be true to say that God realises Job's longing for mediation in chapter 9, although this is only seen after having read chapter 16. Thus, chapter 9 does not bear witness to Job expressing a hope in God in the same way that chapter 16 does. However, it is the first stirrings of a hope which grows much more confident—and specific—in chapter 16 (and chapter 19, as I will demonstrate below).

3.3. Second Text Job 13:15-16

3.3.1. Though Job 13:15-16 was not included in Wilson's analysis, it is here included due to the fact that Job either

²⁷ J.P. Fokkelman, *Major Poems of the Hebrew Bible: At the Interface of Prosody and Structural Analysis. Volume II: 85 Psalms and Job 4–14* (SSN 41; Assen: Van Gorcum, 2000), 350,n.25.

²⁸ Clines, *Job*, 220,n.33.a.

expresses hope in God (so qere לו) or does not (so kethib לא). I take it, though, that Job bravely asserts a confidence in God:

הַז יִקְטֹלֵנִי [לֹא/לוֹ] אֵיחָל אֶדְרֹכֵי אֱלֹהֵי אֹכִיחַ
גַּם־הוּא־לִי לִישׁוּעָה כִּי־לֹא לִפְנֵי חַנָּף יָבוֹא

“Behold, though he may slay me, I will hope in him;
surely I should defend my ways to his face.
Moreover, this will be my salvation
since the godless would not come before him”
(13:15-16).

3.3.2. As stated, I understand these verses as Job’s bold hope. Verse 16, by its use of גַּם־הוּא,²⁹ indicates that the implementation of the previous verse will result in Job’s יְשׁוּעָה. אֶחָ in this context is a modal adverb,³⁰ expressing Job’s conviction as to the correctness of his defence. However, both these things are only feasible because God is ultimately a reliable object of hope (15a). If God were otherwise, Job’s hope is futile and the contemplation of יְשׁוּעָה self-deluded. From context I thus assert that the qere-reading is to be adopted. Collaborative confirmation may be observed in the fact that much manuscript evidence supports the reading of לוֹ.³¹ Furthermore, the additional Masoretic notation of the Masorah parvum reads:

²⁹ Again, on the syntax of אֶחָ which my analysis is based, see van der Merwe, Naudé, and Kroeze, *Biblical Hebrew*, §41.4.5; van der Merwe, “Old Hebrew Particles”, 35-37. Cf. also idem, *The Old Hebrew Particle gam*.

³⁰ Again, see van der Merwe, Naudé, and Kroeze, *Biblical Hebrew*, §41.3.3(i); cf. also T. Muraoka, *Emphatic Words and Structures in Biblical Hebrew* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1985), 129-130.

³¹ Giovanni Bernardo de Rossi, “Job,” in *Variae Lectiones Veteris Testamenti Librorum. Volumen IV: Libri Psalmi, Proverbia, Job, Daniel, Ezras, Nehemias, Chronica seu Paralipomena cum dissertatione praeliminaria de hujus collationis praestantia utilitate usv et appendice additionum*

לו חד מן יז
ק

The Masoretes record that this is one out of seventeen other occurrences of אֵל where the oral tradition differed, instead reading לו.³² It is therefore not unheard of for לו to have become confused with אֵל.³³ Although no significant theology hangs on the choice of אֵל vis-à-vis לו, in these other examples to retain אֵל nevertheless would often result in absurd interpretations. The NET, for example, prefers לו thirteen times,³⁴ of which at least a further one is debateable.³⁵ It would therefore appear that the Masoretes' correction is usually to be preferred, and I suggest that this is indeed the case with Job 13:15 for the reasons outlined above. However, even if אֵל is retained either because אֵל is judged to be *lectio difficilior* or the manuscript evidence is assessed to be insufficient, nevertheless the clause may communicate the same thought—albeit more emphatically—by identifying לו אֵל as another instance of a construction Driver called “affirmation by exclamatory negation.”³⁶ אֵל “serves alone almost as an exclamation conveying a positive sense of surprise or

(Bibliotheca Rossiana 7; Amsterdam: Philo Press, 1970), 111 provides the evidence.

³² Exod 21:8; Lev 11:21; 25:30; 1 Sam 2:3; 2 Sam 16:18; 2 Kgs 8:10; 1 Chron.11:20; Ezra 4:2; Job 13:15; 41:4[12]; Pss.100:3; 139:16; Prov 19:7; 26:2; Isa 9:2[3]; 49:5; 63:9. Cf. also Job 6:21.

³³ Cf. James Barr, “A New Look at *Kethibb-Qere*,” *OTS* 21 (1981), 31.

³⁴ Fourteen out of eighteen times if we include Job 6:21, which the Masoretes failed to include in their count of seventeen.

³⁵ Prov 26:2.

³⁶ See Godfrey Rolles Driver, “Affirmation by Exclamatory Negation,” *JANES* 5 (1973), 107-114.

assurance”:³⁷ “I will not have hope!” which implies “I will have hope.” The reason is again to do with God: **ישועה** is able to be found since the godless would not dare come before God (13:16b), presumably because Job understands God to be just, and thus a reliable object of hope.

3.4. *Third Text Job 19:23-27*

3.4.1. Chapter 19 follows a similar movement to chapter 16 in moving from despondency to hope, here centring on a **גאל**-figure (19:25). Given his previous asseveration of God in 16:19 as witness (**עד**) and advocate (**שדה**) it is not surprising he should now declare him to be **גאל**. Nevertheless, the claim by many is that this is not so; instead, the **גאל**-figure is another heavenly being or a heavenly hypothetical possibility. But the burden of proof must still surely reside with those who would deny that God is the referent of the term **גאל** here due to the fact that **גאל** as used of no heavenly figure(s) in the OT other than God and Job has already affirmed that God is his witness, advocate, and friend in chapter 16.³⁸ Fyall, critiquing Habel’s analysis that “viewing God as the *gō’el* ... would mean a complete reversal in the pattern of Job’s thought to date”,³⁹ argues that such an interpretation also fails to sufficiently reckon with (1) “Job’s passionate desire to meet with God and

³⁷ Driver, “Affirmation”, 108.

³⁸ John Day (“The Development of Belief in Life After Death in Ancient Israel,” in *After the Exile: Essays in Honour of Rex Mason* [ed. John Barton and David J. Reimer; Macon: Mercer University Press 1996], 251, n.58) notes that **גאל** “is never used in the Old Testament of any heavenly figure apart from God,” although he understands Job’s expectation of vindication in this life only.

³⁹ Habel, *Job*, 306.

his refusal to give up the struggle to see him”;⁴⁰ (2) the canonical status of Job; and (3) what Fyall calls “the full implications of verses 25b and 26”.⁴¹ Thus although Wilson was incorrect in finding a referent other than God, he was nonetheless accurate to say that Job’s hope is “variously described,”⁴² since now in chapter 19 God is said to be **גאל**. Indeed, deserted, detested Job (cf. 19:13-19) has none besides his divine kinsman likely to perform the role of **גאל**.⁴³ In contrast to his death-destined self (19:26), Job’s **גאל** is characterised by **חי** (19:25),⁴⁴ thereby eminently qualified to perform Job’s post-mortem desires.

⁴⁰ Note, however, that this point does not necessarily apply to Wilson’s analysis, for, as noted above, Wilson understands that “Job’s desire for a restored relationship with God actually undergirds these imaginative cries” (“Realistic Hope”, 251).

⁴¹ Fyall, *Now My Eyes*, 48-49. See these pages for Fyall’s elaboration and argument of these points.

⁴² Wilson, “Realistic Hope”, 249.

⁴³ This is what Helmer Ringgren (“**גאל**,” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* [ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980], 2:355) fails to notice. Moreover, he also fails to recognise that Job has *already* spoken in a paradoxical way in chapter 16 (see above).

⁴⁴ Thus the phrase **חי גאלי** may be understood as “my Living Redeemer”, which, *mutatis mutandis*, is somewhat analogous to **אלהים חיים** (see H. Ringgren, “**חיה**,” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* [ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980], 4:338-339). The object of the clause is then **חי גאלי**. Cf. Hartley, *Job*, 293-294; Jan Holman, “Does My Redeemer Live or is My Redeemer the Living God? Some Reflections on the Translation of Job 19,25,” in *The Book of Job* (ed. W.A.M. Beuken; BETL 64; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1994), 377-381.

3.4.2. My assertion of this point that Job understands himself here in chapter 19 as bound for death is based on an analysis of the controversial and difficult verse 26:

ואחר עורי נקפוזאת ומבשרי אחזה אלוה

The diversity found within the ancient versions testifies to the difficulty of the verse,⁴⁵ as does the profuse emendation the text.⁴⁶ Although Dhorme, for one, took the two clauses as being parallel,⁴⁷ they are probably best seen to be sequential, which the construction [-ו...אחר] implies. However, the main puzzle I see with the verse is with the demonstrative זאת. In order to leave the text unemended, זאת is said to be used adverbially.⁴⁸ However, while it may be the case that demonstrative זה originated as a demonstrative adverb, it is hard to see ואחר עורי נקפוזאת as a surviving instance of this construction, since the semantics which would be implied are entirely different and difficult to reconcile with the evidence

⁴⁵ Jean Lévêque (*Job et son Dieu. Tome II: Essai d'exégèse et de théologie biblique* [Études Bibliques; Paris: Gabalda, 1970], 469-473) provides a good discussion of the early versions.

⁴⁶ E.g., Dhorme, *Commentary*, 285; Lévêque, *Job et son Dieu*, 477; R. Tournay, "Relectures bibliques concernant la vie future et l'angéologie," *RB* 4 (1962), 489-495. Lévêque provides a discussion of various attempts as does Clines (*Job*, 433,n.26.a), who prefers in the end to take the text as it stands.

⁴⁷ Dhorme, *Commentary*, 284.

⁴⁸ So Clines, *Job*, 434,n.26.c; J. Gerald Janzen, *Job* (Interpretation; Atlanta: John Knox, 1985), 143. James K. Zink's ("Impatient Job: An Interpretation of Job 19:25-27," *JBL* 84 [1965], 149) translation implies this also.

adduced by Joüon and Muraoka.⁴⁹ In any case, although both Zink and Janzen understand the form adverbially, they see the form as essentially demonstrative in function, either pointing to Job's skin disease (Zink) or to the content of the following clause (Janzen). The problem with Zink's interpretation is skin is what Job understands he has barely escaped with (19:20) and **נקר** does imply some sort of violent action leading to death (cf. Isa 10:33-34) and not simply to some flaying skin.⁵⁰ Janzen, on the other hand, could be correct, since **זאת** does function in the way he suggests (e.g. Lev 26:16); however, in order to do so he has to connect **עורי** with the verb **עור** ii "to wake up". But the following clause with **בשר** mitigates against this. Furthermore, to translate the verb as "things will come around to" the clause should have read **דברים נקפו**. If **זאת** functioned as the subject of the verb, then the interpretation proposed by Janzen could still be retained; but this would mean that the verb would have to be emended to **נקפה**.

3.4.3. My suggested solution is treating the verse as an example of poetic ellipsis.⁵¹ The pointers to this analysis are the *waw* beginning the verse and the lack of a verb with **זאת**. The use of *waw* suggests that verse 26 is somehow connected with the

⁴⁹ See Paul Joüon and T. Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* (Subsidia Biblica 14; Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1993), §143a.

⁵⁰ This is also the problem with the treatment of J. Meek ("Job xix 25-27," *VT* 6 [1956], 100-103). On **נקר**, see Eugene Carpenter, "נקר," in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* (ed. Willem A. VanGemeren; 5 vols.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 3:157.

⁵¹ On ellipsis in BH, see Wilfred G.E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to its Techniques* (JSOTSS 26; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984), 303-306.

preceding verse and since **זאת** cannot be used adverbially with the sense required, a verb needs to be supplied. My suggestion is that **ידעתי** needs to be elliptically supplied from the previous verse. The thought of the verses runs as follows:

ואני ידעתי
 גאלי הי ואחרון על-עפר יקום
 ואחר עורי נקפוזאת [ידעתי]
 ומבשרי אחזה אלוה

In the two verses Job verbalises two things that he knows: firstly, that his redeemer lives and that one day that redeemer will stand upon the earth; and secondly, that after he has had his skin destroyed he will nevertheless see God from his flesh. I thus understand **אחר** in verse 26 as an adverb and **נקפו** as a third-person plural with the agent(s) unexpressed.

3.4.4. But what does Job mean when he says that his skin will be destroyed? I take it that if **ואתמלטה בעור שני** in verse 20 means that Job has narrowly escaped with nothing,⁵² then the destruction of his **עור** in verse 26 poetically implies the further removal of this and consequently his death. Equally, **עור** may be synecdoche for the whole person as it is in Exod 22:27[26] and possibly Job 2:4, thereby signalling his death also.⁵³ Either way, Job's statement expresses the understanding that death awaits him.

3.4.5. As a result, the office of **גאל** as one who righted wrongs, restored fortunes, upheld heritage, and avenged innocent blood

⁵² So Clines, *Job*, 452.

⁵³ See Gary Alan Long, “עור,” in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* (ed. Willem A. VanGemeren; 5 vols.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 3:360; and Gordis, *Job*, 206.

is entirely necessary given Job's prospects.⁵⁴ Thus in chapter 19 Job affirms that the Living Redeemer and the God he finally sees upon his resurrection–vindication are one and the same.⁵⁵ Job's trust in God is fundamental and basic both to his eschatological outlook and present torment. The future reality is his hope in the present. Job understands his future is inextricably tied to God; he ultimately believes that the just God he previously knew is the God he will prove himself eschatologically to be. Consequently, this dominating God-focus means that the afterlife is portrayed as consisting primarily of restored relationship, of life with God. Everything else seems to be secondary such that details aside from this point are not elaborated upon. The afterlife for Job is essentially one of God-centredness and divine priority. In other words, Job's conception of the afterlife is one wholly focussed on God: in Job's own words it is an experience of "seeing" God.

⁵⁴ Kline, "Job," 476.

⁵⁵ I take it that Job understands his resurrection to be bodily. However one understands the preposition מן on ומבשרי in 19:26, this is essentially what is conveyed by the context in that Job sees a time after his death when he and God will again be united. Moreover, given Job's talk previously on resurrection (on which see below my comments on chapter 14), it would not be out of place to suggest that מן here conveys source, i.e. Job expects to be (bodily) resurrected and see God from his בשר. This would also appear to be the implication of the verb חזוה in vv.26-27.

3.5. *Fourth Text Job 31:35-37*

3.5.1 Now I want to present an alternative proposal from the consensus on Job 31:35-37.⁵⁶ Many take it that here Job (metaphorically?) affixes his signature to his oath of innocence.⁵⁷ Needless to say, it is just this acceptance of the idea that Job appends his signature which has lead Hartley, inter alios, to relocate 31:38-40b prior to verse 35. For example, Hartley says:

It appears doubtful that Job would add another specific item after affixing his signature (vv. 35–37), so most modern interpreters place these verses earlier in the declaration of innocence. Perhaps a scribe discovered that they had inadvertently been omitted from the text and copied them at the end to preserve them.⁵⁸

3.5.2. However, it is just the placement of verses 38-40b after 35-37 which counts against the “signature” interpretation, since, to use Hartley’s words above, it is “doubtful that Job would add another specific item after affixing his signature”. Furthermore, the “signature” view has lead to the numerous speculative, but in the end textually unsupported, relocations, which suggests to me creativity is more involved than seeking to understand Job’s words themselves. These points strongly suggest that perhaps we should examine more closely what is meant by Job’s use of the word **תּו**. That is, is there an alternative to having Job sign his signature since the context would seem to indicate that he is not?

3.5.3. Habel argues that the word **תּו** “seems to mean ‘authenticating mark, signature’ in Ezek 9:4, 6 and hence the

⁵⁶ I suggest that the weight of scholarly opinion for the consensus need not necessarily make that interpretation *correct* so much as *entrenched*. This, in itself, is hard to overcome.

⁵⁷ E.g., Hartley, *Job*, 424.

⁵⁸ Hartley, *Job*, 422.

evidence of innocence.”⁵⁹ Alternatively, it might be better to see in Ezekiel that the תו is what Fohrer has called a “Schutzzeichen”, a mark of protection.⁶⁰ Köhler says:

It was the ancient custom to mark one’s cattle, one’s implements and such like with a stroke, a circle, or a combination of strokes, circles and points, in short with a sign which ranks as the property of the clan, and was recognised, so as to protect from theft.⁶¹

It would thus seem that while a תו could be understood in the sense of “signature”, it also bears a nuance—at least from the perspective of the one who is “signed”—that it is a mark guaranteeing protection, a “signature” of protective ownership. Thus, תוי in Job 31:35 could be Job claiming that he (metaphorically) bears a “protective mark”. Exactly what this תו is and what it involves is enunciated in the following two clauses. Specifically, in the language of verse 35, it is the fact that Job believes God will give both answer to him and the charges of his accuser. That Job *and* איש ריבי ספר כתב איש ריבי are addressed by God’s “answering” is indicated by the use of ו on וספר and the fronting of that word. I have yet to read where anyone else has sort to address the reason(s) for the use of ו and the fronting of ספר. I propose, as indicated, that the fronting of the word along with the *waw* binds it to the preceding object (the pronominal element י- on the verb יעני) as a compound object. Both the first person singular object suffix as well as ספר come under God’s address.

⁵⁹ Habel, *Job*, 427.

⁶⁰ Georg Fohrer, *Ezekiel* (HZAT 13; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1955), 54.

⁶¹ Ludwig Köhler, *Hebrew Man* (trans. Peter R. Ackroyd; London: SCM, 1956), 75.

3.5.4. Moreover, modal renderings such as the NIV's "let the Almighty answer me; / let my accuser put his indictment in writing" are completely out of place for a number of reasons. Firstly, for **יענני** to unambiguously signify jussive vis-à-vis indicative, we would have expected the word order **יענני שדי** rather than **שדי יענני**,⁶² since BH jussive word order has been conclusively shown to be (prototypically) verb–subject.⁶³ Secondly, for the jussive translation (and consequent interpretation) "let my accuser put his indictment in writing" we would have again expected the verb to head its clause, which it does not. Thirdly, though the BH *qatal*-form may express modal meanings such as performative/commissive, contingency, directive deontic, and past habitual,⁶⁴ I have yet to come across *anyone* who suggests a jussive rendering of a *qatal*-

⁶² Gordis (*Job*, 355) similarly notes the problem with the word order. To overcome the problem, he treats **תי** as being defectively spelt without **א**, that is, **תִּי = תִּיְאִי = תִּיְאִיְתִי**. He does not attempt a reading based on the word as it appears (i.e. as **תִּי**), which I have tried to do above.

⁶³ See Alviero Niccacci, "A Neglected Point of Hebrew Syntax: Yiqtol and Position in the Sentence," *LA* 37 (1987), 7-19; E.J. Revell, "The System of the Verb in Standard Biblical Prose," *HUCA* 60 (1989), 1-37; Vincent Joseph DeCaen, "On the Placement and Interpretation of the Verb in Standard Biblical Hebrew Prose" (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 1995); Ahouva Shulman, "The Use of Modal Verb Forms in Biblical Hebrew Prose" (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 1996); Robert D. Holmstedt, "The Relative Clause in Biblical Hebrew: A Linguistic Analysis" (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin–Madison, 2002); John A. Cook, "The Biblical Hebrew Verbal System: A Grammaticalization Approach" (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin–Madison, 2002); cf. also Robert D. Holmstedt, "The Phonology of Classical Hebrew: A Linguistic Study of Long Vowels and Syllable Structure," *ZAH* 13 (2000), 145-156.

⁶⁴ See, e.g., Cook, "The Biblical Hebrew Verbal System", 223-232.

verb as is done in 31:35d. The verb simply is *not* jussive, and should *not* be rendered as jussive; doing so has been a contributing factor to the fact that until now we have not seen that **וספר** continues the object of the verb **ענה**, i.e. that it is both the first person singular suffix as well as **ספר** which come under God's address.

3.5.5. What Job means, then, is that because God will answer the document that has sentenced Job to judgement, the document has in effect become void; it no longer holds sentence over Job. The document has, in effect, become proof of Job's reconciliation with God. He is thus, on that day, even able to wear it proudly (31:36), as divine proof of his restoration, the fact that he is once again "near to God" (31:37b). Consequently, Job's *Schutzzeichen* is God himself! Job's **תו** is the fact that God will "answer". As in 14:13-14 (on which see below §§4.11–4.12), wish appears to give way to conviction in 31:35. Job's present hope is centred on God and what he will do in the future. Job has not abandoned his trust in God despite claims to the contrary.

3.6. As a result of the above discussion, all of the texts adduced by Wilson as pointing to a "hypothetical" hope of Job can be more readily perceived as otherwise. In §4 below I present the evidence of Job's changing conception of death as collaborative support for the understanding that Job places his trust in God.

4. JOB'S CHANGING CONCEPTION OF DEATH

4.1 *Death as positive*

4.1.1. The book opens with a basic two-tier cosmology: the domain of heaven and the domain of earth.⁶⁵ Within this cosmological framework, Earth is where one originates and returns. Thus Job says:

“Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there. Yahweh gave and Yahweh has taken away; blessed be the name of Yahweh” (1:21).

Life, then, in Habel’s words, “is that interim period between originating from Earth and returning to Earth.”⁶⁶ Job declares that death is the great equaliser. Stripped of his possessions, Job assumes and accepts that he is headed for death.⁶⁷ Thus the reader knows more than Job: the reader knows that the removal of Job’s possessions is because he is God’s champion who is to win victory for him in a blessing-free life.⁶⁸ Job for his part knows none of this, and it will be this lack of knowledge that will drive his speeches as he begins to find the strict two-tier cosmology claustrophobic.

⁶⁵ Norman C. Habel, “Earth First: Inverse Cosmology in Job,” in *The Earth Story in Wisdom Traditions* (ed. Norman C. Habel and Shirley Wurst; The Earth Bible 3; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 66.

⁶⁶ Habel, “Earth First”, 67 (*italics his*).

⁶⁷ Cf. Clines, *Job*, 36.

⁶⁸ See Meredith G. Kline, “Trial by Ordeal,” in *Through Christ’s Word: A Festschrift for Dr. Philip E. Hughes* (ed. W. Robert Godfrey and Jesse L. Boyd, III; Philipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1985), 81-93 for this understanding of the book of Job.

4.1.2. The cosmology—understood from Job’s perspective and not that of the larger perspective of the more-informed narrator and reader—may be represented thus:

Heaven	
- place from which God “gives” and “takes”	
Life	Death
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - realm in which the “giving” and “taking” of God are experienced - an interim between an origination from, and return to, Earth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the equaliser
Earth	
- place of origination and return	

This cosmology is somewhat deconstructed and reconstructed by Job as he seeks answers to his predicament.⁶⁹

4.1.3. Chapter 3 presents Job as gaining further awareness of his God-forsakenness. The friends’ week-long silence (2:12-13) resembled mourning for the dead (cf. Gen 50:10; 1 Sam 31:13).⁷⁰ Following this, Job considers himself as good as dead,⁷¹ cursing his very existence. Firstly, he laments his birth, preferring it to be excised from history (3:3-10).⁷² Secondly, given that he was born, he laments the fact that he was not

⁶⁹ Habel (“Earth First”, 68-77) only allows for a deconstructive aspect.

⁷⁰ Clines, *Job*, 61, 63-64; Kline, “Job,” 464.

⁷¹ Andersen (*Job*, 95-96) thinks it “too literal to infer that the three considered Job as good as dead.” This may be right, but it is significant that *Job* reads his situation this way.

⁷² The structure of the passage corresponds to the use of the interrogative למה in verse 11 and 20. Similarly, Clines, *Job*, 76; Kline, “Job,” 464-465.

stillborn or aborted, since he desires to rest peacefully in the earth (3:11–19). Thirdly, given that he was born alive, he laments the fact that his life continues, with God hedging him in (3:20–26).

4.1.4. Chapter 3 thus displays Job reacting within the cosmology of the first two chapters. However, this cosmology has become somewhat intolerable. Life now is not so much a gift but a burden. Under God’s judgement, life is intolerable and it is ultimately better to have not been born or to have it cut off. Within this framework, death is the preferable option: rather than being the great equaliser, now it is the great liberator,⁷³ setting one free from the injustice(s) of life (3:17–19).⁷⁴

4.1.5. It is important to notice that within this chapter the word **שׂאול** is not used. Fyall claims that the “basic indicator” that the netherworld is in mind is the word **שׂם** (3:17, 19).⁷⁵ However, the deictic **שׂם** has its referent primarily from context, and here we need not specifically think of **שׂאול**. It would seem that Job is primarily referring to death (e.g. 3:11, 21), with the only local emphasis (to use Fyall’s words) coming from the use of **קבר** in verse 22, which would point away from a “netherworld” interpretation. Certainly Job has his reasons for not yet using **שׂאול**. The use of **שׂאול** throughout the OT primarily signifies the habitat of the wicked after death,⁷⁶ with nuances of

⁷³ Pace Fyall, *Now My Eyes*, 102.

⁷⁴ Norman C. Habel, “Interpretations of Death in the Discourses of Job,” (unpublished essay, 1998), 7.

⁷⁵ Fyall, *Now My Eyes*, 105; similarly Habel, “Interpretations of Death”, 7.

⁷⁶ Num 16:30, 33; 1 Kgs 2:6, 9; Job 21:13; 24:19; Pss 9:17; 31:17; 49:14(x2); 55:15; 141:7; Prov 5:5; 7:27; 9:18; Isa 5:14; 14:11, 15; 28:15, 18; Ezek 31:15–17; 32:21, 27.

captivity (Isa 38:10; Jon 2:6; Pss 18:5; 116:3).⁷⁷ For Job, *life* now has the characteristics of **שְׂאוֹל**. By not employing the term **שְׂאוֹל**, Job can—and does—associate positive nuances to death. Death sets one free from such captivity. Thus, death is freedom and life is bondage. This conclusion is primarily derived from Job’s vantage point of suffering and futility.⁷⁸ Thus if life under the judgement of God is neither peaceful (**שְׁלֵה**), quiet (**שְׁקֵט**), nor restful (**נוֹחַ**) but one of turmoil (**רִגְגַּ**; 3:26), then death by way of contrast must be quiet (**שְׁקֵט**) and restful (**נוֹחַ**; 3:13).⁷⁹

⁷⁷ On **שְׂאוֹל** see esp. Philip S. Johnston, *Shades of Sheol: Death and Afterlife in the Old Testament* (Leicester: Apollos, 2002), 69-124; idem, “Left in Hell? Psalm 16, Sheol and the Holy One,” in *The Lord’s Anointed: Interpretation of Old Testament Messianic Texts* (ed. Philip E. Satterwaite et al.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 216-221; idem, “Psalm 49: A Personal Eschatology,” in *“The Reader Must Understand”:* *Eschatology in Bible and Theology* (ed. K.E. Brower and M.W. Elliott; Leicester: Apollos, 1997), 76; idem, “Death and Resurrection,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (ed. T.D. Alexander and Brian S. Rosner; Leicester: IVP, 2000), 444-445; Desmond Alexander, “The Old Testament View of Life After Death,” *Them* 11 (1986), 41-44; *contra, inter alios*, John Barclay Burns, “The Mythology of Death in the Old Testament,” *SJT* 26 (1973), 340; David Powys, *“Hell”: A Hard Look at a Hard Question: The Fate of the Righteous in New Testament Thought* (PBTM; Carlisle: Paternoster, 1997), 69, 83; T.H. Gaster, “Dead, Abode of the,” *IDB*, 1:787-788; A. Dagan, “Olam Ha-da,” *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 12:1356. This interpretation also removes the difficulties of R.L. Harris’ (“The Meaning of the Word *Sheol* as Shown by Parallels in Poetic Passages,” *JETS* 4 [1961], 129-135) interpretation, viz. the speculative nature of Sheol and its aversion to taking the definite article (cf. Alexander, “Old Testament View”, 43; Johnston, *Shades of Sheol*, 74).

⁷⁸ Burns (“Mythology of Death”, 335) also notices the intense contrast between life and death, but has other reasons for suggesting this.

⁷⁹ See Habel, “Interpretations of Death”, 6.

These are the first stirrings of his “sufferer’s cosmology”.⁸⁰ The portrayal of the afterlife in this chapter is one of escape into death. Like the graverobber, Job longs for an experience of the grave (3:21-22).⁸¹ For the time being, Job ignores the negatives of death.⁸²

4.1.6. Now the cosmology may be represented thus:

Heaven	
- place from which one is “hedged in”	
Life	Death
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - under God’s judgement - intolerable - place of captivity and bondage - like שאול - turmoil (רגז), place of suffering and injustice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the liberator - freedom from captivity - desirable over life - quiet (שקט) and resful (נוח)
Earth	
- place of the קבר	

4.1.7. In his second discourse, Job continues to understand death positively, although the term שאול is used once (7:9). Here it would appear that although death is viewed as punishment from God, nevertheless the positive overtones are continued from chapter 3. However, the emphasis has shifted slightly:⁸³

מִי־יִתֵּן תְּבוּאָה שְׂאֵלֹתַי וְתִקְוֹתַי יִתֵּן אֱלֹהִים
וַיֹּאֲלֵ אֱלֹהִים וַיִּדְכְּאֵנִי יִתֵּר יָדוֹ וַיִּבְצַעֲנִי

⁸⁰ The words are from Habel, *Job*, 154; idem, “Earth First”, 69.

⁸¹ Fyall (*Now My Eyes*, 105) made me aware of the simile of the graverobber.

⁸² See Habel, “Interpretations of Death”, 6-7.

⁸³ So Habel, “Interpretations of Death”, 8.

“Oh that I might have my request,
and that God would fulfil my hope –
that it would please God to crush me,
to let loose his hand and cut me off” (6:8-9)!

The traditional terminology of *תְּקוּוּה*, usually synonymous with redemption and rebirth (Pss 71:5; 62:5-6; cf. Job 4:6), is here applied to the longing for violent death (*דָּבָא*).⁸⁴ Eliphaz’s fervent theistic interpretation has wrought a change to the first somewhat aloof treatment of God in Job’s first speech—now Job confronts God openly and directly.⁸⁵ The oppression felt by Job initially has now given way to a recognition of God as the oppressor (e.g. 7:17-20);⁸⁶ he is on the attack as Job’s enemy: an archer (6:4a); a terroriser (6:4b); a spy (7:8); and a jailer (7:12). No more, it would seem, is God merely a “hedger” (3:23). The “sufferer’s cosmology” is now fully-blown. Life—the interim period before one returns to Earth—is an experience of forced labour (*צָבָא*) and slavery (7:1-6). Unlike the Atrahasis myth where human labour had the purpose of freeing the gods from work, here Job emphasises his enforced labour is arbitrary and purposeless.⁸⁷ In his darkly ironic twist to Psalm 8, Job asserts that although humans are given

⁸⁴ Habel, “Interpretations of Death”, 8. On *דָּבָא* cf. Pss 72:4; 89:10[11]; Isa 53:5, 10; Lam 3:34; W.R. Domeser, “*דָּבָא*,” in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* (ed. Willem A. VanGemeren; 5 vols.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 1:944; J.A. Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah* (Leicester: IVP, 1999), 430.

⁸⁵ Kline, “Job,” 467-468.

⁸⁶ Habel, “Interpretations of Death”, 8.

⁸⁷ Habel, “Earth First”, 69-70; cf. idem, *Job*, 157-158; idem, “‘Naked I Came...’: Humanness in the Book of Job,” in *Die Botschaft und die Boten: Festschrift für Hans Walter Wolff zum 70. Geburtstag* (ed. Jörg Jeremias and Lothar Perlt; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1981), 381-182; idem, “Interpretations of Death”, 10-11.

greatness they have no chance of fulfilling it due to the penetrating divine scrutiny.⁸⁸

4.1.8. In such a world one can only hope for escape,⁸⁹ especially if life is all but bones:

מחנק נפשי מות מעצמותי ותבחר
מאסתי לא־לעלם אחיה חדל ממני כִּי־הבל ימי

“... so that my throat prefers strangling;
I prefer death rather than bones.
I loath it; I will not live forever.
Leave me since my days are nothing” (7:15-16).

Habel notes that here נפש is given a double-meaning: normally it means “throat” or “soul” in the sense of “life”.⁹⁰ Thus, since life is הבל, death is much preferable. Job’s options are essentially a polarity: life/death. Viewed in this manner death becomes a victorious escape, its victory cry אינני:⁹¹

כִּי־עֵתָה לְעֹפֶר אֶשְׁכַּב וְשִׁחַרְתֵּנִי וְאִינִי

“For now I will lie down in the dust;
you will search for me—but I will not be” (7:21)!

For suffering Job, if life is a polarity, then death is the welcome reprieve to life; שאול is a place of thankful no return (7:9), and the afterlife experience is one of necessary death, a glad return to dust (עפר; 7:21).

⁸⁸ Habel, “Naked”, 383.

⁸⁹ Cf. Zimmerli, *Man and his Hope*, 19 comments.

⁹⁰ Habel, “Interpretations of Death”, 13; cf. Ps 69:1[2], Jon.2:5[6]; H. Seebass, “נֶפֶשׁ,” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (ed. G. Johannes Botterweck et al.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 9:504-505; HALOT, 2:712; DCH, 5:725.

⁹¹ The language of “victory cry” is from Habel, “Interpretations of Death”, 12.

4.1.9. Thus Job has essentially inverted the cosmology presented in the opening chapters. His inverted sufferer's cosmology may be represented in this way:

Heaven	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - place from which God attacks Job - place of divine archer, terroriser, and jailer—no longer merely a hedger 	
Life	Death
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - place from which Job hopes (תקוה) for violent death at the hand of God - place in which Job is under constant divine attack and scrutiny - experience of forced labour and slavery - place in which man has no hope of fulfilling Ps. 8 greatness because of divine scrutiny - bones and הבל - place from which Job longs to escape; escape is life's opposite, death 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - although understood as judgement (i.e. שאול), death nevertheless carries positive overtones - Job's תקוה - preferable to life if life is but bones and הבל - escape; welcome reprieve - return to dust
Earth	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - place Job longs to return to - place of עפר 	

4.2. *Death as negative*

4.2.1. In 4.1. I surveyed those passages in which Job expresses a positive attitude toward death. However, as his discourse with his friends continues, death for some reason becomes to be seen as a negative experience.

4.2.1. Chapter 14 is one such place. Humans appear to be unlike trees which inherently seem able to regain life (14:7-10); much more like water which disappears, humans lie down never to arise (14:11-12). Alternatively put, like mountains that are eroded and stones worn, so God appears to act upon humanity (14:18-20). שאול now is seen to be an ominous place:

an existence of some sort of consciousness characterised by pain, self-pity, and loneliness (14:21-22).⁹²

4.2.2. Indeed, Job even expresses a desire for being hidden from the divine anger *in* שאול (14:13).⁹³ Job is blatantly aware he is suffering divine judgement, although his claim is this is unjust. He is therefore under no false apprehension that he is destined for שאול, the place of the divinely judged.⁹⁴ Sheol has thus become transformed into a place of “forced labour” (צבא; 14:14c),⁹⁵ one from which Job “expectantly hopes” (יחל; 14:14c) for the coming of his renewal (עד־בוא הליפתי; 14:14d). What this “renewal” exactly entails is hard to say; but at the very least the context indicates that Job’s “renewal” involves such things as: God remembering (זכר; 14:13d) Job, perhaps as Noah was (cf. Gen 8:1);⁹⁶ a call of longing from God to Job

⁹² On the structure of the chapter, see Habel, *Job*, 236.

⁹³ On מִי יִתֵּן see Joüon and Muraoka, *Grammar*, §163d; B. Jongeling, “L’Expression *my ytn* dans l’Ancien Testament,” *VT* 24 (1974), 32-40. I take it that מִי יִתֵּן simply expresses the *fact* of the wish; it implies nothing as to whether the speaker believes the event will or will not occur, and this needs to be determined on other grounds. My reasoning for this is that in contrast מִי יִדַּע seems to encode a wish where the outcome is judged to be in doubt whereas מִי יִתֵּן simply encodes that the speaker *has* a wish. See, briefly, van der Merwe, Naudé, and Kroeze, *Biblical Hebrew*, §43.3.1. Note, however, James L. Crenshaw, “The Expression *mī yôdēa*’ in the Hebrew Bible,” *VT* 36 (1986), 274-288.

⁹⁴ Cf. Johnston, *Shades of Sheol*, 76.

⁹⁵ *Contra* Hartley, *Job*, 236, n.3. Clines (*Job*, 332) persuasively argues that שאול is now a place of labour; I have provided my reasons above why I also understand it this way.

⁹⁶ Meredith Kline (“Death, Leviathan, and the Martyrs: Isaiah 24:1–27:1,” in *A Tribute to Gleason Archer: Essays on the Old Testament* [ed. Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. and Ronald F. Youngblood; Chicago: Moody,

(14:15); and favourable divine scrutiny—in contrast to the earlier lamentable scrutiny—along with divine removal of sin (14:16-17).⁹⁷ All of this suggests that the rhetorical question of 14:14a appears to operate on two levels.⁹⁸ On the first level, the particle $\bar{\eta}$ implies a negative answer. Thus, empirically, man does not, *prima facie*, live again. But from the perspective of hope?⁹⁹ At the second level the rhetorical question expects a positive answer: Job will live again, and he will be renewed, remembered, friendly scrutinised, and have his sin removed. In other words, Job and God will have relationship again. But it would seem to be quite plain that this is beyond the experience of Sheol and thus beyond death. Sheol in this chapter seems to

1986], 241; idem, *Kingdom Prologue II* [privately published, 1985], 104-106) even suggests the ark was something of a burial chamber, a refuge through the waters of death.

⁹⁷ Surprisingly, Harley (*Job*, 236-238) neither acknowledges nor defends his removal of $\bar{\eta}$ from verse 16, which I judge to have occurred on the basis of his translation which reads: “But now you count my steps, / and surely you notice my sin”. But if $\bar{\eta}$ is read, then Hartley’s interpretation begins to fall apart since 16b then says exactly the *opposite* of what he has made it say by the removal of $\bar{\eta}$. Clines’ (*Job*, 333-334) interpretation is therefore much preferable.

⁹⁸ On the question of the bias of rhetorical questions with $\bar{\eta}$, see Lénart J. de Regt, “Discourse Implications of Rhetorical Questions in Job, Deuteronomy and the Minor Prophets,” in *Literary Structure and Rhetorical Strategies in the Hebrew Bible* (ed. L.J. de Regt et al.; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1996), 59-64; idem, “Functions and Implications of Rhetorical Questions in the Book of Job,” in *Biblical Hebrew and Discourse Linguistics* (ed. Robert D. Bergen; Dallas: SIL, 1994), 364-368. He fails to recognise 14:14 as a further instance of $\bar{\eta}$ expecting a positive answer.

⁹⁹ Cf. Ben C. Ollenburger (“If Mortals Die, Will they Live Again? The Old Testament and Resurrection,” *EA* 9 [1993], 34-35) who also notices this tension.

be a half-way house for Job between life and restored relationship with God. The wish of 14:13 seems to give way to conviction in 14:14, signalled by the change to the indicative clause structure and the lack of the repetition of **גַּם יִתֵּן**.¹⁰⁰ Somewhere, sometime, beyond the experience of Sheol, Job knows that he and God will again be friends. (This passage, then, could be added to those discussed in §3 as a further instance where Job places his trust in God.)

4.2.3. Therefore, while Job was at first happy to characterise death as a positive experience, when the full extent of his situation is grasped—namely that he is under God’s judgement and is thus headed for Sheol—death is no longer simply blessed reprieve but forced labour in Sheol. Sheol is the place from which Job understands he must be “renewed”.

4.2.4. Before I again present a diagram summarising Job’s cosmology, I shall discuss the second passage, Job 17:13-16, where Job views death and Sheol negatively. Here, well-aware of his shattered existence (17:11-12), under divine judgement and destined for Sheol (16:22–17:1), Job audaciously asserts:¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ See above n.63.

¹⁰¹ The following analysis is based on Habel, “Interpretations of Death”, 18.

אס־אקוה שאול ביתי בחשך רפדתי יצועי
 לשחת קראתי אבי אתה אמי ואחתי לרמה
 ואיה אפו תקותי ותקותי מי ישורנה
 בדי תרדנה אס־יחד על־עפר נחת

“If I ‘measure’ Sheol for my home
 and make my bed in the darkness,
 if I say to the pit, ‘You are my father’,
 or to the worm, ‘My mother’, or ‘My sister’,
 where then is my hope?
 As for my hope, who sees it?
 It descends to the chambers of Sheol
 when we descend to the dust together” (17:13-16).

4.2.5. Faced with the grim prospect of Sheol, Job maintains he and his hope are inseparable. The word-play on the קוה-root is profound: if he must “plan/measure” (אקוה) his home in שאול,¹⁰² his hope (תקוה) descends with him. Hypostasised, Job’s hope is his companion in שאול.¹⁰³ The assertion is not that his hope is ultimately vacuous (contra NEB; NET note),¹⁰⁴ but that תקוה sustains him in Sheol, a place of otherwise acute separation and hopelessness.¹⁰⁵ No longer is Job’s תקוה death

¹⁰² The parallelism of אקוה with רפדתי suggests this. See Gordis, *Job*, 184. Cf. HALOT, 3:1082; REB; NEB.

¹⁰³ This interpretation makes sense of the otherwise confusing Masoretic תַּרְדְּנָה and, to a lesser extent, נַחַת. Thus it is probably preferable to vocalise the consonantal תרדנה as bearing an energetic nun: תַּרְדְּנָה (see, e.g., Marvin Pope, *Job: Introduction, Translation, and Notes* [2nd ed.; AB; Garden City: Doubleday, 1965], 122).

¹⁰⁴ This is also against: Burns, “Mythology of Death”, 334; Clines, *Job*, 400-401; Hartley, *Job*, 271; Samuel Rolles Driver and George Buchanan Gray, *The Book of Job* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1971), 155-156.

¹⁰⁵ This would appear to be the intention of the repetitious phrases: לשחת קראתי אבי אתה אמי ואחתי לרמה (v.14), i.e. within Sheol Job’s only apparent father is שהת and his only recognisable mother or sister רמה. However, תקוה provides sustenance and companionship.

(cf. 6:8-9), but תקוה preserves him in death. As in chapter 14, Sheol for Job exists as a transition stage to a new life. Death is neither his destiny nor his final hope.¹⁰⁶

4.2.6. Now, the cosmology of chapter 14 and 17 may be represented thus:

Heaven	
- place from which God remembers, scrutinises, and removes Job's sin	
Death (and Sheol)	Job's "renewal"
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - place of pain and separation - place of forced labour - place from which Job will be renewed - place from which Job will be remembered by God, scrutinised, and have his sin removed - place in which Job his sustained by hope (תקוה) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - experience of divine remembrance, divine scrutiny, and divine removal of sin - friendship with God again - Job's hope (תקוה)
Earth	
- place of Sheol	

4.2.7. It should now be readily apparent that Job's conception of death and Sheol change from a realm of liberation and reprieve to a realm from which he expectantly hopes to be removed. The blissfulness of death has given way to the experience of Sheol—a place of forced labour, loneliness, and separation. Earlier I briefly suggested that this progression in thought could be put down to the nature of Sheol itself as the place of those under the judgement of God, i.e. as the dialogue continues Job allows the fact that Sheol is for those divinely judged to colour and transform his earlier positive portrayal of death. In this sense, it could be argued that Job progressively becomes more honest as to the nature of his foreseen death and beyond. But in the end, I still would like to know what has prompted such thoughts, i.e. has something provoked either

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Habel, "Interpretations of Death", 18.

Job's honesty regarding Sheol or his recollection as to its true nature? Thus, while I take it that the progression in thought can be put down to the nature of Sheol itself, I would also like to suggest that there is more to it. And taken as a whole, the interpretation challenges the "heavenly-witness-as-a-hypothetical-figure" argument of Wilson.

4.2.8. It is interesting to note the progression of Job's conceptions of death: positive in chapters 3 and 6–7, but negative in chapters 14 and 17. It is not that Job's positive thoughts of death are interspersed with his negative thoughts; rather, his thought appears to change from one to the other. Significantly, prior to his negative portrayal of death in chapter 14 is none other than chapter 13, which I have shown to be a chapter involving Job's expression of trust in God. Similarly, prior to chapter 17 is chapter 16 in which Job again boldly affirms his trust in God. It would thus appear from the text that as Job begins to reaffirm his trust in God in the midst of his despair, he discards his positive portrayal of death. Job understands that God is dependable and trustworthy, and that his future is centred around God. Consequently, from this perspective, death is negative—even more so as Job begins to concede and affirm that he is destined for Sheol. As one who will experience death in Sheol, Job realises he is out of relationship with God as one who is under divine judgement. In the last analysis, then, death is supremely negative for Job.

4.2.9. It would thus appear that a strong motivating factor for Job to be changing his framing of death is his affirmations of trust in God standing as they do prior to his negative depictions of death. While not conclusive in and of itself, Job's changing thoughts on this subject is strong collaborative evidence supporting the position that Job does not abandon his trust in God. Taken alongside the import of אֱלֹהִים in chapter 16,

the evidence points strongly in favour of the view taken here that Job continues to place his trust in God.

5. COMMENTS ON RESURRECTION AND THE BOOK'S

ENDING

5.1. As argued above, Job continues to place his trust in God in the midst of his despair. This trust at times involves a future hope of resurrection, however this be understood.¹⁰⁷ As expressed by Job, life after death is essentially a post-mortem experience with the God he will not let go. His hope of resurrection is then basically a means to an end: considered in and of itself it is empty. But viewed as Job's "escape plan" from Sheol, it is his unquenchable hope that sustains his tenure there.¹⁰⁸ Ultimately Job's hope firmly centres on God, a hope that will break free from the confines of Sheol itself. Resurrected, with the past behind them, Job foresees a future where he experiences the joy of knowing the Living God once again, where he and God dwell once again in communion together.

5.2. But within the larger context of the book, however, as far as Job's "hope" is concerned, his experience of seeing God again is prematurely realised in the appearance of God (chs. 38–41). Pitted against God in a metaphorical belt-wrestling

¹⁰⁷ See my comments above on chapters 19 and 14 for my position.

¹⁰⁸ This would also appear to be the case with his desire for vindication. This is where I judge Clines (*Job, passim*) to have gone wrong in his interpretation of Job (aside from the fact argued here that he has left \square in chapter 16 not interpreted), and which is particularly prominent in his discussion of chapters 16 and 19.

match,¹⁰⁹ Job is overcome by the “Godness” of God and the humanness of himself (40:1-5; 42:1-6). Confronted with such a reality, Job declares: “Therefore, I sink down in reverence and am comforted (נָחַם) upon dust and ashes” (42:6).¹¹⁰ Ultimately for Job, comfort is only to be found in God. Job 2:11 and 42:6 would thus seem to form a kind of inclusio. Job’s longing is met in God, and not in the trappings normally to be associated with faith: assured that God was God, Job revealed his commitment to God as a commitment content to embrace the misery of life and beyond in death. The appearance of God does not therefore negate Job’s fervent hope of resurrection to see God, although this is somewhat anticipated in the appearance of God and the restoration of blessings. Job, however, is not back where he began, and so the LXX is “theologically correct” in adding to 42:17: γέγραπται δὲ αὐτὸν πάλιν ἀναστήσασθαι μεθ’ ὧν ὁ κύριος ἀνίστησιν.¹¹¹

5.3. Here, too, lies, I suggest, the answer to the friends’ need for sacrifice. Their unwavering commitment to the principle of retribution has unmasked their hearts. Their rejection of the possibility of innocent suffering means that they have ultimately sided with a position positing a causal relation between piety and blessing; and as such it reflects their out-of-step character with the way things actually are to be in the divine–human relationship. Indeed, it was this very thing which

¹⁰⁹ Cf. 38:3; 40:7; Kline, “Trial by Ordeal,” 88-93; idem, “Job,” 487-489; Cyrus H. Gordon, “Belt-Wrestling in the Bible World,” *HUCA* 23 (1950-51), 131-136.

¹¹⁰ The rendering is much like Clines’ (*Job*, xlvi), although the understanding is unlike his.

¹¹¹ On the Greek translation of Job, see Donald H. Gard, “The Concept of the Future Life According to the Greek Translator of the Book of Job,” *JBL* 73 (1954), 137-143.

was the subject of satanic attack at the book's beginning and which has taken the life of Job to prove and establish. Their relationship with God, then, is not אֱלֹהִים; their relationship is unlike Job's. The issue is not so much that they were "bad theologians" but that their unmovable stance of perceiving the divine-human relationship to be one essentially of cause-and-effect has in effect exposed their own relationship with God as one based on cause-and-effect, which the book of Job judges to be deficient. It is no wonder, then, that prayer and sacrifice are called for at the end of the book.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1. I have sort to demonstrate in the above analysis that claims that Job does not have a hope in God are unfounded. I have sort to show that the use of אֱלֹהִים in chapter 16 means that we cannot understand that chapter in this manner. Armed with this understanding, I argued that it would then not be out of place to suspect that Job elsewhere affirms his trust in God, and indeed this was found to be the case. The texts depict Job placing a bold, confident trust in God despite the tragic nature of his present experience. Despite its paradoxical nature, Job affirms that God is his witness, advocate, redeemer, friend, and mark of protection. Consequently, the interpretation which was prompted by the use of אֱלֹהִים in that chapter, is found to be repeated at various times elsewhere in Job. These other affirmations of trust in God are consistent with the interpretation of chapter 16 I presented. Indeed, without this understanding of these passages it is unclear why Job's conception of death changes from being negative to positive. Collaborative evidence is thereby provided by this changing conception.

6.2. Contrary voices have argued the point that Job does not have trust in God and have been able to do so because they have neglected to deal with the use of **אֱלֹהִים** in chapter 16. The evidence outlined above has revealed that the analysis of chapter 16 also fits with the other disputed chapters: they can all be naturally understood as Job expressing a trust in God. The lines of evidence thus join to paint a consistent picture of Job as one who trusted God even though his world fell apart. In the midst of his despair, he trusted that God remained, somehow, his only friend.