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**The Nature of Job's Response (42.6) to YHWH's Self-Disclosure**

**by**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Despite extensive scrutiny, the book of Job – universally hailed as one of the truly great works of literature – remains largely an enigma in the realm of modern biblical interpretation. While it is recognized as Scripture by both Jews and Christians, scholars have long debated virtually every aspect of the book, including its authorship, date, historicity, genre, structure (unity), purpose (e.g. function within the canon), and message (e.g. divine sovereignty, human suffering, the righteous sufferer). Attempts to understand the book of Job have been hampered in part by the difficulty and ambiguity of the Hebrew text. For example, the climax of the Joban account – God’s self-disclosure and Job’s subsequent response – presents formidable exegetical and hermeneutical challenges.

A key to interpreting the message of the book of Job is to understand the precise nature of Job’s response (42:6). A brief survey of English Bibles and commentaries shows that this verse has been translated as “Therefore, I [abhor, despise, retract, reprehend, humble, repent of,] [myself, it, what I have said] and I [repent, relent, console (myself)] [in, of] dust and ashes.” This variety reflects the inherent difficulty and ambiguity of the Hebrew text, which permits a number of possible translations. Therefore, an investigation into the nature of Job’s response (42:6) to YHWH’s self-revelation was undertaken to provide a foundation for understanding how the character of Job is intended to function within this book and how the book of Job should be viewed within the larger context of the Biblical canon.

The approach taken in this study involved a careful examination of the Hebrew text at multiple linguistic levels – lexical, syntactic, and discourse. A synchronic (inductive) approach was employed to establish the appropriate semantic range of each constituent element. Greek (LXX) and Aramaic (Targums) translations/interpretations were

examined with an eye toward establishing meaning and toward understanding the exegetical choices made by ancient interpreters. The grammatical relationships among the various components were also evaluated, giving due consideration to the poetic character of the text. Finally, at a discourse level, Job 42:6 was also considered in light of its immediate context (verses 1-5) and with a view toward its function within the larger narrative (Job 1-42).

The results of this analysis suggest three principle interpretive options of Job 42:6, which depend on the meaning assigned to נָחַם.- comfort, change of mind, or repentance [of sin]. The option best supported by semantic, syntactic and discourse considerations understands נָחַם in Job 42:6 to communicate the idea of comfort/consolation. Such a rendering provides for the greatest overall continuity within the story and relieves the principle tension (the innocent suffering of Job) in a more satisfactory manner than the other alternatives. Job is seen to be the “righteous servant,” who is identified as YHWH’s champion in the prologue, who maintains his integrity throughout his ordeal, and who to the glory of YHWH is ultimately vindicated and rewarded in the epilogue.

## Chapter I - Introduction

### Statement of the Problem

Despite a long history of extensive scrutiny, the book of Job – universally hailed as one of the truly great works of literature of any era – remains largely an enigma in the realm of modern biblical interpretation. Thousands of years after its initial composition a number of broad, yet fundamental, questions have yet to be answered. Why did God both inspire the author of this work to compose it and then preserve this book so that it became inscripturated in the Hebrew and, later, the Christian canons? What truth is the book of Job crafted to impart to the ancient Hebrew reader and to the modern Christian? How is the Christian theologian to incorporate the teaching(s) of the book of Job (and for that matter other books classified among the *ketuvim* – the “Writings”) into an Old Testament biblical theology or a more comprehensive systematic theology?<sup>1</sup> Although a variety of answers to these questions have been advanced by a plethora of scholars, no consensus has been achieved. Our concern is therefore with the correct interpretation and understanding of this most enigmatic book.

While it has long been recognized as Scripture by both Jews and Christians, scholars have debated virtually every aspect of the book, including its authorship, date, historicity, genre, structure (unity), purpose (e.g. function within the canon), message

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<sup>1</sup> Gary V. Smith, “Is There a Place for Job’s Wisdom in Old Testament Theology?” (*Trinity Journal* 13:3-20, 1992) observes that “few biblical theologians have given wisdom ideas equal status with salvation history in their theological understanding of the OT” (p. 3). Smith observes that such an approach ignores the significance of the canonicity of the Wisdom books. With respect to OT theology he asserts “If wisdom and salvation history do not stand together, all that has been created is a deceptive illusion based on human imagination” (p. 11). He advances the argument that a central theme found in Job, namely that “God sovereignly rules over individuals, nations and nature” comports well with theology of the Pentateuch, historical books and the prophets which teach that “God rules over Israel, the nations, and nature” (p. 16-17). This motif provides a foundation for integrating the theology of the wisdom books with the theology derived from the salvation history texts.

(e.g. divine sovereignty, human suffering, the righteous sufferer), and so forth.<sup>2</sup> Such debate has been fueled in part by the uniqueness of the book of Job within the canon, by its purported similarities to various ancient Near Eastern texts, and by the difficulty of the Hebrew text itself. It is on this latter element that this current thesis will focus, seeking to understand the nature of Job's response as an important key to understanding the entirety of the text.

The climax of the Joban account – God's self-disclosure and Job's subsequent response – presents formidable exegetical and hermeneutical challenges. A key question which emerges from a consideration of this material is the precise nature of Job's response (42:6). A brief survey of translations found in English Bibles and commentaries shows that this verse has been translated as "Therefore, I [abhor, despise, retract, reprehend, humble, repent of ...] [myself, it, what I have said] and I [repent, relent, am comforted/consoled ...] [in, of, by, in accordance with] dust and ashes." This reflects the inherent ambiguity of the Hebrew text which permits a number of distinct translations each of which colors one's interpretation of the larger work. Therefore, an investigation into the nature of Job's response (42:6) to YHWH's self-revelation should provide a foundation for understanding how the character of Job is intended to function within this biblical narrative and how the book of Job should be viewed within the larger context of the biblical canon. This investigation entails exegesis of the Hebrew text, evaluation the exegetical options available to the interpreter, interaction with the extant literature and consideration of the impact of each viewpoint on one's understanding of the book of Job.

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<sup>2</sup> The limited scope of this work does not permit an extended discussion of all the issues which contribute to the interpretation of this work. Consequently, some of the issues which have played a more prominent role in the history of Joban interpretation, such as date, genre, and ANE literary parallels, will be discussed more fully, while other aspects are only briefly mentioned.



### Statement of methodology

The approach taken in this study involved a careful examination of the Hebrew text at multiple linguistic levels – lexical, syntactic, and discourse. The constituent elements of Job 42:6 were examined with respect to their usage in the Hebrew OT (all occurrences) in order to establish the appropriate semantic range of each element. Greek (LXX) and Aramaic (Targums) translations/interpretations were examined with an eye toward establishing meaning and toward understanding the exegetical choices made by ancient interpreters. The grammatical relationships among the various elements of the verse were then evaluated, giving due consideration to the poetic character of the text. Finally, at a discourse level, Job 42:6 was also considered in light of its immediate context (verses 1-5) and with a view toward its function within the larger narrative (Job 1-42).

In addition to the linguistic assessment, attention was also given to interpretive insights which might be gleaned from a consideration of general characteristics of the literary work such as authorship, the setting and date of composition, and its genre. With respect to genre, the relationship between Job and possible ANE literary parallels was also investigated.

The interpretive choices made by modern commentators were also considered. Because of the volume of extant material no attempt was made to be exhaustive in this analysis. However, a wide variety of viewpoints were evaluated in light of the linguistic data derived from my own analysis of the text. This process served to eliminate exegetical options which were not well supported linguistically. Finally, an attempt was made to consider the larger implications of the remaining interpretive options.

### Recognition of the subjective nature of interpretation

In carrying out this methodological study attention was also paid to the subjective element of interpretation. Subjectivity is involved in all attempts to interpret language and is undoubtedly at least partly responsible for the diversity of the many scholarly interpretations of Job 42:6. Many factors contribute to the particular “preunderstanding” which each interpreter necessarily brings to a text. Such factors include the historical era in which the interpreter lived, his or her cultural heritage, education, life experience, philosophical world view and religious beliefs, among others. However, such an acknowledgment should not be viewed as a reason for despair with respect to the task of correctly interpreting a text, but rather, as recognition that human understanding is necessarily limited in extent, incomplete in scope, and therefore, subject to error. This recognition that man is fallible should act as a safeguard against presumption and engender both a charitable attitude toward differing viewpoints and intellectual rigor to ensure that interpretive conclusions are adequately supported by textual evidence.<sup>3</sup>

The author of this study brings to the task at hand a perspective shaped by his experiences as a Caucasian male living in North America during the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. To this must be added the insights derived from formal training in the biological sciences and 20 years of experience as a research biologist. Perhaps, most significant to the task at hand, is the fact that the author possesses a world view shaped by a sincere personal commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. In recognition of these influences the text under discussion is being approached with certain assumptions: (1) The book of Job is Scripture. As such, it is both divinely inspired and revelatory. The book merits careful study, not only because it stands at the pinnacle of human poetic expression, but because God sovereignly reveals himself in its pages; (2)

The literary integrity of the entire work is assumed. The prosaic frame and the poetic discourse synergistically form an organic whole; (3) The book of Job stands in an organic relationship to the rest of biblical Canon and must therefore be understood in the light of the larger contexts of the OT and of the Bible as a whole.

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<sup>3</sup> A helpful discussion of the role of subjectivity in biblical interpretation may be found in Newell, "Job, Repentant or Rebellious." (Th.M. Thesis., Westminster Theological Seminary, 1983), 20-35.

## Chapter II - Background

### Authorship

The author of the book of Job is anonymous. While it is possible that the book is essentially an autobiographical composition by the main character, no specific claims to that effect are made in the biblical text. In Rabbinic tradition Moses has been variously identified with Job, either as the author/editor of the book or as a contemporary of the man.<sup>4</sup> J. Weinberg suggests that this association may be the reason why the canonical status of Job (in contrast to Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs) was never questioned by the rabbis.<sup>5</sup> Others postulate a non-Israelite origin (oral or written) for the book, suggesting that the story was subsequently appropriated by a later Israelite editor(s). In this vein it has been proposed that the prose frame of the extant work represents an ancient folk-tale, which was adapted by the author of the largely poetic central dialogue to provide a context for the discussion of Job and his friends<sup>6</sup>. Others have postulated a blending of two distinct literary traditions (stories) which have two different Job's in view:

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<sup>4</sup> See S. R. Driver and G. B. Gray, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Job (International Critical Commentary. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1908), lxxv, who cites a well known passage in the Babylonian Talmud (*Baba Bathra*, 14b) in support. C. Hassell Bullock, An Introduction to the Old Testament Poetic Books (Revised and Expanded, Chicago: Moody, 1979, 1988), 72, cites *Baba Bathra* 15b, *Sanhedrin* 106a, and *Sotah* 11a as additional relevant Rabbinic texts. However, linguistically and stylistically Job bears little resemblance to other Mosaic writings.

<sup>5</sup> Joanna Weinberg, "Job Versus Abraham, The Quest for the Perfect God-Fearer in Rabbinic Tradition," in The Book of Job ed. W. A. M. Beuken (Leuven, Belgium: Leuven University Press, 1994, 281-296), 281.

<sup>6</sup> For example, consider the view of Athalya Brenner ("Job the Pious? The Characterization of Job in the Narrative Framework of the Book," JSOT 42 (1989), 37-52), who suggests that the author left the prose frame largely intact to emphasize the contrast between the idealized patient Job of the folk-tale, whom he intends the readers to reject, and his own very human impatient Job of the poem, whom he expects the reader to embrace.

“Job the Patient” and “Job the Impatient.”<sup>7</sup> The genius of the compiler is seen in the skillful blending of the two to produce a whole that is greater than either of its parts. However, such speculation needs to be tempered by the fact that no records or attestations to these putative sources exist.

More recent scholars have attempted to draw a picture of the author on the basis of clues derived from the text of Job. Hartley deduces that the author was a highly educated person and a devout servant of Yahweh, who is to be numbered among the great wise men of ancient Israel.<sup>8</sup> Clines attempts to construct a psychological profile of the author. He assumes that the character of Job is a projection of the author’s own values and, therefore, pictures him as a rich man who embraces the “chauvinistic” values of the patriarchal society in which he lives.<sup>9</sup> Anderson is more circumspect, acknowledging that even if the author was some kind of professional Wisdom teacher, we can infer little about his place in society or the setting in which he composed this work.<sup>10</sup> Wolfers generally agrees with Hartley’s depiction of the attributes of the author, and on the basis of his own preferred dating (early 7<sup>th</sup> century B. C. E.) and the numerous textual and thematic similarities between the books of Job and Isaiah,

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. Encyclopedia Judaica, Vol. 10 (Jerusalem: Keter; New York: Macmillan, 1971), 112-119; H. L. Ginsberg, “Job the Patient and Job the Impatient,” (Vetus Testamentum, Supplements, 17: 88-111, 1969).

<sup>8</sup> Hartley, John E. The Book of Job. (The New International Commentary on the Old Testament, ed. R. K. Harrison. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 17.

<sup>9</sup> David J. A. Clines, “Why Is There a Book of Job, and What Does It Do to You If You Read It?” in The Book of Job ed. W. A. M. Beuken (Leuven, Belgium: Leuven University Press, 1994, 1-20), 5-11. Clines appears to employ a 20<sup>th</sup> Century filter through which to view the text, so that his analyses reflect “liberation” and “feminist” theological perspectives.

<sup>10</sup> Francis I. Anderson, Job: An Introduction and Commentary, (Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, ed. D. J. Wiseman, Downersgrove, IL: InterVarsity, 1976), 61.

suggests that the author of Job was either the author of “first” Isaiah or someone closely associated with him.<sup>11</sup>

These divergent views regarding authorship are necessarily speculative and of little value to Joban interpretation. Knowledge of the author’s identity would aid in establishing a more precise date of composition and may also shed light on the question of genre (e.g. Wolfer’s view). Perhaps future discoveries will provide more definitive evidence concerning the identity of this unparalleled author.

### Setting and Date of Composition

In regard to the question of the dating of Job it is necessary to distinguish between the time period in which the story is set and the date of composition of the extant text. Because of correspondences between Job and the patriarchal narratives of the Pentateuch, there is general agreement that the story is set in the time of the patriarchs.<sup>12</sup> Like Abraham, Job was a man of great wealth in terms of livestock and servants. He lived a long time (~ 210 years) and his death is described in a manner analogous to the deaths of Abraham and Isaac (Gen. 25:8; 35:29). The monetary currency mentioned in Job 42:11 appears to be the same as that which was in use in the time of Jacob (Gen 33:19). In addition, like Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Job appears to fulfill the role of priest for his own family, offering sacrifices and making intercession on behalf of his children.

The question of the date of composition of a literary text is important from a hermeneutical perspective. Assumptions about the date of composition can exert a

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<sup>11</sup> David Wolfers, Deep Things Out of Darkness: The Book of Job, Essays and a New Translation, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 54-59. Cf. Hartley, 13-15 for a detailed discussion of the literary parallels between Job and Isaiah.

<sup>12</sup> See the helpful discussion in Gleason L. Archer, A Survey of Old Testament Introduction, Revised and expanded (Chicago: Moody, 1964, 1974, 1994), 505-506.

major influence on an interpreter's understanding of any particular text. For example, conclusions drawn with respect to questions of literary dependency, historical backdrop, and theological/philosophical development are all largely determined by the perceived temporal relation between various texts. The absence of any consensus with respect to the date of composition of the text of Job presents an additional hermeneutical difficulty and has contributed to the adoption of widely divergent interpretations by scholars down through the ages.

Scholars have suggested dates of composition for the book of Job which range from the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B. C. E. The few instances of independent attestation and/or historically datable references within the text have meant that the evidence deduced in support of any particular view is primarily inferential and necessarily incomplete. According to Harris, the most common view of the date of Job in conservative circles has been that the book is very old,<sup>13</sup> while less conservative scholarship has generally preferred to assign later dates.<sup>14</sup> According to Archer, the views of modern biblical scholars may be grouped into 5 historical periods: (1) Pre-Mosaic/Patriarchal age [prior to 1500]; (2) during the reign of Solomon [972-932]; (3) during the reign of Manasseh [687-642]; (4) in the time of Jeremiah [626-580]; (5) during or after the Exile [after 587].<sup>15</sup> I will attempt to briefly highlight some of the more prominent arguments used to support each of these positions.

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<sup>13</sup> R. Laird Harris, "The Book of Job and Its Doctrine of God," in Sitting with Job: Selected Studies on the Book of Job, ed. Roy B. Zuck (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992, 151-179; reprinted idem, Grace Theological Journal, 13: 3-33, 1972), 151.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Driver, lxv-lxxi, who favors a date on 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E.

<sup>15</sup> Archer, 506-511.

The assignment of a pre-Mosaic date finds support in the rabbinic tradition recorded in the Talmud and the Targums.<sup>16</sup> It also appears to have been a view widely held in Christian circles (e.g., Eusebius) up to recent times. However, it must be acknowledged that these sources are relatively late. The Babylonian Talmud, for example, was not codified until the 5<sup>th</sup> century C.E., with the extant manuscripts being dated later still. Among the Hebrew texts found at Qumran, only Job and the Pentateuch are sometimes written in Paleo-Hebrew script. Gordis takes this as proof that the Qumran community accepted Mosaic authorship of the book of Job.<sup>17</sup> He also points out that the Syriac version of the OT, the Peshitta, placed the book of Job immediately after the Pentateuch for ostensibly the same reason.

From a historical perspective, scholars have noted similarities between Job and other Ancient Near Eastern texts which appear to address similar, if not identical themes.<sup>18</sup> For this reason Harris concludes that the book of Job seems to fit well with the ideas and literature of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium B.C.E. Pope asserts that “the ideas championed by Job’s friends were normative in Mesopotamian theology from the early second millennium B.C.”<sup>19</sup> He discusses the similarities between Job and several works on suffering from Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Babylonia. While the existence of such documents does not directly address the dating of Job, they do demonstrate that the ideas articulated by Job and his friends do not necessarily reflect a later and more fully developed theology. Thus, these documents are consistent with the assignment of an early date to the text of Job.

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<sup>16</sup> Archer, 505; Cf. Footnote 3 (this document). It must be acknowledged that support for later dates may also be derived from these same sources as rabbinic views were diverse.

<sup>17</sup> Robert Gordis, The Book of Job and Man: A Study of Job, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), 216.

<sup>18</sup> The significance of these documents is discussed below.



With respect to internal evidence for the dating of the composition of Job, the patriarchal setting (noted above) is also consistent with a Mosaic era date. However, even if the text of the book of Job recounts a historical event (as opposed to being a parable or folk-tale), it does not necessarily follow that the account was promptly written down. Some scholars have suggested that this patriarchal setting is merely contrived by the author, who intentionally employs various archaisms to create the appropriate atmosphere and so is of little value in establishing the date of composition.<sup>20</sup> Archer argues that the absence of any demonstrable knowledge of the Mosaic code in Job is of the utmost significance. He observes that every other book of the Old Testament presupposes Abraham, the Torah, and God's covenant with Israel. The only reasonable explanation for this, in Archer's view, is that the events depicted in Job and the written record of his experience were completed before the conquest of Canaan by Joshua and before the departure of Israel from Egyptian bondage. In Archer's view this implies that the original composition was written in a language other than Hebrew and later translated for inclusion in the Hebrew canon.<sup>21</sup>

Harris also argues for an early date (pre-monarchy, possibly Mosaic) on the basis of internal evidence.<sup>22</sup> He notes that Job's sacrificial ritual has much in common with that of the patriarchs, but bears no resemblance to the tabernacle ritual commonly observed from the time of Moses. In this context Harris sees Job's priestly function as analogous to Abraham and (possibly) even to Melchizedek. The names of places and people in the text of Job lead Harris to suggest that Job and his friends may have been

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<sup>19</sup> Marvin H. Pope, *Job* (Anchor Bible Commentary, Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965), xxxv.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Driver, lxvi; Hartley, 16-17.

<sup>21</sup> Archer, 508; The "translation theory" as an explanation for the provenance of Job is carefully investigated and rejected by Gordis, 210-211.

<sup>22</sup> Harris, 154.

distantly related to the Israelites. He speculates further that the characters in Job may provide a glimpse of other godly men of Abraham's day who, like Melchizedek, worshipped the true God even though they were not in Abraham's immediate family.

A date of composition during the reign of Solomon has been advocated by Gregory Nazianzen (4<sup>th</sup> century C.E.), Martin Luther, Franz Delitzsch, and Francis Anderson. Four observations are usually offered in support of this view: (1) the prosperity and leisure of Solomon's age are generally believed to have facilitated the production of literary works of the highest order (e.g. Psalms, Proverbs); (2) the era was characterized by an interest in Wisdom; (3) the similar perspective with respect to the nature of godly wisdom that is found in Proverbs 8 and Job 28; (4) the author of Job is assumed to possess extensive knowledge of the Near East and of countries such as Egypt, which comports well with the extensive international trade that typified Israel's commerce during this era.<sup>23</sup>

Support for dating the composition of Job during the reign of Manasseh is derived primarily from a consideration of the social and economic climate of the times. This was an age characterized by moral degeneracy and widespread injustice and, therefore, is assumed to have been a time when questions about God's providence and justice would naturally be expected to arise. Archer cites Ewald and Hitzig as outstanding proponents of this view.<sup>24</sup> The chief problem with this view, however, is that there is no suggestion of national misfortune in the text of Job.

A date for the composition of Job during the time of Jeremiah is advocated by J. Steinmueller, who bases his views on the similarities between Job and the writings of Jeremiah with respect to both content and language (Cf. Job 21:7 with Jer. 12:1-3; Job

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<sup>23</sup> Archer, 508; Anderson, 63.

<sup>24</sup> Archer, 509-510.

3:3 with Jer. 20: 14-18). He also ascribes significance to the fact that, apart from the book of Job, the land of Uz is only mentioned in Jer. 25:20 and Lam. 4:21. However, as Archer points out these similarities are too vague to be considered compelling.<sup>25</sup> Closer parallels exist with other biblical texts and the direction of literary dependence is at least as likely to be the opposite of Steinmueller's expectation. In fact, other commentators have employed the same observations as evidence of a post-Exilic date.

Finally, Driver, Gordis, and Dhorme are among those who have opted for a post-Exilic dating for the composition of the book of Job. Arguments advanced in support of such a view include the similarities of the book of Job to the books of Jeremiah (above) and Deutero-Isaiah (dated later than 550 B.C.E.). The similarities with Isaiah include what is perceived as a highly developed personal morality and doctrine of God in Job, and the analogy between the suffering of the innocent Job and the Servant of the Lord in Isaiah. While these parallels surely exist, the direction of dependency and the accuracy of the presumed late dating of these prophetic books are variables which add considerable uncertainty to the equation.

Further support for a post-Exilic date has been adduced from the presence of so-called "Aramaisms" in the text of Job. According to Gordis, it is methodologically unsound to treat all Aramaisms in the same way.<sup>26</sup> For this reason he asserts that, in general, the occurrence of a few Aramaisms in a Hebrew text is insufficient to determine its age or origin. However, with respect to Job he argues that there is a sufficient

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<sup>25</sup> Archer, 510.

<sup>26</sup> Robert Gordis, "The Language and Style of Job," in Sitting with Job: Selected Studies on the Book of Job, ed. Roy B. Zuck (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992;reprinted from Robert Gordis, The Book of God and Man: A Study of Job [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996, 157-168.], 84-85), favors a more complex analysis, grouping Aramaisms into 4 distinct categories: (1) vocabulary indigenous to both Aramaic and Hebrew; (2) loan words which entered Hebrew during the pre-Exilic period; (3) later Hebrew borrowing during the Babylonian captivity and post-Exilic period; (4) idioms and morphological forms introduced into Hebrew and patterned after Aramaic usage.

abundance of Aramaisms to substantiate the assignment of a late (post-Exilic) date.<sup>27</sup>

Others, such as H. N. Snaith and F. Anderson, disagree.<sup>28</sup>

Pope offers two additional reasons for rejecting an Exilic or post-Exilic date for Job.<sup>29</sup> First, he points out that a Jewish author in the midst of the Exile or immediately thereafter would inevitably regard the story of Job as a parable for the suffering of his nation. However, no hint of such a viewpoint is present in the book of Job. Second, it is equally unlikely that a Jewish author would have chosen to portray an Edomite (as Job may have been) in such heroic terms.<sup>30</sup> The Jews would surely remember that when Judah had been taken into captivity the Edomites had rejoiced at their humiliation.

With respect to external evidence which may bear on the date of composition, two sets of observations emerge. First a reference to Job is found in Ezekiel 14: 14, 20, which mentions him along with Noah and Daniel. If this reference is indeed to the biblical Job, then it would indicate that Job was composed before 600 B.C.E. Scholars who opt for a later date tend to conjecture that this reference to Job is to the ancient “folk-tale” which preceded the composition of the biblical book. They also point out that the reference to Daniel (a work they date to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C.E.) is problematic. Conservative scholars have countered that the reference to Daniel may actually be to an

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<sup>27</sup> See Driver and Gray, lxx, and Edouard Dhorme, “The Language of the Book of Job,” in Sitting with Job: Selected Studies on the Book of Job, ed. Roy B. Zuck (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 96, for examples of earlier commentators who accept the occurrence of the Arabisms and Aramaisms as consistent with the assignment of a late date for the Book of Job.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. H. N. Snaith, The Book of Job: Its Origin and Purpose, (Studies in Biblical Theology 2, Volume 11, London: SCM; Naperville: Allenson, 1968), 83, who concludes, “We find virtually no Aramaisms at all” in the book of Job. Anderson, 61, n.1, observes that a quantitative assessment does not bear out the claim that Job is “aramaized” like other post-Exilic writings. While such an analysis does demonstrate that the Elihu speeches have more Aramaisms than the rest of the book the frequency does not rise to the level of Esther, Ecclesiastes or the Song of Solomon.

<sup>29</sup> Pope, xxxiii-xxxiv. However, Pope’s identification of Job with the land of Edom must be considered conjectural at best. Cf. Obadiah, verses 10-14.

<sup>30</sup> The idea that Job has an Edomite background is at least as old as the LXX, which equates Job with Jobab, king of Edom (Gen. 36:33).

ancient wise man (Dan'el) identified in Ugaritic texts as the father of the hero, Aqhat. Such an identification, however, poses its own problems in that the Daniel of Ugarit does not appear to merit the "righteous" designation bequeathed by Ezekiel. Because the focus of the Ezekiel text is not on the antiquity of the trio, but rather on the high degree of moral integrity possessed by each man, there is no need for Ezekiel to have selected characters from antiquity. Therefore, the possibility that the biblical Daniel, a contemporary of Ezekiel, is in view cannot be ruled out.

A second source of external evidence is found in the many verbal and literary parallels which exist between the text of Job and other biblical books. Examples include: Job 2:13/Prov 10:28 ("the hope of the wicked shall perish"), Job 3:3-6/Jer. 20:14-18 (both cursed the day of their birth), Job 5:17/Prov. 3:11 (... despise not the chastening of the Almighty/Lord), Job 7:17/Ps 8:5 ("What is man that you magnify/ remember him?"), Job 14:11/ Is. 19:5 ("... the waters shall fail from the sea"), Job 28/Prov. 1:7; 9:10; 15:33; Ps. 11:10 (the identification of wisdom with the fear of the Lord), etc.<sup>31</sup> Harris makes special mention of the verbal parallel between Job 27:1; 29:1 and Num. 23:7, 18; 24:3, 15. He acknowledges that the parallel expression "he took up his parable and said" may merely reflect common linguistic usage, but he finds it intriguing that the four occurrences in Numbers all refer to Balaam, "another man of the eastern area," who was a contemporary of Moses.

Parallel passages have been used in support of both early and late dates. Uncertainty about the degree and the direction of the literary dependence and about the dating of parallel texts lies at the heart of the differing conclusions. In truth, the direction of dependence between two texts is often very difficult to establish without knowing in

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<sup>31</sup> These and other passages are discussed in detail in Harris, 153-154; Additional parallels especially between Job and Isaiah are documented by Hartley, 11-15; Cf. Wolfers, 53, 56-57, who emphasizes parallels with the early chapters of Isaiah.

advance which text has priority. Subjective assessments, such as the level of detail and the degree of development of the thought, may serve as internal clues with regard to priority, but are rarely conclusive. Employing such considerations Harris is persuaded that the Joban texts often appear to merit priority over the corresponding parallels. Similarly, with respect to the interplay between Isaiah and Job, Hartley finds himself in agreement with Pfeiffer and Terrien, who assert that it is most likely that the author of Job wrote before Isaiah (740 - 690? B. C. E.), "for he only alludes to the vicarious merit of innocent suffering; Isaiah develops this theme more fully."<sup>32</sup> Hartley appreciates the import of such an observation when he states:

If this position is correct, the message of the book of Job prepared the people to understand and receive Isaiah's bold new message that God was going to redeem his people and the world through the innocent suffering of his obedient Servant.<sup>33</sup>

This insight demonstrates to what extent the assignment of a date to a text can influence the manner in which that text is interpreted. If Job was composed prior to Isaiah, then the text may be understood to play a key role in the unfolding of God's plan of redemption as it functions to prepare the hearts and minds of the people of God to hear the more fully developed message of Isaiah. In turn, Isaiah's depiction that this redemption would be accomplished through the efficacious suffering of YHWH's innocent servant, itself points forward to the ultimate realization of God's plan in the incarnation, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In contrast, if Job is dependent on Isaiah, then the function of Job within the canon must be viewed quite differently. Rather than a preparatory role, Job might be seen as an expansion or a commentary on the "Suffering Servant" motif of Isaiah (Gordis), engaging the reader in a

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<sup>32</sup> Hartley, 15; Cf. R. H. Pfeiffer, "The Priority of Job over Is. 40-55, Journal of Biblical Literature 46 (1927), 202-206. In contrast Gordis, 216, argues for the priority of Isaiah, seeing further development occurring in Job as (1) the insights about suffering are transferred from the nation to the individual and (2) the fact that Job appears to take monotheism for granted.

philosophical/theological exploration of questions relating to theodicy and the nature of human suffering. While neither perspective necessarily negates or diminishes the value of Job, the issue of priority does dramatically influence a reader's opinion about the purpose of the book.

In the final analysis it must be admitted that is not possible to date the composition of the book of Job with any degree of precision. However, after examining the arguments offered by various scholars the preponderance of evidence seems to favor the assignment of an earlier (up to the reign of Solomon) rather than later (post-Exilic) date. If one considers the patriarchal setting of the story and the thematic similarities to ancient Ugaritic literature, then a date of composition close to the Mosaic era, while far from certain, is not unreasonable.

### Genre

The identification of a literary work as belonging to a particular genre can exert considerable influence upon the biblical interpreter by shaping expectations about the form and content of a text under study. This influence may be beneficial, allowing appropriate insights gained from analyses of related literature to be applied to the text under study. The influence may also be detrimental. The expectations derived from genre considerations may make an interpreter oblivious to features which are important, but unexpected, or cause an interpreter to reject as spurious a feature judged to be atypical of the assigned genre. As with the preceding considerations of authorship and date, the inability of scholars to definitively describe the genre of the book of Job has contributed to the proliferation of interpretations.

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<sup>33</sup> Hartley, 15.

Traditionally Job has been identified with the Hebrew wisdom literature. Driver states that on the basis of the content of the speeches (ch. 3, 32-41), Job has commonly (and in his view correctly) been classified with Proverbs, Qoheleth, Sirach, and Wisdom “as belonging to the ‘Wisdom’ or reflective literature of the Jews in which human life is considered broadly without the overruling national interest which characterizes most other Hebrew literature.”<sup>34</sup> This characterization of Job has been embraced by biblical scholars of many eras. Even those scholars who argue that the book of Job is complex, exhibiting features belonging to multiple genres, still treat the work as if these other genres may be subsumed under the heading of Wisdom.

Some scholars have openly questioned this traditional categorization. For example, J. L. Crenshaw asks:

What if the Book of Job does not belong to wisdom literature? After all, Chapter 31 has the form of Egyptian ritual texts. . . . None can deny strong affinity between Job and complaints within the book of Psalms and related laments in Mesopotamian texts. The book certainly can be viewed as an answered lament, a model for the appropriate manner of responding to suffering. It also has the form of a disputation, specifically, a mythological prologue, a debate, and a divine resolution. In addition the book freely incorporates material from prophetic literature, especially Isaiah 40-55, and traditions concerning the divine self manifestation. The ending of the poetic dialogue, specifically God’s approach to humans, belongs to prophetic and narrative texts but is ill at home in wisdom contexts.<sup>35</sup>

According to Bullock the book of Job defies all efforts to establish its literary genre. It has been viewed as an epic, a tragedy, and a parable.<sup>36</sup> It has also been

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<sup>34</sup> Driver and Gray, xxi-xxii; However, Driver acknowledges that Job possesses certain literary features which cause it to stand apart from all other literary forms.

<sup>35</sup> J. L. Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom*, SCM Press, 1982, 16, cited in Wolfers, 48.

<sup>36</sup> Bullock, 74, attributes these classifications to Nahum Sarna, Horace Kallen and Moses Maimonides, respectively (see footnotes 21-24).



classified as a lawsuit (Richter) and a dramatized lament (Westerman).<sup>37</sup> Hartley (in agreement with Gordis, Pope) considers Job to be *sui generis* (a genre unto itself).<sup>38</sup> He sees the book of Job as exhibiting multiple genres, including lament, lawsuit, petition, hymns, affirmations, wisdom, warning, and disputation.<sup>39</sup> If Job is truly a genre unto itself, and if there is no overarching literary motif which does justice to the entirety of the text, then perhaps it is time to reconsider the import of these various sub-genres.

Hoffman observes that this multiplicity of motifs makes it impossible to determine how the book of Job needs to 'behave,' what anticipations the reader ought to develop, and what features are out of place, requiring some type of exegetical treatment.<sup>40</sup> For these reasons, Hoffman argues that it is not possible to draw any firm conclusions regarding the relation between the extant text and any supposed "original" version of the book. In view of these observations, it is especially important that any interpreter of the book of Job guard against the tendency to generate expectations about the text of Job on the basis of apparent similarities with texts assigned to any particular genre. At best such expectations will inform only one aspect of the work under study. For example, while the identification of a "legal motif" in the text of Job has undoubtedly aided our understanding of selected passages, yet Job is not in itself primarily a legal text, not does the category of lawsuit adequately encompass it. To treat it as such would be inappropriate and misleading.

Thus, there is no general agreement among scholars as to the most appropriate genre designation for the book of Job. My own sympathies lie with the questions raised

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<sup>37</sup>Hartley, 37-38.

<sup>38</sup> Hartley, 38, Gordis, 7.

<sup>39</sup> Hartley, 40-41; Cf. Yair Hoffman, *A Blemished Perfection: The Book of Job in Context*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 213, ed. D. J. A. Clines and P. R. Davies, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 31-45.

by Crenshaw. I do not believe that the category of Wisdom does justice to the full scope of the text of Job. Other options need further exploration, especially the prophetic character of much of the text.

Many of the characters in the story claim to speak for God. For example, Eliphaz (Job 4:12-21) claims to have received a divine message in a dream and repeats it to Job as a word of instruction. Bildad (Job 8: 20-22) speaks prophetically of Job's ultimate end, "Lo, God will not reject a man of integrity, nor will he support the evildoers. He will yet fill your mouth with laughter, and your lips with shouting. Those who hate you will be clothed with shame; and the tent of the wicked will be no more." Likewise, Zophar (Job 20) prompted by "the spirit of my understanding" instructs Job in the ways of God and His dealings with the wicked. Finally, Elihu also (Job 33 - 37; note especially 33:3-5) claims to speak for God as he seeks to accuse Job and instruct the "comforters" in the ways of God and to vindicate God's actions in the world. Job also claims to speak for God (Job 27:11), "I will instruct you in the power of God; what is with the Almighty I will not conceal." Job also utters a number of statements with prophetic (and eschatological) import. Examples of such statements include: (1) "If a man dies shall he live again?" (Job 14:14); "As for me I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will take his stand on the earth." (Job 19:25-26); and his remarks about God's mastery over nature (Job 26:5-14) which are expanded upon by YHWH as He speaks from the whirlwind.

In addition, Job frequently directs his remarks directly to God (reminiscent of prayer). Prophetic and prayerful speech of this sort is abundant in Job and does not appear to fit within the realm of the Hebrew Wisdom genre per se. While I am not prepared to go as far as Wolfers in suggesting prophetic authorship of Job,

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<sup>40</sup> Hoffman, 37.

nevertheless, it is likely that further studies of its genre will yield additional insights about the canonical function of the book of Job.

### Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) Literary Parallels

Several scholars have noted apparent thematic similarities between the Book of Job and various ancient texts.<sup>41</sup> A number of these texts have been classified as “righteous sufferer” texts, and are believed by some to address the question of theodicy. However, it must be acknowledged that the interpretation of many of these texts has been hampered by their generally fragmentary nature. Frequently, key lines of a text are missing. In some of these texts the missing lines appear to be important in establishing the innocence or guilt of the protagonist, which is fundamental with respect to the question of theodicy. This contributes to the debate over whether any of the Mesopotamian texts routinely described as “righteous sufferer” texts are appropriately classified. If the protagonist understands his suffering to be the result of personal sin, then the question of innocent suffering is clearly not in view. In general, missing lines have been reconstructed by various scholars on the basis of reasonable literary and linguistic (e.g., poetic parallelism) assumptions. However, these reconstructions are only hypothetical, and conclusions drawn from them are necessarily speculative apart from independent attestation.

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<sup>41</sup> Newell, (Th.M. Thesis.), 42-64, provides a competent overview of the relevant texts. Cf. John Gray, “The book of Job in the Context of Near Eastern Literature,” Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 82 (1970): 251-269; Anderson, 23-32; Hartley, 6-11; For general background see Peter Craigie, Ugarit and the Old Testament, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983); J. J. M. Roberts, “The Ancient Near Eastern Environment.” in The Hebrew Bible and Its Modern Interpreters, ed. D. G. Knight and G. M. Tucker, (Minneapolis: Fortress/Atlanta: Scholars, 1985), 75-121.

Recently, Bricker has called into question the validity of viewing most of these Mesopotamian texts as speaking to the question of theodicy.<sup>42</sup> Bricker, following Wolfram von Soden, has evaluated the Mesopotamian literature in light of the four requirements which must be satisfied in order for the question of theodicy to be raised: “(1) a clear sense of right and wrong, so that a sufferer could reasonably claim to be suffering undeservedly; (2) significant individual worth, so that personal suffering must be justified; (3) minimal competition within the godhead or pantheon, so that suffering cannot be blamed on one deity due to human loyalty to another; and (4) a limited view of judgment in the afterlife.”<sup>43</sup> According to Bricker, all four of these elements must be present to establish the tension which leads to a theodicy, because the absence of any one of these components can negate or qualify the principle of just retribution. Following a careful analysis of each of the relevant texts, Bricker concludes:

...each of the texts examined from Mesopotamia (except for the Erra poem) implies that the sufferer can never claim innocence, only ignorance. Evil was built into humanity; thus suffering was to be expected. It was simply part of the normal world order; thus there was no need to question and complain. . . . Simply stated, there are few instances where suffering is undeserved, and there is no recourse but to admit one's guilt, praise one's god and plead for mercy.<sup>44</sup>

Bricker also notes that even in Erra, the one document which mentions the suffering of innocent people who were punished along with the guilty, there is no attempt to justify

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<sup>42</sup> Daniel P. Bricker, “Innocent Suffering in Mesopotamia,” Tyndale Bulletin 51(2, 2000), 193-214.

<sup>43</sup> Bricker, 193-4, cites W. von Soden, “Das Fragen nach der Gerechtigkeit Gottes im Alten Orient,” Mitteilungen der deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft 96 (1965), 41-59.

<sup>44</sup> Bricker, 210. A recent translation of the “Poem of Erra” by S. Daily may be found in W. W. Hallo and K. Lawson Younger, ed., The Context of Scripture (3 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 1997-1997), 1.404-416.

the actions of the god.<sup>45</sup> Thus, theodicy in a proper sense is not in view in any of these texts.

Nevertheless, scholars have cautiously proceeded to reconstruct a picture of the theology and culture of the Ancient Near East on the basis of these texts. Several of the relevant Mesopotamian texts were composed prior to 1200 BCE (the generally accepted date of the destruction of Ugarit). The oldest of these texts, the Sumerian “Man and his God,” has been dated as early as 2000 BCE.<sup>46</sup> It is possible that these texts may be typical of the literary milieu with which the author of Job was acquainted and may even have influenced the composition of the book of Job. Therefore, such texts may provide some insights into the date of composition and the nature of the genre of the book of Job. They may also provide insight into the theological background of the dialogue between Job and his comforters.

With respect to the date of composition, theological concepts or beliefs which are clearly attested in the Mesopotamian texts may be understood to be rooted in antiquity and not the product of later (supposedly more mature) reflections, as some Joban commentators, who desire to assign a late date of composition to the book of Job, have suggested. The fact that there is clear attestation in the ancient Mesopotamian literature of concepts and motifs common to the book of Job, such as retributive justice (i.e. punishment for sin), pious frustration over the prosperity of the wicked, human suffering as a direct result of the action of a deity, and possibly even the idea of innocent suffering, lends support to the assignment of an early date of composition for the book of Job.

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<sup>45</sup> Bricker, 208-210.

<sup>46</sup> S. N. Kramer, “Man and his God: A Sumerian Variation on the Job Motif,” in Wisdom in Israel and in the Ancient Near East, ed. M. Noth and D. W. Thomas, (VTS 3; Leiden: Brill, 1955), 170-182. ANET, 589-591. Gray, 261, suggests a date of 2000-1700 BCE.

The diversity with respect to form, style, and content among these Mesopotamian texts and their many differences with the book of Job make them of only limited use in exploring the question of genre. However, some scholars, such as Newell, stressing the similarities between these texts and the book of Job, have sought to establish a common pattern with respect to how an “innocent sufferer” should respond to his god, and to suggest that this pattern may be paradigmatic of the genre and therefore instructive in determining the nature of Job’s response.<sup>47</sup>

Finally, theological perspectives derived from these Mesopotamian texts appear to inform the opinions articulated by Job’s comforters and even by Job himself. For example, the insistence on the part of Job’s comforters that God acts in accord with the principle of retributive justice may be understood to merely recapitulate the common theological understanding of that time. This correlation suggests that the comforters may have been the product of (or at least modeled after individuals belonging to) the culture of ancient Mesopotamia. Similarly, Job’s oft-expressed frustration over the apparent prosperity of the wicked may also reflect a theological concept which was being actively debated at the time when Job was being written.

### Structure and Language of the Book of Job

Traditionally, the book of Job has been viewed as being comprised of a prose frame narrative enclosing a mostly poetic discourse. Considerable scholarly debate has surrounded the question of how the prose frame and the poetic discourse are related.<sup>48</sup> More recently scholars such as Norman Habel (following Robert Alter) have suggested

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<sup>47</sup> Cf. Newell, (Th.M, thesis), pp. 64, 144. Newell seeks to obtain support for his interpretation of **נחם** in Job 42:6 as “repentance from sin” on the basis of an inference drawn from ANE “theodicy” texts in which the expected response of the protagonist (even if innocent) is confession and repentance of his personal sin. For reasons discussed above (pp. 18-19) in connection with Hoffman’s views, such an approach cannot be sustained.

that the appropriate model for the book of Job is the traditional biblical narrative. According to this perspective, dialogue functions in biblical narrative not only to report or foreshadow specific actions in the plot, but rather is itself “an action which retards, complicates, or resolves an episode of the plot.”<sup>49</sup> Therefore, Job should not be viewed as a collection of independent poetic speeches inserted into a traditional narrative context, but rather as a narrative whose plot incorporates lengthy poetic speeches which are integral to that plot. A detailed consideration of the arguments offered in support of the various viewpoints is beyond the scope of this thesis; however, the interpretive remarks which follow presume a perspective consistent with the position advocated by Habel. Despite these differing views of the structure of the book of Job, virtually all scholars agree that the central poetic discourse requires some type of framework to provide a context for the discussion. Freedman states:

In the end, the Dialogue requires a frame, and the one we have does as well or better than any we might reconstruct. In the same way the story, while not requiring the Dialogue to form a bridge between beginning and ending (Prologue and Epilogue), is nonetheless enriched thereby.<sup>50</sup>

The necessity of the “prologue” and “epilogue” for the proper interpretation of the central discourses will be discussed in more detail below.

The central poetic portion of the text is composed mainly of a series of speeches. Job initiates the dialogue with his “comforters” with a lament (Job 3) which depicts the

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<sup>48</sup> See my comments under the discussion of authorship (p. 6) which will not be repeated here.

<sup>49</sup> Habel, 26.

<sup>50</sup> David N. Freeman, “The Book of Job,” in *The Hebrew Bible and Its Interpreters*, ed. W. H. Propp, B. Halpern, D. N. Freedman (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990, 33-51), 38. Cf. Bullock, 74, 83; Christopher R. Seitz, “Job: Full-Structure, Movement, and Interpretation,” *Interpretation* 43(1): 5-17, 1989.

depths of his personal agony.<sup>51</sup> The speeches which follow are generally considered to occur in three cycles (chapters 4-14, 15-21, and 22-27). In each cycle Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar reply in turn to Job's statements. Their replies are sequential, but not contiguous. They are interspersed with the speeches of Job, who both reacts to each of their arguments and leads the discussion forward. The third cycle is considered to be defective from a literary perspective due to the relatively short speech attributed to Bildad and the absence of a speech by Zophar. This has led some commentators to propose that the text of Job is corrupted at this point and to emend the text to remedy this difficulty.<sup>52</sup> However, as Bullock has pointed out such emendations are not required to make sense of the text. The apparent defective character of the third cycle of speeches may be intentional and serve to signal to the reader that the "comforters" have now exhausted their arguments.<sup>53</sup> These speeches are followed by Job's poem on wisdom (28), his closing monologue (29-31), Elihu's speeches (32-37), the legitimacy and function of which have also been the subject of considerable debate, and the divine speeches (including Job's replies, 38:1-42:6).

As is typical of all biblical Hebrew poetry, this poetic discourse is principally characterized by its use of parallelism (as opposed to meter or rhyme) and secondarily by its rich use of figurative language, such as simile and metaphor (e.g., legal language), imagery, hyperbole, irony, sarcasm, and perhaps most prominently the extensive use of

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<sup>51</sup> Anderson, 96-97, acknowledges the difficulty categorizing this section. He considers and rejects the terms "discussion," "debate," "conversation," and "dialogue," suggesting that "contest" may be most appropriate. The "contest" seems to have been a debate format in which the victor is the one who makes the best speech as judged in terms of its inherent quality and cleverness, as opposed to its effectiveness in refuting an opponent. Such a format implies an audience (e.g., note the presence of Elihu). In such a format the speakers are not necessarily trying to convince each other, which may explain why it is difficult to trace the connection between one speech and the next.

<sup>52</sup> Gordis, 268-269, attempts to rectify this asymmetry by lengthening Bildad's speech (attributing 26:5-14 to him) and by attributing 27:13-23 to Zophar.



rhetorical questions in the YHWH speeches (38:2 -41:34).<sup>54</sup> Gordis describes parallelism as the heightening of the impact of an idea or emotion by having one poetic line (stich, colon) followed by another which echoes, contrasts, or completes the content of the first.<sup>55</sup> Through the skillful use of parallelism, the Hebrew poet is able to communicate subtleties and nuances of meaning without employing lengthy explanations. It is this feature combined with the skillful use of synonyms and antonyms drawn from a rich vocabulary which prevents the repetition of the same idea in adjoining stichs from becoming monotonous and serves to sustain the reader's interest through approximately forty chapters of poetic discourse.

It is important to recognize the poetic character of these speeches, when attempting to interpret them. Poetry in every language evokes an emotional response from the reader. This is no less true of the book of Job. The volubility of the utterances and the passionate pleas of the participants draw the reader into the story. This communication between Job and the comforters is not one of dispassionate reasoning, but reveals the personal conflicts and vulnerabilities of the principle characters. Although they are considering matters of weighty philosophical and theological import, they are considering these matters in a context of personal physical suffering and emotional anguish (Cf. 2:12). Poetic expression, although not required, is particularly well suited to capture and creatively express this depth of emotion. Thus, when Job

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<sup>53</sup> Bullock, 102.

<sup>54</sup> Habel, 42-60, discusses many of these literary features at length in the introduction to his commentary.

<sup>55</sup> Gordis, 81-82. Ernst R. Wendland, Analyzing the Psalms (Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1998), 57-125 provides a more detailed and nuanced analysis of Biblical Hebrew (BH) parallelism, distinguishing between "connected parallelism" (i.e. between parallel lines) which Gordis has in view, and "distant parallelism" which is frequently employed in BH poetry to mark text boundaries. Cf. the discussions of the nature of Hebrew poetry in C. Hassell Bullock, An Introduction to the Old Testament Poetic Books (Revised and Expanded, Chicago: Moody,

curses the day of his birth (3:3-10), laments the futility of his life in the context of his present circumstances (7:1-6), accuses God of punishing him unjustly (9:17 ff.), chides his comforters to seek instruction from the beasts and the birds (12: 7-9), and so forth, consideration must be given to the emotional state of the speaker and to the poetic and rhetorical devices (e.g. metaphor, irony, sarcasm, etc.) being employed by the author. The unguarded candor and genuine feeling of such utterances resonate with the reader. These considerations apply not only to the comments of Job, but also to those of the comforters and of YHWH himself.

The terseness of speech typical of poetry is also an important interpretive consideration. Job's indictments of his God and his friends (and vice versa) are made the more powerful and the more difficult to interpret as a consequence of this feature. Many readers of this story down through the ages may have preferred that Job couch his remarks, especially his accusations, more tactfully. If only Job's words had been less direct, less definite. Perhaps he should have made statements such as these: "[In my ignorance it seems to me that God] multiplies my wounds without cause" (9:17) or, "[it is as if] God ... tosses me into the hands of the wicked" (16:11). In considering the poetic character of the text, the interpreter understands that such a perspective may be in view. However, to add such comments to the text would only serve to rob the remarks of their force and to transform them from the passionate cries of a participant into the measured reflections of an observer. Terseness of speech is also observed in the absence of smooth transitions between one speech and the next. At one level this makes it more difficult for the reader/listener (or interpreter) to follow the "discussion," at another level it adds authenticity, because it reflects the way in which verbal communication often takes place.

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1979, 1988), 31-38; Archer, 483-485; and Robert Alter, The Art of Biblical Poetry (New York: Basic Books, 1985), 3-26, 62-84.

Finally, the use of figurative language (e.g. metaphor, hyperbole) and rhetorical devices, coupled with the terseness of expression, invite the reader to ponder more deeply the assertions being made by all of the participants. In so doing the reader becomes aware of the significance of the theological implications of each participant's words. In addition, the interpreter who views Job's remarks with respect to their poetic form and emotional context, is not surprised when God fails to condemn Job, because the interpreter understands that although Job's words challenge the theological orthodoxy of the day, they represent the sincere cries of a righteous man and do not necessarily rise to the level of sin against the Almighty.

Job has more *hapax legomena* and a richer vocabulary than any other biblical book.<sup>56</sup> The richness of this vocabulary has been a challenge to its translation and interpretation and a source of difficulty with respect to the assignment of a date to this composition. In order to understand the many unusual terms which occur in the book of Job, modern scholars have employed insights derived from the study of other Semitic languages such as Akkadian, Ethiopic, Ugaritic, Arabic, Aramaic, and even post-biblical Hebrew. Gordis discusses the rationale for taking this approach.<sup>57</sup> While he indicates that one reason for consulting a cognate language is the possibility that a particular term was borrowed from a neighboring people, he acknowledges that in actuality this is a comparatively rare phenomenon. The basic assumption underlying the consideration of cognate roots is that Hebrew and its sister languages are all descended from a proto-Semitic tongue. Therefore, rare words which have come down to us in the relatively limited vocabulary of the Hebrew Bible may be explained by their use in some other

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<sup>56</sup> Gordis, 82. Cf. the list of hapax legomena in Franz Delitzsch, *Das Buch Hiob* (Leipzig, 1864), 125. For an analysis of the occurrence and frequency of hapax legomena in Job in comparison to other OT books see, Yair Hoffman, 178-184, 319-321.

<sup>57</sup> Gordis, 83.

Semitic language where they are more commonly used and their meanings are more certain.

For example, some scholars are of the opinion that Job possesses a considerable number of Arabisms.<sup>58</sup> However, this should not necessarily be construed as evidence that the author either knew or spoke Arabic. Gordis suggests that in most instances these Arabisms are best understood as authentic Hebrew words which are “fortunately attested by the provenance in the far richer Arabic lexicon.”<sup>59</sup> For this reason, he rejects the notion, first suggested by the medieval scholar Abraham ibn Ezra and championed by later scholars (e.g. Tur-Sinai), that Job is a translation of a non-existent Arabic original.<sup>60</sup>

Other scholars have suggested that there appear to be even more examples of Aramaisms in the text of Job.<sup>61</sup> Determining the presence and significance of these occurrences is complicated by the close relationship of the two languages and the extensive contacts between the Hebrew- and Aramaic-speaking peoples at several periods in their history. Among the major Semitic languages, Hebrew and Aramaic are the two most closely related members, belonging to the same sub-group of North-West Semitic. Historical data indicates that contact between the Hebrews and the Aramaic-

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<sup>58</sup> A detailed list may be found in Edouard Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job*, trans. by Harold Knight (1926; reprint, London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1967), p. clxxv-clxxix.

<sup>59</sup> Gordis, 83. Cf. Wolfers, 29, who generally disagrees with Gordis’ “comparative method” concurs on this point and warns further that “the search of cognate languages for the meaning of Hebrew words is justified only where the Hebrew words are otherwise entirely unknown, and even in these cases conclusions drawn from such discoveries should be entertained with the utmost wariness.” J. J. M. Roberts, 77-80, echoes a similar warning with respect to the use of Ugaritic cognates. Finally, Y. Hoffman, 196, states: “It is sometimes difficult to escape the impression that those who advocate the use of accumulated proofs to demonstrate that the book was written in a foreign language or dialect forget that a collection of many very weak proofs does not add up to one decisive proof.”

<sup>60</sup> Anderson, 60, who summarizes the historical development of this view, also rejects it as untenable.

<sup>61</sup> See discussions by Gordis, 84ff. and Driver and Gray, xlvī - xlvii.

speaking peoples occurred throughout the history of the Hebrew nation. An early Biblical attestation is found in Genesis 31:47 which indicates that Jacob's father-in-law Laban, with whom he lived for 20 years, spoke Aramaic. During the First Temple Period the Aramaic kingdoms and Israel shared a common border. During the Babylonian Exile and the post-Exilic period Aramaic came to be widely used throughout the Middle East for the conduct of government and business. Ultimately, Aramaic became the "language of law, literary composition and ordinary conversation" for the Jewish community of the Second Temple Period. For these reasons inferences based on the presence of Aramaisms in various Hebrew texts must be drawn with considerable care. It is possible that these so-called Aramaisms may have entered Hebrew usage at various periods and in many instances may merely reflect common modes of Hebrew thought and expression. Indeed some scholars have questioned whether any true Aramaisms are present in the text of Job.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Note the views of Snaith and Anderson cited in footnote 26.

### Chapter III - Content

#### The Prologue (Job 1 & 2):

In the prologue the reader is introduced to a man named Job, whose moral character is beyond reproach. The text (1:1) describes him as “blameless and upright (יֵשָׁר וְתָם), fearing God (יִירָא אֱלֹהִים), and turning away from evil (וְסָר מִרָע).”<sup>63</sup>

God had blessed him with a large family (seven sons and three daughters), many servants and great material wealth. In addition, Job served God by functioning as a priest of YHWH for his own household. The text (1:5) relates that Job regularly “rose up early in the morning and offered burnt offerings” on behalf of his children just in case in a moment of weakness they might have “sinned and cursed God in their hearts.”

That which unfolds next is key to establishing the literary (dramatic) tension in the story. The reader is taken behind the scenes and given a glimpse of events transpiring in a heavenly council, which provides the context for and explains the circumstances of the suffering that Job is about to undergo. Given this comprehensive knowledge, the reader is placed in the position of being able to correctly evaluate the merits of the various arguments, which are subsequently developed by Job and his “friends.” In contrast, with the exception of YHWH all of the characters in the story (including Job) remain formally ignorant of these events. This literary device (which I term “limited omniscience”) frees the author to employ sarcasm, irony, humor, hyperbole, etc. in the speeches of the characters without fear of misleading the reader.

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<sup>63</sup> The Hebrew phrase “blameless and upright” does not necessarily imply “sinless perfection,” but does attest to a degree of personal righteousness (or integrity) before God which was not common among men. This is emphasized further when the same description of Job is placed on the lips of YHWH (1:8, 2:3) and qualified by the statement: “there is none like him in all the earth.” Additional examples of Job’s character are related in Chapter 29. Job’s “righteousness” appears to be independently attested in Ezekiel 14: 14, 20.

There are two scenes in heaven (1:6-11 and 2:1-5) in which YHWH initiates the conversation with the Satan by asking whether he has “considered” (הֲשִׁמַּתָּ לְבִי עַל) YHWH’s servant Job, who is unique in terms of his piety and irreproachable character. In the first scene the Satan replies by questioning the motives of Job’s religious devotion. Is it for nothing that Job serves YHWH (1:9)? He accuses Job of serving YHWH for the simple reason that YHWH has prospered and protected him. He further challenges YHWH to “put forth your hand and touch all that he has, he will surely curse you (יְבַרְכֶּה)<sup>64</sup> to your face (1:11).” YHWH accepts the challenge and “puts forth his hand against Job” by placing all that Job possesses, save his person, into the hand of the Satan (1:12). The result of this exchange is that the Satan by means of natural disasters (the fire of God and a great wind) and human agents (the Sabeans and the Chaldeans) removed virtually all of Job’s wealth. The only “possessions” left were the servants who escaped to bring the news and Job’s wife (whom the Satan would use later). To heighten the drama, Job receives news of all these losses in rapid fashion with each succeeding messenger coming upon the heels of the former.

Job’s response to this great loss was unexpected on the part of the Satan. Job tore his robes and shaved his head (signs of intense mourning), then he fell to the ground and he worshipped (וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶה). The author records Job’s words:

Naked I came from my mother’s womb,  
And naked I shall return there.

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<sup>64</sup> Lit. “bless you;” Cf. L. Kohler and W. Baumgartner, eds., A Bilingual Dictionary of the Hebrew and Aramaic Old Testament (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1998), 154, indicates that בָּרַךְ is used euphemistically for אָרַר, קָלַל in 1Ki. 21:10, 13 and Job 1:5, 11; Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles Briggs, The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997; reprint Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1906), 139, indicates that בָּרַךְ is sometimes used with the antithetical meaning of “curse” in 1 Ki. 21: 10, 13; Job 1: 5, 11, 2: 5, 9, and Ps. 10:3; Benjamin Davidson, The Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1981; reprint London: Samuel Bagster & Sons, 1848, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 1850), 116.

The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away.  
Blessed be the name of the LORD. (Job 1: 21, NASB)

The author interprets this response by stating categorically for the reader, “Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God” (1:22). Though not explicitly stated in the text it must be assumed that some period of time transpired following Job’s affliction which was of sufficient duration to satisfy the Satan. Thus, the Satan’s explanation of Job’s pious service was proven to be false. Job did not serve God for purely selfish reasons. When virtually all of his blessings were suddenly and inexplicably removed, he did not “curse God to his face,” but he continued to “fear” God as before.

A second heavenly scene closely adheres to the pattern of the first. Again YHWH initiates the conversation with the Satan by reiterating the challenge that the Satan consider His blameless and upright servant Job. YHWH points out that Job has maintained his integrity even though “you incited Me against him, to ruin him without cause” (2:3). The Satan concedes that he misjudged Job, yet he would not accept this defeat. Thus, he makes a second proposal to YHWH. “Put forth your hand, now, and touch his bone and his flesh; he will curse you to your face” (2:5).<sup>65</sup> Once again YHWH accepts the terms and conditions and “puts forth his hand” by placing Job into the hand of the Satan (2:6). The only restriction placed upon the Satan is that Job’s life must be spared. For all intents and purposes, by this action YHWH appears to have utterly abandoned Job to the wiles of his Accuser. The immediate result is that the Satan smote Job with a painful and debilitating ailment which manifested itself outwardly in the form of skin lesions (e.g. boils) which covered his entire body from the “soles of his feet to the top of his head.” It is reasonable to assume that the appearance of these lesions was not instantaneous, but more than likely developed over the course of some days

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<sup>65</sup> In Hebrew this second challenge (2:5) differs from the first (1:11) only in the substitution of the phrase “his bone and his flesh” for the phrase “for all that he has.”



during which time the ailing Job removed himself from his normal abode to sit among the ashes and began to treat his symptoms using a potsherd to obtain some relief. To this physical suffering, the Satan added an emotional assault by inducing Job's wife to tempt him to abandon his integrity and to "curse (בָּרַךְ) God and die."

Once again Job's response to all of these onslaughts failed to meet the Satan's expectations. Instead of "cursing God," Job chastised his wife for her foolish speech and challenged her by saying, "Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?" (2:10). To ensure that the message would not be misunderstood, the author again affirms, "In all this Job did not sin with his lips" (2:10). It is likely that the author added the phrase "with his lips" to further emphasize the particular point upon which the Satan was defeated. He had twice predicted that Job would curse YHWH to his face and in a further attempt to influence Job's response placed the same words upon the lips of Job's wife. In this context, the phrase "with his lips" assures the reader that Job has not capitulated.<sup>66</sup>

The Satan has thus become YHWH's agent, authorized by a divine decree to bring to pass that which he had initially proposed that YHWH should do in order to assess the nature of Job's piety. The repeated use of the term "your hand" (יָדְךָ) alludes to the close connection between the activity of YHWH and that of the Satan. Thus, the reader is informed from the outset that YHWH is ultimately behind all of the events which befall Job. This is made absolutely clear to the reader by YHWH's own admission (2:3).

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<sup>66</sup> Some have suggested that this verse signals a change in Job's attitude. The 4<sup>th</sup> century C. E. Rabbi Raba interpreted Job 2:10 as "With his lips he did not sin, but in his heart he did sin." (Babylonian Talmud, *Peachim* 113b quoted in Weinberg, 295) implying that the phrase "with his lips" suggested a discontinuity between Job's words and his state of mind. In the same document Rabbi Abaye disputes this view and defends Job's motivation.

Why did YHWH act in this way toward his servant Job? Job's behavior certainly did not merit such treatment. And it would appear that the Satan, who had undoubtedly taken note of Job's piety during his frequent forays upon the earth, had nevertheless been content to ignore him, since he was constrained by YHWH from interfering. YHWH had apparently been protecting Job for some time, presumably preparing him for the trials that were about to transpire. Then for His own inscrutable reason(s), which are never divulged to the reader, YHWH chose an opportune moment to focus the attention of the heavenly council and of the Satan upon this blameless and upright servant. In one sense it seems that YHWH had chosen a champion to demonstrate to the Satan an example of true human piety. It was YHWH who issued the initial challenge (1:8). It was the Satan who subsequently accepted the challenge and used his prerogative as the "challengee" to select the weapons (Job's children and family) and to state the terms of the contest (the "hedge" to be removed, the victor to be decided on the basis on Job's profession). The result of all of this activity is that YHWH's champion prevailed and YHWH's confidence was vindicated.

Yet, inexplicably, YHWH permits the Satan a second opportunity.<sup>67</sup> YHWH repeats his challenge to the Satan. This action may be understood to express the supreme confidence of YHWH in his champion.<sup>68</sup> This time the one challenged chooses even more devastating weapons (disease, and in all probability Job's wife and peers, as well) in order to inflict a combination of physical, emotional, and psychological suffering

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<sup>67</sup> Analogies may be observed in other OT passages. When YHWH's confrontation of evil involves human agents, He often appears to stack the deck against himself, so to speak. For example, consider 1Ki. 18:19-40 where YHWH's lone prophet (Elijah) confronts 450 prophets of Baal (plus the 400 prophets of Asherah) and pours 12 pitchers of water over his offering before calling down fire from heaven; Judges 7 where YHWH reduces Gideon's army from 30,000 to 300 before sending them up unarmed against the Midianite forces who were too numerous to be counted. In each instance YHWH is victorious and glorified by the outcome.

upon Job. With respect to the terms of the contest not only would YHWH's protection be removed, but Job himself was to be handed over to the Satan. The only restriction which YHWH placed upon the Satan's activities was that Job's life must be spared. At first glance it appears that YHWH is limiting the Satan's options and ensuring Job's survival, but upon further reflection it becomes apparent that this provision actually ensures that Job will experience the full measure of suffering. In extreme suffering it is not uncommon for people to yearn for death (or even to end their own lives) as the only means of obtaining relief. In fact many people throughout history have been commended for remaining faithful, even unto death.<sup>69</sup> Surely, if Job suffered to the point of death without "cursing God to his face," then YHWH would have been vindicated. Yet, it seems that YHWH desired even more. Job would suffer even beyond the point where a man might cry out for death to bring release (Cf. 6:8-10). He would suffer until the Satan was satisfied or until YHWH intervened.

Considerations such as these provide the context and theological framework within which the rest of the prologue, describing the arrival of Job's peers (2:11-13) and the subsequent discussions (3:1 - 42:6) and final resolution must be evaluated. Unbeknownst to Job (and the other characters in the story) he had been selected by God as his champion and was consigned to suffer innocently so that YHWH might be glorified.

The text implies that some not inconsiderable period of time transpired between the initiation of Job's affliction and the arrival of his comforters. After they hear the news Job's three friends make plans to meet together and then proceed to visit Job, ostensibly

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<sup>68</sup> Cf. Freedman, 35-39, argues an opposite position. He asserts the contest was necessary because "even God does not know how matters will turn out" (p. 35). Freedman sees this as proof that "the God of the Hebrew Bible is not omniscient" (p. 39).

<sup>69</sup> Cf. Acts 7: 59-60; Heb. 11: 13, 37; various accounts in Foxe's Book of Martyrs.

to sympathize (לְנַדֵּד־לוֹ) with him and to comfort him (וַיִּלְחַמְּנוּ).<sup>70</sup> The fact that their intentions were genuine may be seen in the nature of their response. Upon first discerning the extent of Job's plight, they raised their voices and wept at the sight of Job.<sup>71</sup> Their grief was profound as is apparent from their subsequent actions of tearing their clothes and throwing dust into the air. Upon arriving, Job's friends sat quietly with him for a period of 7 days. During this interval the true extent of Job's suffering became apparent to them as they mourned the plight of their friend. They heard Job's cries and prayers to God and observed his frail and festering frame.

#### Job's Lament (Job 3):

The silence of this vigil was broken (3:1) by Job's words cursing (קָלַל) the day of his birth.<sup>72</sup> It is important to note that Job did not curse God. Nor, as Anderson points out, did he curse himself (and by extension humanity). His eloquent words powerfully convey the depth of his suffering and the desperateness of his situation. He has experienced a great loss. Yet, as the later speeches make clear, Job's focus is not on the loss of any material possessions or even upon his own health. Such losses in themselves do not really concern Job. They merely attest to the fact that he has lost something much more precious and of inestimable value, namely the favor of his God. Therefore, he curses the day of his birth (3:3-10), he longs for the release from suffering that comes with death (3:11-19), he questions why he is still alive (3:20-23), and he

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<sup>70</sup>This is the first instance of the seven occurrences of נָדַם in Job. Here it occurs in the Pi'el in the sense of "comfort" or "consolation". It parallels נָדַד which indicates the sympathetic disposition of the friends. Both verbs are telic infinitive constructs with expressed objects.

<sup>71</sup> With regard to Job's appearance, Anderson, 95, discerns a connection with Is 52:14 and 53:3.

<sup>72</sup> Job's lament over his birth (reiterated 6:8-9, 10:18-19) along with a heightened sense of his own mortality (7:6-10, 10:20-22) provide clues to the great depth of Job's suffering.

groans under the weight of his oppression (3:24-26). However, it cannot be emphasized too strongly that the expression of these sentiments, although startling, do not indicate that Job has been broken, nor that he has sinned.

Job's lament is most properly viewed in the light of other biblical psalms of grief. This larger context demonstrates that the form and language of Job's expression is not unique or necessarily sinful, but rather exhibits features common to the genre. In Jeremiah 20, the prophet accuses YHWH of deceiving him (v.7) and complains about the extent of his personal suffering (vv. 7-10), which leads him to curse the day of his birth (vv. 14-18) using language very reminiscent of Job. We find a similar sentiment in the book of Lamentations. Here YHWH is also acknowledged as the source of the prophet's suffering (3:1-18). The nature of the afflictions is similar to that experienced by Job. For example, "He has caused my flesh and my skin to waste away" (Lam 3:4; cf. Job 3:7); "He has walled me in so that I cannot go out (Lam 3:7; cf. Job 3:23); And my soul has been rejected from peace; I have forgotten happiness" (Lam 3:17; cf. Job 3:26). The thematic parallels between Lamentations and Job extend further in that both seek the intervention of a "redeemer" and cry out for God to "judge my case" (Lam 3:59, cf. Job 9:32, 13:15-18).

The language of lament in Psalm 88, identified as "a psalm of the sons of Korah" and as "a maskil of Heman the Ezrahite", presents a picture of yet another sufferer afflicted by God and has multiple points of resonance with Job's lament. In Psalm 88, the sufferer is depicted as a man without strength (v. 4), who is like one forsaken among the dead (v. 5). Like Job he appears to be a man of genuine personal piety as he has cried out to God day and night (v. 1), called upon him every day (v. 9), and prayed in the morning (v. 13). He has become loathsome to his acquaintances (v. 8), so that they are removed far from him (v. 8, 18). He accuses God of bringing the affliction upon him (v.

6-7, 15-17), abandoning him (v. 14), and refusing to answer his pleas for help (v. 1-2, 9, 13).

Other examples could be cited from the Psalms and Prophets demonstrating that Job's response to suffering is not unique in the biblical canon. More importantly, in each of these cases the lament is not portrayed as being a sinful response to God's affliction, whether deserved or not. In each case the sufferer accuses God of being the source of his suffering. In each case the sufferer pleads for relief and vindication. Anderson observes that all of these laments are "gathered up into that horrifying dereliction of Jesus (Mt. 27:46)?<sup>73</sup> He warns that the mores of western Christendom, especially as they are articulated in the Puritan tradition, which have found fault with Job's passionate response, should not be used to judge the rightness of Job's speech. In this regard, he correctly observes that the reference in the Epistle of James (5:11) to the "patience" of Job, refers not to a detached stoicism in the face of trials, but rather to the active virtue of endurance, to steadfast persistence.

#### The Wisdom of Job's Comforters (Job 4 - 26):

Eliphaz is the first to respond (Job 4-5). He begins by acknowledging Job's past actions in strengthening others who had experienced various difficulties, but then accuses Job of impatience with his own affliction. Eliphaz chides Job by asking him if it is not the case that his "fear of God" and his "personal integrity" should serve as a basis for confidence and hope in spite of his outward circumstances. Eliphaz seems to be insinuating that Job's response to affliction is not what is to be expected from a man who could justly lay claim to a right standing before God. He asserts further that in his own experience he has never known of a time when the innocent perished or the upright

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<sup>73</sup> Anderson, 100.

were destroyed (4:7). Thus, Eliphaz articulates the theological perspective which was widely accepted in Mesopotamian culture – a theology of retributive justice. Simply stated, God blesses the righteous and punishes the wicked. Eliphaz claims that common human experience validates this viewpoint. Then to make his point even more forcefully, he recounts the substance of a divine message, which he purportedly received in a dream. “Can mankind be just before God? Can a man be pure before his Maker?” (Job 4:17). The answer to these questions from Eliphaz’s perspective is most assuredly not. Thus, he is rejecting the possibility that any human could claim to be innocent before God. Again, such a viewpoint is attested in ANE Mesopotamian literature.<sup>74</sup> Although, Eliphaz is speaking in the abstract, the clear implication is that Job has no right to make such a claim of innocence before God. Yet, by invoking such an argument, Eliphaz also undermines the first half of any theology of retributive justice – if none is righteous before God, then none can be blessed.

In chapter 5 Eliphaz’s remarks become more personal. He challenges Job to bring forth someone to defend him (5:1) and insinuates that Job is like a foolish man who merits the afflictions which beset him (5:2-7). He then urges Job to lay his case before God (5:8), “who does great and unsearchable things” in the hope that God might deliver him. He also reminds Job that at times God’s reproof is a blessing and therefore God’s discipline should not be despised (5:17). For in this way God has delivered men from death and blessed them abundantly.

Eliphaz concludes his initial response to Job with a solemn pronouncement: “Behold this, we have investigated it, and thus it is; Hear it, and know for yourself” (5:27). With this statement Eliphaz seems to be speaking for the others as well as himself. The

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<sup>74</sup> Consider these lines (102-103) from the Sumerian document “Man and his God” translated by Hallo and Younger, 1.574 and cited in Bricker, 199:

counsel that he has just offered to Job is reliable and should not be dismissed lightly. It has been thoroughly investigated and established as trustworthy and therefore, Job should give it careful consideration and apply it to himself.<sup>75</sup>

In the abstract Eliphaz's counsel may indeed be all that he claims, but it misses the mark in this situation. It assumes that Job's affliction is deserved. If that were true, then Eliphaz's advice might be of some use. However, Job (and the reader) knows that this is simply not the case. His present affliction is not a punishment for past sin. In addition, Eliphaz's counsel unwittingly serves the cause of the Satan against God, for he seeks to motivate Job to serve God for the benefits that piety brings. Therefore, Job cannot embrace Eliphaz's counsel; he must reject it and seek an answer which goes beyond the understanding of men. Eliphaz's words (5:17-26) which were meant as encouragement were of little comfort to Job. Job had long since come to appreciate his good life as a gift from God (1:21, 2:10), not a reward, so that he did not complain when it was removed. At no time does he ask for its restoration. Even in the end (42:7-17) the restoration of Job's fortunes is not the means that God uses to renew their friendship, but only comes well after Job has settled everything with God.

Perceiving Job's rejection (Job 6, 7) of Eliphaz's counsel, which is actually the counsel of Bildad and Zophar as well, the responses of the comforters becomes antagonistic, rather than comforting. Bildad intimates that Job's children died for their own sins (8:4) and, like Eliphaz, urges Job to "seek God and implore the compassion of the Almighty" (8:5). Bildad's reasoning is that if Job is as "pure and upright" as he claims to be, then surely God will deliver him. Following a third discourse by Job, an obviously

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"Never has a sinless child been born to its mother,  
"A mortal (?) has never been perfect(?), a sinless man has never existed from old ..."



irate Zophar joins the debate. He seeks to rebuke Job for his boasts. Zophar desires that God himself would speak accusations against Job and in so doing to put him in his proper place (11:5, 6). Zophar advises Job to put his iniquity far away, and so regain moral standing and receive deliverance from God (11:13-20). Thus, these other comforters do not really add anything to Eliphaz's counsel. They presume that Job's afflictions are God's just recompense for sin. They advise Job to abandon his claims of uprightness and integrity, to put away his sin, and to seek God's mercy, so that he might be restored to his former condition.

Following the first cycle of speeches, this unsympathetic, incorrect, and unyielding position taken up by the comforters prompts a sarcastic and disparaging response from Job (12:1-10). Job rejects not only their advice, but also their attitudes. He perceives that they consider themselves to be superior to him (in wisdom), simply because of his present circumstances. Therefore, he reminds them that he also has intelligence and is not inferior to them in knowledge. He observes that their wisdom lacks true insight, and that their words are little more than common knowledge. Job grieves over the depth of his humiliation. Although he is just and blameless (reminiscent of the description in 1:1), he has become no more than a laughingstock in the eyes of his friends. Instead of comfort, they bring him only pain (6:14-21). He intimates that their own lives of ease cause them to look with contempt on those facing calamity.<sup>75</sup> Finally, he repudiates their teaching by pointing out the prosperity of robbers (12:6). He suggests that if they have any doubt then they should seek wisdom by inquiring of the

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<sup>75</sup> So Habel, 137. Cf. Gordis, 44, 60, who suggests reading שְׁמַעְנָהּ for שְׁמַעְנָה, "we have heard it" which he argues is supported by both the parallelism and by the adversative clause introduced by וְאַתָּה, "but now you take it to heart."

<sup>76</sup> Later (31:29-30) Job will attest that he never viewed another's misfortune with contempt, not even an enemy.

beasts, the birds, the earth, and the fish whose wisdom in these matters exceeds their own (12:7-10).

Predictably, this response from Job does nothing to endear the comforters to him. The tenor of their remarks and the substance of their advice remains the same in their succeeding speeches. In the second cycle, Eliphaz reacts to Job's claim to possess wisdom (15:5-6), Bildad reacts to Job's allusion to them as no better than beasts (18:3), and Zophar reacts to Job's assertion that the prosperity of the wicked repudiates their position by submitting that such prosperity is only temporary (20:5). The third abbreviated cycle of speeches expounds the same unyielding view. The words of the comforters end with Bildad's comments (25:3-4): "How can a man be just before God? Or how can he be clean who is born of woman?" In a last gasp, the wise man tries once more to demonstrate to Job his folly by asserting that no man can make the claims which Job does in regard to himself. Since no man is just, no man can ever assert that God has afflicted him undeservedly. With these words, the wisdom and the stamina of the comforters is exhausted. They will say no more to Job, "because he was righteous in his own eyes" (32:1).

#### The Words of Job (Job 4 - 31):

Job's initial lament (Job 3), which precipitated the discourse between Job and his comforters was discussed in detail above. In his subsequent statements, Job's remarks are much more complex than those of the comforters (whose statements are all directed toward Job). Job addresses his would be comforters directly, responding to their arguments, rebuking their ineptness, and defending his integrity (e.g. 6:24-30; 12:1-25; 13:1-19; 19:2-6; 26:1-3). Job addresses God directly, challenging God to explain himself, crying out for release from his afflictions, and seeking vindication of his faithful piety (e.g. Job 7:20-21; 10:3-18; 13:20-28). In addition, some of Job's remarks are not

necessarily addressed to anyone in particular, but are reflections on concepts such as the nature of wisdom, the nature of God, and God's relationship to his creation (e.g. Job 28). Unlike the stagnant views of the comforters, Job's perspective appears to undergo subtle development as he wrestles with the issues set before him.

The cries of lament uttered by Job in chapter 3 are repeated and find fuller expression in subsequent speeches. These cries of Job communicate to the reader the full measure of Job's afflictions. Job's afflictions are likened to the "poison-dipped arrows of the Almighty" which have struck him (6:4), his flesh being clothed with worms (7:5), being terrified by dreams and visions, so that his soul would choose death (7:14-15), being as one who is "handed over to ruffians, and tossed into the hands of the wicked" (16:11), being held in contempt by his friends and family and being despised by little children (19:13-22). Added to all of these--and for Job most significant of all--is God's silence (3:23). Despite his repeated pleas for an explanation, God has declined to answer (13:24). And so Job cries out in pain, in fear and in confusion, desperately wanting to know what he might have done (7:20; 13:23) to deserve such treatment. Such a cry resonates through the centuries with a similar cry uttered by the ultimate innocent sufferer hanging upon the cross. In the ninth hour, Jesus' cried, "My God, My God, Why have you forsaken me?" (Mt. 27:46 and parallels). The anguish expressed in such a cry, articulates the anguish of Job, a faithful servant of God who had likewise been abandoned for a time by his master.

Yet, despite protracted suffering, Job never abandons his integrity, nor completely despairs of all hope. Therefore, in the midst of his struggles we find that Job can say, "But it is still my consolation, And I rejoice in unsparing pain, That I have not denied the words of the Holy One" (6:10). Later, speaking of the God who is afflicting him, he asserts, "Though he slay me, I will hope in him. Nevertheless I will argue my ways before him. This also will be my salvation, for a godless man may not come before

his presence” (13:15-16). And in the midst of persecution by his comforters, Job affirms, “And as for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, And at the last He will take his stand on the earth. Even after my skin is destroyed, yet from my flesh I shall see God” (19:25-26). Job avows further, “My foot has held fast to his path; I have kept his way and not turned aside. I have not departed from the commands of his lips; I have treasured the words of his mouth more than necessary food” (23:11-12). Again, Job asserts, “As God lives, who has taken away my right, and the Almighty who has embittered my soul, for as long as life is in me, and the breath of God is in my nostrils, my lips certainly will not speak unjustly, nor will my tongue mutter deceit” (27:2-4).

Such statements in Job’s speeches attest to the fact that although Job has been severely tried and at times almost overwhelmed, his faith has not faltered. Job does not understand God’s purposes. Everything he sees and knows persuades him that God is dealing with him unjustly. Yet, he continues to look to his God for his salvation. Job’s tenacity is reminiscent of Peter’s confession. When Jesus asked the disciples if they would abandon him also, Peter stated, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. And we have believed and come to know that you are the Holy One of God” (Jn. 6:68-69). In like fashion, Job also knows that there is no viable alternative. He is convinced of the inadequacy of the theology of his comforters, and so, in spite of the difficulty of his present circumstances, his hope must be in his God.

A more detailed examination of one of Job’s speeches will illustrate Job’s perspective. Job’s appreciation of God is enlarged as he wrestles with his circumstances. Long before YHWH addresses Job out of the whirlwind, Job exhibits a remarkable understanding of the nature of his God (Job 9, 10). Job recognizes that even though a man might desire to dispute with God, no man could stand before the creator and sustainer of the universe, who overturns mountains, shakes the earth, and commands the sun; who alone stretches out the heavens, tramples down the waves of

the sea, and does wondrous works without number (9:2-10, Cf. 26:5-14). Job realizes the incomparable difference between God and himself. He understands that it is not possible for a man to make any demands upon God. Man is so feeble, that he cannot even perceive God's presence (Cf. 23:8-10), let alone challenge His actions or answer Him. In fact, Job recognizes that even if he were in the right, he could not give an answer to God, but could only implore his mercy (9:11-15).

Job's correct perception of his God is the underlying reason for his distress and despair. For Job knows with full certainty that it is this same God who "bruises me with a tempest, and multiplies my wounds with cause. [Who] does not allow me to get my breath, but saturates me with bitterness" (Job 9:17-18). Job recognizes that against such a Being, he cannot stand. In 9:19-24 Job reaffirms his innocence, but is at a loss with respect to how to proceed. Job acknowledges that he can neither overpower God, nor challenge His justice. In contrast to the commonly accepted theology of retributive justice previously articulated by Eliphaz and Bildad, Job's experience has shown him that at times God "destroys both the blameless and the wicked" and that wickedness often reigns upon the earth.<sup>77</sup> That Job does not fully understand this is apparent from the earnest question with which Job concludes these remarks – "If it is not [He], then who is it?" But Job has no other explanation to offer. His understanding of God's sovereignty over all creation admits no other possibility. In the remaining verses of chapter 9 Job reflects on the futility of his limited options. Job might choose to simply ignore his present situation or attempt to cleanse himself through his own efforts. But he recognizes that he is "accounted wicked" and no such actions would acquit him in the eyes of God. Thus, Job is left longing for someone who could mediate between God and

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<sup>77</sup> Consider Anderson's treatment of this text (p. 149). Anderson observes that the other side of this coin is found in the teaching of Jesus: God "makes the sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust" (Mt. 5:45). At times God seems to be unfair.

himself. If such a one could be found, then perhaps, Job might be able to stand before God.

Job's speech continues, perhaps after a brief pause, with Job renewing his lament, "I loathe my own life" and repeating his cry for an explanation, "Let me know why you contend with me" (10:1, 2). Job is now emboldened to voice some penetrating questions about God's actions. He asks whether it is right for God to reject Job (the work of His hands) and yet look favorably on the schemes of the wicked (10:3). The rhetorical questions that follow demonstrate how much difficulty Job has in accepting what his experience seems to confirm. He asks, "Do You have eyes of flesh? Do you see as a man sees?" (10: 4-6). Job is expressing his incredulity. The implication is that if God is not a mere mortal, as Job surely knows that he is not, then why does God appear to behave like one? Why does God pursue and afflict an innocent man? Again Job unequivocally asserts his innocence: "According to your knowledge, I am indeed not guilty; Yet there is no deliverance from your hand" (10:7) strikes to the heart of Job's situation.

If Eliphaz and the other comforters were right, then surely God would have delivered Job from these afflictions. Yet, despite his innocence Job remains as one numbered among the guilty. Thus, these wise men must be mistaken. God's plans transcend their understanding.

In 10:8-19, we find Job thinking aloud as he wrestles with the reality of his circumstances. He is taking stock of his beliefs and wondering how God could permit his present circumstances to have befallen him. He recalls that as a creature, he is the product of God's workmanship. Does God care so little for the work of his own hands that he would casually toss Job aside? If so, then why had God bothered to bring him forth from the womb at all? If this is the end that a blameless man might expect, it would have been better if he had died before birth. Job's anguish is overwhelming at this point.

He expects to die soon. He closes this speech (10:20-23) with a feeble plea that God might relent, just a little, and allow him a brief respite before his life is over.

In this speech we are permitted a glimpse into Job's soul. We find a man who has lived a life of faithfulness and service to God struggling to understand and cope with the affliction that has befallen him. He cannot understand why this God whom he has loved and served would treat him as an enemy, while at the same time overlooking the egregious sins of the wicked and allowing them to prosper. Job's faith is being strained to its limits as he recognizes the hopelessness of his situation. Job knows full well that he cannot prevail by force over the God who rules over all creation, whose power and majesty are unsurpassed. To this end Job asks, "Who has defied him without harm?" The obvious answer is – no one. He also knows that a mere mortal cannot successfully challenge God's justice. Job enumerates the difficulties in taking this approach. First, a man cannot even find God (cf. 23:3), let alone summon Him to give an account of Himself. Job knows that even if God were standing next to him, he would not be able to perceive him. Second, a man is not able to give answer to God. Job acknowledges the futility of attempting to overcome God's wisdom. He asserts that no one could answer God even once in a thousand times (i.e. ever). Third, Job knows that as a created being, he is utterly dependent upon God, and therefore, does not presume to have any standing before God. Job recognizes that even if he is righteous, he dare not lift up his head in God's presence or attempt to give answer for his own mouth would condemn him<sup>78</sup>. Therefore his only hope is to implore the mercy of his judge.

In contrast to the way in which some commentators portray Job, his words do not suggest a man who considers himself to be an equal with God, or who even dares to act

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<sup>78</sup> This needs to be understood as Job's reasonable expectation, when one considers feeble man in light of God's majesty. Yet, Job continues to hope for just such an opportunity (23:4-7),

presumptuously toward his God. Quite to the contrary, these words portray a man who has a keen understanding of God's power over all creation and a circumspect appreciation of the subservient and dependent position of human beings. Far from rebelling against this order, Job accepts it, even though he does not fully understand it. Job's conviction that God is ultimately responsible for his undeserved suffering is correct and derives from his understanding of God's ultimate sovereignty. Job's failure to accept his lot by suffering in silence should not be seen as any sort of affront to God. His questioning of God may be seen as yet another example of his piety. He desperately desires to know God more fully. Specifically, he desires to know why he has been afflicted by God. Furthermore, Job does not want to prevail over God as over an adversary. He desires to contend with God, because of his deeply held belief that God would indeed act justly toward him. Despite his present circumstances, Job believes that in such a confrontation God would either identify his sin and thus vindicate Himself, or right a grievous wrong by delivering him from undeserved affliction.

In this regard it is important to note that the OT does not portray contending with God as a necessarily sinful act. For example, in Genesis 18 we find Abraham questioning God's justice in regard to the destruction of Sodom. When Abraham found out that the Lord intended to judge Sodom, he addressed Him saying, "Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked?" There is no indication from the text that the Lord considered Abraham's question to be impertinent, or an affront, or sinful in any way. Abraham followed this question with several more, "Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city, will you indeed sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous who are in it. Far be it from you to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked are treated alike. Far be

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believing that God in such an encounter would treat him fairly and ultimately vindicate him forever.



it from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?" (Gen. 18:24-15). In this way Abraham is challenging the Lord with his own theological expectations. Abraham contends further by asking, "What if there are only 45 righteous? ... 40? 30? 20? 10?" Abraham's probing questions allowed him to gain understanding of the way in which the Lord dealt with sinful men. Interestingly, God's answer is that He would act mercifully, rather than justly, sparing the whole place for the sake of only a small number.<sup>79</sup> In Genesis 32:28 we find that Jacob is blessed because "you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed." Later, we find Moses contending with God over the fate of the nation of Israel. When God announced to Moses his intention to destroy Israel because of their sin (Exod. 32:10), Moses contended with God, interceding on their behalf (Exod. 32:12). In none of these instances is the act of striving with God portrayed as sinful. Neither are the protagonists portrayed as acting with presumption. Thus, it seems that God indulges his servants and does not necessarily view their contending with him as an act of rebellion or of disrespect. Job's contending with God should be viewed in the same way.

Job's subsequent speeches (Job 12-14, 16-17, 19, 21, 23-24, 26-31) portray a perspective similar to that expressed in chapters 9 and 10 and must be interpreted in light of the insights discussed above. Nowhere, does Job repudiate his earlier confession. Even at the conclusion of his formal speeches, where Job reviews the glories of his past life (ch. 29), reflects on his present state of humiliation (ch. 30), and reasserts, yet again, his integrity by disavowing any guilt with respect to specific sins (ch. 31), he does not fundamentally change his attitude toward God.<sup>80</sup> Some commentators have seen an air of defiance in Job's final plea to have a formal (legal) hearing before

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<sup>79</sup> Despite His statement to Abraham, God actually does act justly, destroying the wicked of Sodom, while delivering the "righteous" (Gen. 19:12-29).

the Almighty. Anderson interprets Job's willingness to bear the indictment of his adversary "on his shoulder" and to wear it "like a crown" as indicating that Job is not abashed but belligerent to the end, eager to have his case settled and confident of the outcome.<sup>81</sup> Hartley suggests that Job's expectation is that the document in question would amount to a writ of innocence and that he would therefore gladly wear it publicly as a sign of his vindication.<sup>82</sup> Both interpretations, seem to suggest some degree of arrogance (perhaps, overconfidence) on the part of Job.

However, it is also possible to interpret this statement as an act of pious humility as opposed to presumptuous arrogance. Job has repeatedly asked God to inform him of any sin(s) which might be the cause for which he has been afflicted. Job has just carefully examined himself and still has been unable to find any fault. During the course of this self-examination Job has also repeatedly stated that he would gladly bear the appropriate penalties for any sin of which he might be guilty. Job's final plea may be understood as a continuation of the same sentiment. Let his adversary bring forth a legitimate indictment. Job would display it for all to see. If it had merit, then God's treatment of Job would be vindicated and Job would gladly bear his reproach. However, Job was confident of his own vindication, a confidence based not on arrogance, but on an honest assessment of his life.

#### The Wisdom of Elihu (Job 32-37):

The narrator informs the readers that "the words of Job are [now] ended" (31:40), and then immediately introduces a new character, Elihu, a younger man who apparently

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<sup>80</sup> Job's disavowals of specific sins in Ch. 31, appears to be a direct reply to the accusations leveled by Eliphaz in 22:3-11.

<sup>81</sup> Anderson, 244,

<sup>82</sup> Hartley, 424-425.

has been present, but silent, during the preceding discourse between Job and his comforters. Elihu is angry with Job “because he has justified himself before God” and with the comforters, “because they had found no answer, and yet condemned Job” (32:2-3). According to the narrator, Elihu speaks in order to give vent to this (self)-righteous anger. First, he takes the comforters to task for the inadequacy of their wisdom. “Indeed, there was no one who refuted Job, not one of you who answered his words” (32:12). He defends his right to speak by suggesting that wisdom is not only found among the aged, and then asserts that he will not reply to Job with the same arguments that they employed.

Next, Elihu addresses Job. However, despite his promise to bring new arguments, he for the most part reiterates the same concerns already raised by Job’s comforters. Elihu shares the same theological perspective as his elders, and therefore he is no more open to the reality of Job’s situation than they were. Furthermore, Elihu cannot understand how any man could lay claim to innocence before God. Therefore, he equates Job’s vindication of himself (i.e. his insistence upon his innocence before God) as an outright rejection of God. Elihu initially attempts to show Job the folly of his position and to explain that God brings affliction “oftentimes with men, to bring back his soul from the pit, that he may be enlightened with the light of life” (33:29-30). He then proceeds to pass judgment upon Job. “Job ought to be tried to the limit, because he answers like wicked men. For he adds rebellion to his sin ...” (34:5-6). He then attempts to defend and exalt God (36-37). While his claims about God are largely correct, they do not really go beyond the truths already acknowledged by Job and the comforters, although they do serve to foreshadow the comments which YHWH will make out of the whirlwind.

The purpose and meaning of the speeches attributed to Elihu have been the subject of scholarly debate throughout the history of Joban interpretation.<sup>83</sup> William Green, a 19<sup>th</sup> century commentator on the book of Job states: “No portion of this book has proved more embarrassing than the discourse of Elihu. And there is not such a great diversity of views in regard to any other portion.”<sup>84</sup> A number of questions have been raised concerning Elihu’s remarks. How do they address the nature of Job’s affliction? How do they differ (if at all) from the views of Eliphaz, Bildad, & Zophar? How are they related to the speeches of the Lord? Are they part of the original text (or possibly later additions)?

Various answers have been advanced with respect to each of these questions. With respect to the relationship of the Elihu speeches to the other components of the book of Job, some have argued that the ideas advanced by Elihu are essentially the same as those offered previously by the three comforters and, therefore, contribute nothing to the settlement of the question(s) at issue. If Elihu’s solution is seen to be the same as that of Eliphaz, and therefore subject to the same condemnation, there is no need for Job to offer any additional reply – and hence his continued silence. This may also explain why the Lord makes no reference to him – it would appear that Elihu is understood to be merely an intruder who says nothing which requires special commendation or rebuke.

However, if Elihu merely repeats the sentiments of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, then one may wonder why so much space (6 chapters) is allotted to him? In light of this

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<sup>83</sup> Cf. Anderson, 49-52; R. Althann, “Elihu’s contribution to the Book of Job,” Old Testament Essays 12 (1999), 9-12; Larry J Waters, “The Authenticity of the Elihu Speeches in Job 32-37,” Bibliotheca Sacra 156 (January-March 1999), 28-41; Larry J. Waters, “Elihu’s Theology and His View of Suffering,” Bibliotheca Sacra 156 (April-June 1999), 143-159.

<sup>84</sup> William H. Green, Job’s Triumph over Satan, (Revised, N. F. C. E., n. d.), 61. Green’s book was originally published under the title The Argument of the Book of Job Unfolded (New York: Hurst & Co., 1873).

others have proposed that the Elihu speeches were not part of the original story, but rather, a later addition as evidenced by differences in language and style, intended primarily to provide a transition between Job's remarks and God's reply. Interestingly, more recent scholarship has shown renewed interest in viewing the text of Job as an integral whole and the Elihu speeches as original.

Green offers the following suggestions in an attempt to answer the questions noted above. First, he observes that the author of Job does not view Elihu as siding with Job's friends (Job 32:2, 3). Rather, Elihu is put forward as an arbiter, framing Job's question(s) in a new way. Green observes that Job's chief source of distress is that God appeared to be treating him as an enemy. It is to this "error" that Elihu initially addressed himself. Elihu's response alludes to the fact that God employs two principal methods in leading men from wrong to right, - namely His word (Job 33:15 ff.) and His providence (Job 33:19 ff.). According to Green, Elihu's words introduce a fresh perspective by insisting that God uses affliction not only as a token of His displeasure but also as a means of correction (i.e. graciousness). Affliction is one of the ways that God "draws men from sin and promotes their welfare."<sup>85</sup> In Green's view, this contrasts with the views espoused by Job's friends, who perceive Job's suffering solely as punishment for sin and evidence of God's displeasure, and by Job himself, who views his suffering as arbitrary and unjust.<sup>86</sup> Green suggests that Elihu's view represents an entirely new doctrine - the concept of gracious purpose in earthly suffering.

Green's viewpoint is attractive on one level in that it demonstrates the potential significance of Elihu's remarks. If Elihu does introduce a new concept (beneficial suffering), which serves as a useful corrective to the views embraced by the other

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<sup>85</sup> Green, 63.

participants and which advances a new teaching that provides a realistic and possibly correct explanation of the reason for Job's suffering, then one may be readily persuaded of its authenticity and central importance to the story. However, this does not appear to be the case. Both Job's "comforters" and Elihu make correct statements about God's ways, but they do not apply these insights correctly with respect to Job. The comforters are correct when they insist that God punishes the wicked and rewards the righteous. However, they err when they attempt to apply this general truth to Job's particular situation. It is abundantly clear from the circumstances set forth in the prologue and from YHWH's own testimony that Job is not being penalized for his personal sinfulness or for wrongdoing of any kind.

Similarly, Elihu's observation that God also uses suffering to change a man's behavior and preserve his life is both insightful and correct. However, his attempt to apply this insight to Job's particular situation is misguided. At the outset of the story Job is portrayed as a true servant of YHWH, blameless and perfect. While God might use suffering to chasten a sinner, he is clearly not using suffering in this way with respect to Job. Thus, Elihu's wisdom is no better than that of the elders he has rebuked and he is no closer to understanding Job's unique situation than they. At the conclusion of Elihu's speech the problem of Job's suffering is still unresolved. However, it may provide an alternative explanation for Job's suffering and in its failure to fully resolve the question serves as a suitable prelude to the appearance and subsequent proclamations of YHWH.

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<sup>86</sup> Whether the purpose of God's affliction was punishment or correction, Elihu incorrectly believed that Job's affliction was caused by his own sin and, in this he was just as wrong as Job's comforters.

### YHWH's Questions (Job 38-42):

YHWH himself finally breaks the silence, speaking “out of the whirlwind.” His speeches are addressed exclusively to Job. They appear to be in response to Job’s repeated request for an opportunity to address God directly. However, the response received is not what Job (or the reader) expected. Job had anticipated that God would issue a specific indictment and provide him with an opportunity to give answer to the charges or else issue a verdict of innocence. In fact, YHWH’s reply was neither of these.

In His speeches YHWH does not directly reply to the questions which have tormented Job. In fact, on the surface, they do not seem to have anything to do with the central issue of why Job has suffered so severely, in spite of his life of exemplary piety. YHWH’s replies take the form of a series of rhetorical questions pertaining to God’s mastery over (and by implication Job’s limitations with respect to) nature. In fact both the tenor and the content of the YHWH speeches have been the subject of debate.

It is very difficult to judge the tenor of YHWH’s response without the usual non-verbal clues associated with human speech. The reader is unable to discern the expression on YHWH’s face, the intonation of His voice, the fierceness or calm of the whirlwind, or the physical gestures (threatening or welcoming) which punctuate His words. This makes the interpreter’s task all the more difficult. This subjective element is of critical importance, determining how the content of the speeches is ultimately understood.

Some commentators have viewed YHWH’s tone as primarily adversarial (even hostile) toward Job. And so they understand YHWH’s questions to be confrontational in character, designed to point out Job’s deficiencies and to bring him low before the Almighty. Thus, what the comforters and Elihu were unable to accomplish due to a lack of wisdom, the YHWH speeches bring to pass. Alternatively, others have felt that the

speeches reflect a more conciliatory tone.<sup>87</sup> Anderson portrays the interaction between YHWH and Job as a meeting between friends, the purpose of the questions being primarily educative, to deepen Job's understanding. And so for Job the questions are not so much statements of fact as "they are invitations, suggestions about discoveries he will make as he tries to find his own answers."<sup>88</sup> The discoveries to which God leads him in the context of these speeches result in a considerable advance in Job's knowledge of God and of himself. Such vast differences in the perceived tone of YHWH's responses necessarily lead to differences with respect to the interpretation of the content of the speeches.

YHWH begins by asking, "Who is this that darkens counsel without knowledge?" Most commentators accept that this "rebuke" is addressed to Job. Newell understands this as an accusation of sin. Job in his ignorance has somehow obfuscated God's plan or purpose. In contrast, Anderson argues that the Bible does not consider ignorance to be either sin, or the root of sin. In his view this remark does not refer "slightingly" to the debate between Job and the comforters. Anderson observes that if the meaning of this remark is that Job had somehow obscured God's divine purpose then there is a serious contradiction between this statement and God's affirmation (42:7) in that Job spoke the truth about him. Since counsel also refers to advice dispensed by a wise man, Anderson suggests that "the negative 'without' does double duty." In Anderson's view this remark indicates that Job is completely in the dark "because he lacks counsel and knowledge." These YHWH now supplies.

The interpretation of this verse is further complicated by the ambiguity of the pronoun "this." The antecedent is not immediately apparent from the context. Although

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<sup>87</sup> Adversarial tenor: Cf. Hartley, 490-492; Newell, (Thesis), 119; Conciliatory tenor: Cf. Anderson, 268-272.

<sup>88</sup> Anderson, 269.



most commentators accept that Job is the antecedent, one has to then link this verse back to 31:40, skipping over the Elihu material. Recently, Karl Wilcox has challenged this interpretation by proposing that Elihu is most properly understood as the antecedent of “this.”<sup>89</sup> In support of this interpretation Wilcox observes that the pronoun seems to require a third person antecedent (not YHWH or Job); it avoids tension with YHWH’s pronouncement in 42:7; and it has the advantage of providing a link between the Elihu speeches to the rest of the narrative supporting the unity of the text. Wilcox suggests that the broad acceptance of Job as the antecedent is predicated upon the widely accepted assumption that the Elihu speeches were a later addition to the text. Still more recently, John Bimson has published a reply to Wilcox rejecting his interpretation.<sup>90</sup> Bimson circumvents Wilcox’s initial argument by postulating YHWH’s question is not necessarily addressed to Job and therefore Job may be understood as the third person antecedent. While grammatically possible, it should be noted that this is also a non-standard treatment of the verse. In Bimson’s view God may be addressing himself, or his angelic council, or a purely hypothetical third party with respect to Job’s words with the intention that Job would overhear the remark. Bimson adduces additional support from the continuity between דַעַת in 38:2 and the six instances of the verbal form of this word in the rest of the speech, which are all directed at Job, and from the fact that Job appears to partially quote 38:2 and apply it to himself (42:3).

However, Wilcox’s treatment should not be dismissed too quickly. Neither argument is definitive. Job apparently quotes 38:2 and applies it to himself, but this does not necessarily indicate that Job was the original referent of YHWH’s remark. Job utters this statement after YHWH’s second speech. Presumably by this time YHWH’s

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<sup>89</sup> Karl Wilcox, “Who is this ...?’ A reading of Job 38:2,” *JSOT* 78 (1998), 85-98.

personal revelation has had its effect on Job's perspective. Therefore, it is not unreasonable to assume that in his new humility Job might have come to recognize that the limits of his former understanding made YHWH's opening question equally applicable to himself. Job's willingness to view himself as being no better than those who opposed him (Elihu and by extension the other "sorry" comforters) is a sign of true humility and very likely signals the putting aside of any grievances that he may have had against them. This tacit identification with them also serves to highlight his fitness to seek intercession for them later.

In verse 3 YHWH exhorts Job, "Now gird your loins like a man. I will ask you, and you instruct me." This exhortation is repeated at the beginning of YHWH's second speech. Here again the presumed tenor of the exchange dictates the meaning assigned to these words. From Hartley's perspective, Job is enjoined to prepare himself as though they were to have a wrestling match.<sup>91</sup> The ensuing exchanges are viewed as a contest. Earlier Job had said to God, "Call on me and I will answer, or I shall speak and you answer me." (13:22 Cf. 10:2). According to Hartley, God has accepted the former option and chosen to put Job on the defensive. Hartley affirms that YHWH neither charges Job with any sin, nor rebukes him for his avowal of innocence. While Job has not sinned, he has erred by basing his defense upon his own integrity. Therefore, it is to thwart any undue pride in Job that YHWH opens with a rebuke.

In contrast, Anderson considers the same words and observes that God "invites Job to meet Him almost as an equal, standing up 'like a man' (38:3)."<sup>92</sup> Anderson finds no hint in YHWH's words that He in any way despises Job or considers him unworthy of

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<sup>90</sup> John J. Bimson, "Who is 'This' in 'Who is this ...?' (Job 38:2)? A Response to Karl G. Wilcox," JSOT 87 (2000), 125-128.

<sup>91</sup> Hartley, 492.

<sup>92</sup> Anderson, 270.

divine companionship. Instead of a contest, Anderson detects a kindly playfulness in YHWH's speeches which he views as "quite relaxing." In his opinion the aim of these speeches is not to crush Job by pointing out his minuteness in comparison with YHWH's vast power, nor to mock him when he places his limited knowledge alongside of God's intellect. Rather Job is given a special dignity above all others in the mere fact that God has chosen to converse with him.

Considering these opposing views, I find myself more in sympathy with Anderson than with those who choose to see an adversarial context in YHWH's words. While it is true that YHWH's subsequent questions are challenging, their primary purpose seems to be to engender in Job an even greater appreciation of God's glory. God's self-revelation accomplished by means of a consideration of the created order proves to be the healing balm which Job requires. There is no need at this point for additional reproach. As described above (see pp. 45-50 of this thesis) Job had already demonstrated his appreciation of God's exalted stature and acknowledged his own feeble limitations. There is no need for YHWH to humiliate Job further. He has already been brought very low as a consequence of his physical, emotional and spiritual suffering. Yet, he has proven himself faithful to the end.

With YHWH's words Job's trial effectively ended. Job himself had previously recognized this. In 13:16 Job affirmed, "This also will be my salvation, for a godless man may not come before his presence." Although Job may have hoped to have an opportunity to argue his case before YHWH, he understood that his vindication would not lie in the cleverness of his speech or in the correctness of his doctrine, but rather in the presence of the Lord. By appearing to Job in the midst of the whirlwind, God had vindicated Job. There was now no need for any further recriminations.

Those who might argue that God needed to set the record straight with respect to Job's various accusations miss the point. Job had attempted to speak rightly about God.

He had rejected the testimony of the comforters, because their understanding of God was flawed. To accept such a flawed theology, to offer a false repentance for sins not committed in order to satisfy the expectations of his “sorry” comforters, or to appease a capricious God, would have been tantamount to a rejection of his faith, for which YHWH had previously commended him. His accusations that God permits the wicked to prosper served two primary purposes. When directed toward the comforters, it was intended to persuade them of the flawed nature of their understanding of God. Their conception of God failed to comport with everyday experience – the wicked did in fact prosper, at least for a time.

This point actually did have an impact. In chapter 20 Zophar finally concedes that Job is correct (verse 5), but that such prosperity is fleeting. However, the comforters continued to resist Job. Even though they might concede that the wicked prosper for a time, they do not concede that the innocent may also suffer, and so they remain unsympathetic to Job’s situation. When Job directed this and other “accusations toward God,” they were intended as sincere questions designed to elicit information. They were not intended to vilify or disparage Him. Job sought vindication, not victory.

Understood in this way, the speeches of YHWH can be seen primarily as revelatory and healing. Thus, in the first speech YHWH takes Job on a brief tour and asks him questions about his world. Both inanimate and living things pass in review demonstrating the complexity of the works of God. The list includes: the earth (38:4-7), the sea (38:8-11, 16), the dawn (38:12-15), the gates of death (38:17-18), the dwellings of light and dark (38:19-21), the storehouses of snow/hail (38:22-23), storm (38:24-27), rain (38:28-30), various constellations (38:31-33), clouds (38:34-38), lions (38:39-40), ravens (38:41), the mountain goats (39:1-4), the wild donkey (39:5-8), the wild ox (39:9-12), ostriches (39:13-18), the horse (39:19-25), the hawk (39:26), and the falcon (39:27-30). This discourse seems intended to arouse in Job a sense of awe at the beauty and

order of the world. Through these questions God causes Job (and us) to pause and reflect upon the surpassing greatness of His achievements. God's governance of the world includes far more concerns than simply the affairs of men.

The conclusion of the Lord's first speech (40:1-2) is a repetition of his earlier challenge to Job (cf. 38:3b), in light of all that He has now said. The challenge may be paraphrased as "So what do you have to say now, Job? Will you instruct (correct) me in these matters?" Job's response (40:3-5) is subdued and humble, just as he had predicted (cf. 9:14-15). In God's presence Job recognizes his own insignificance and words fail him. He acknowledges that he had already spoken and states that he has nothing to add to what he has already said.

YHWH continues his dialogue with Job, introducing his remarks with the same exhortation found in 38:3. The questions in 40:8-14 deal more directly with the moral issues which Job raised and as such may constitute the core of YHWH's reply. YHWH asks Job, "Would you discredit my justice? Would you condemn me that you might be justified?" This is a penetrating question which must have caused Job to pause and reflect on his prior statements. The question may be restated, "Job, how far would you go to press your case? Is getting an answer to your questions so important that you would go to any lengths, even impugning my justice to vindicate yourself? YHWH does not wait for a reply, but goes on to instruct Job further.

Verses 9 to 14 appear to be chiasmic in structure with v. 11 exhibiting parallelism with v. 12, v.10 with v. 13, and v. 9 with v. 14.

9 Have you an arm (זִרְעוֹ) like God, and can you thunder with a voice like his?

10 Adorn yourself with majesty and dignity; clothe yourself with glory and splendor.

11 Pour out the overflowings of your anger, and look on everyone who is proud  
and abase him.

12 Look on everyone who is proud and bring him low and tread down the wicked  
where they stand.

13 Hide them all in the dust together; bind their faces in the world below.

14 Then will I also acknowledge to you that your own right hand (יְמִינֶךָ) can save you.

The terms “arm” (v. 9) and “right hand” (v. 14), which connote strength or power, may serve as an inclusio demarcating this section of the text. An additional parallel may exist between the “thunderous voice of v. 9 and YHWH’s acknowledgement, which would presumably be verbal, mentioned in v.14. The relationship of verses 10 and 13 is more subtle and employs contrasting ideas. In verse 10, Job is instructed to “adorn” and “clothe” himself with majesty; while in verse 13 he is instructed to “hide” them (i.e. the proud) in the dust and “bind” their faces in the world below. The central action in both verses appears to be one of “covering.” The one who would deign to stand before God must be able to exalt himself (by covering himself with “majesty, dignity, glory, and splendor”), while also possessing the ability to humble the proud by covering them with “dust”. Verses 11 and 12 serve as the pivot of the chiasm. In both verses Job is called upon to look down upon everyone who is proud and to bring them low. The “pouring forth of anger” in verse 11 corresponds with the “treading down of the wicked” in verse 12.

In this section YHWH appears to outline the qualifications necessary for one who would presume to instruct God with respect to the just governance of the earth. YHWH’s remarks are now all the more poignant, coming as they do after His first speech (38-39). In the first speech, Job was given a glimpse of the extent of YHWH’s wisdom, power and majesty. YHWH’s words now demonstrate that the just governance of the world requires even greater attributes than YHWH had formerly demonstrated. The one with whom YHWH would deign to discuss his justice must be His equal in power and authority.

Thus, he asks Job whether his arm is like God's and whether his voice can thunder like His. YHWH goes on to say that such a being would have to be able to adorn himself with majesty and grandeur and be able to humble the proud and trample down the wicked. If Job would demonstrate such qualities, then God himself would praise him and acknowledge that he could save himself.

The remaining two poems, which describe God's mastery over Behemoth, the strongest of God's creatures, and Leviathan, possibly the most fearsome of God's creatures, simply serve to drive home the same point. If Job is not up to the task of subduing these creatures, then neither is he up to the task of standing before God (41:10-11). It is these statements by YHWH that inform the context of Job's reply in 42:1-6, which is the subject of our study.

## Chapter IV - Exegetical Analysis of Job 42:6

עַל־כֵּן אֲמַאֵס וְנִחַמְתִּי עַל־עָפָר וְאִפָּר: (BHS) Job 42:6

Job 42:6 presents exegetical and hermeneutical challenges at several levels. According to Peter Cotterell, “the task of the exegete is to determine the discourse meaning of an utterance, to which the constituent elements of the utterance make their cumulative contributions.”<sup>93</sup> “Utterance” is used here in a formal sense and differs from the term “sentence” in that the former (but not necessarily the latter) possesses both context and cotext, which necessarily contribute to its meaning. In order to address the question of the meaning of Job 42: 6 we will consider its constituent elements, both individually and jointly, and its relationship to other elements of the story.

At the discourse level the meaning of the verse under study needs to be considered from the perspective of the pericope in which it occurs (42:1-6) and with respect to the book as a whole (Chapter III, above). Job 42:6 stands in immediate relation to verses 1-5; all six verses together constitute the second part of Job’s response to YHWH’s theophanic revelation. YHWH’s revelations along with Job’s responses (38:1 - 42:6) constitute the “peak” or “climax” of the story. This climax (resolution) stands in relation to the preceding speeches (3:1-37:24) of Job and his companions (including Elihu) which are, in turn, occasioned by the events which are described in the prologue (1:1-2:13). Finally, the verse under investigation also stands in relation to the epilogue (42:7-17), in which Job’s words and integrity are publicly vindicated, and Job’s position (priesthood) and wealth (family and possessions) are restored and enlarged. Discourse considerations compel us to query how each of these



literary contexts informs our understanding of the meaning of Job 42:6. As discussed in the preceding chapter the key tension in the story involves the relationship between YHWH and His servant Job. It is precisely this relationship that is challenged and tested in the prologue; it is the subject of the debate between Job and his comforters; its disruption is the basis of Job's most acute suffering; it is restored through the YHWH speeches; and it ultimately results in Job's vindication in the epilogue. Any interpretation of Job 42:6 must fit naturally into these contexts and serve to relieve this tension.<sup>94</sup>

At the syntactical level the relationships among the various constituent elements also raise a number of questions.<sup>95</sup> What are the grammatical (and logical) relationships among the various elements of Job's second reply (42 1-6)? How do these relationships inform our understanding of the text? With respect to 42:6 how does the juxtaposition of the verb נָחַם and the preposition עַל affect the meaning of each word? Where is the expected direct object of נָחַם? Is it missing due to textual corruption, intentionally omitted, implied by the context, or present in the form of the prepositional phrase עַל-עָפָר וָאֵפֶר ("in/on/according to dust-and-ashes")? What does the disjunctive Masoretic accent (*athnach*) under the third constituent element indicate (if anything) about the perceived relationship of the prepositional phrase to one or both of the preceding verbs?

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<sup>93</sup> Peter Cotterell, "Linguistics, Meaning, Semantics, and Discourse Analysis," in A Guide to Old Testament Theology and Exegesis, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999, 131-157), 144.

<sup>94</sup> Because the major thematic and content elements constituting the discourse considerations have already been discussed in chapter III, they will not be addressed further in this chapter.

<sup>95</sup> A helpful analysis of the syntactical relationships among the various constitutive elements of Job 42: 1-6 may be found in Ellen Van Wolde, "Job 42, 1-6: The Reversal of Job." In The Book of Job: Proceedings of the Colloquium Biblicum Lovaniense XLII Held in Leuven, Belgium 24-26 August 1993, edited by W. A. M. Beuken, 223-250. (Leuven, Belgium: Leuven University Press, 1994, 223-250), 228-234.

At the lexical level the verse is composed of six constituent elements (words, lexemes). However, there is general agreement about the meaning of only one of the elements. The first lexeme **עַל־כֵּן** is understood to mean “therefore.” Its primary function is to indicate a logical connection between the thought expressed in the remainder of 42:6 and the main idea of the verses immediately preceding (42:1-5). The precise meanings of the remaining constituent elements are less certain and have been the subject of considerable scholarly debate. What are the meanings of the verbs **נִאֵס** and **נָחַם** in the context of this verse? What are the meanings of the two nouns **עֵפֶר** and **אֶפֶר**? Are they being used literally or metaphorically? Does their significance lie in their individual meanings or is it derived from their combination (e.g. as compound elements, a hendiadys, or an idiomatic expression) in this text?

#### Analysis of syntactic relations among the constituent elements of Job 42:1-6

According to Van Wolde, Job 42:1-6 is a syntactically and semantically ambiguous text. She argues that the ambiguity of verses 1-5 derives principally from the possibility that the text contains two ellipses which can both be extended in two ways.<sup>96</sup> When combined with the distinctive *ketiv* and *qere* readings of the word **יִדְעִית** (verse 2), they present at least 8 possibilities. Further ambiguity is encountered in verse 6, where both the structure of the utterance and the meaning of the verbs are unclear. I am greatly indebted to Van Wolde for shaping my understanding of the structure of Job 42. I find her analysis perceptive and compelling. For this reason, I have attempted to summarize some of her more salient observations in the paragraphs which follow.

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<sup>96</sup> Van Wolde, 233.

Van Wolde employs a syntactic model based on the work of Weinrich, Schneider, and Niccacci to perform a text-syntactic analysis of Job 42.<sup>97</sup> Schneider's model presumes that the structure of a Hebrew text may be deduced on the basis of the usage of two principle verb forms: the *wayyiqtol* forms (generally in third person) which indicate the narrative line in the text, and the *yiqtol* forms (generally in first or second person) which communicate direct speech. Developing these ideas further, Niccacci also distinguishes between two types of text: (1) narrative - a text about persons or facts, generally written in the third person, and (2) discourse "or embedded speakers' text" - a text that is directly aimed at somebody and is often written in the first or second person."<sup>98</sup> Niccacci also emphasizes the position of the verb form in a sentence. A clause with the verb form in the first position is termed a verbal clause. A clause with the verb form in the second or third position is termed a compound nominal clause. A clause without a verb form is termed a simple nominal clause. Depending on the verb form and its position within the clause, Niccacci determines whether a verb belongs to discourse or narrative. Van Wolde proposes a third text type – the "narrators' discourse" which may be distinguished from the "character's discourse" described above principally on the basis of its communicative function. In this form of speech the narrator does not relate the actions of others within the story, but directly addresses the reader.<sup>99</sup>

In addition to the verb forms (above) which maintain the main line or narrative flow of the text, Van Wolde's model also recognizes verb forms which interrupt the narrative and constitute a subsidiary line of communication. Such verbs may not be

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid, 223 ff. The relevant sources are cited in footnotes 4-9.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid, 225. Please note that the term "discourse" is used by Niccacci to refer to "direct speech" and should be distinguished from Cottrell's use of the term (noted previously) to refer to a level of linguistic analysis.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid, 226 (fn 11) cites Gen 2:24; Ruth 4:7 and I Kings 21:25-26 as examples of "narrator's discourse" in BH.

distinguished on the basis of form. However, Van Wolde notes that this is not problematic, since “the secondary lines hardly ever form the beginning of a narrative or discourse but are always subordinate to a preceding clause to which they add information. They are often preceded by words such as **אשר** or **כי**; they frequently give indication of place or time, or supply information concerning the past or the future.”<sup>100</sup> On this basis it is possible to analyze the text-syntactic structure of a Hebrew text.

Analyzing Job 42:1-6 in this way, Van Wolde establishes both the syntactic relationships among the various elements and their respective functions within the text. Verse 1 begins with a narrative, expressed by two *wayyiqtol* forms **ויאמר** and **וייען**. Verses 2 to 6 continue with a discourse by Job addressed to YHWH. This discourse opens with the word **ידעית**, the *ketiv* reading indicating a 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular form: “you know.” However, a *qere* reading (noted in *Massorah marginalis*) adds a *yod* to the word, permitting the possibility of reading this verb as 1<sup>st</sup> person singular: “I know.”<sup>101</sup> Thus the text reads:

1. Job said to YHWH:
2.     **“I know / You know**  
           that you can do everything,  
           that no plan can be held back from you”<sup>102</sup>

Job continues the discourse in verse 3a with a nominal clause introduced by the interrogative particle **מי (זה)**, “who” or “whoever.” This compound(?) interrogative

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid, 227.

<sup>101</sup> Van Wolde, 229, notes that J. Barr has explained the variant *ketiv* and *qere* readings as being not so much a reflection of different “manuscript traditions” (text correction or text collations), but of different reading traditions. In footnote 15, Van Wolde quotes Barr, “Reading traditions existed in the temple and synagogue from ancient times. ...the KQ system has its origin not purely in problems of the manuscript tradition, but in the relation of it to the way in which the Bible was liturgically read.”

<sup>102</sup> The structured translations provided in this section to illustrate the syntax of the text are all taken from Van Wolde, 229-233, (emphasis added).

pronoun (supported by the use of the participle (מַעֲלִים)) indicates an indefinite third person and implicitly brings into view a new subject, not previously introduced. Van Wolde observes that this question in the third person may indicate an interruption of the line of discourse taking place between the first person (Job) and the second person (YHWH). This interruption (together with the similarity in meaning between this verse and 38:2) forms the basis for understanding verse 3a as a citation.<sup>103</sup> According to Van Wolde this suggests that there is an ellipsis (or syntactic gap) between verses 2b and 3a, which can be supplied in different ways. For example:

1. Job said to YHWH:
2. "I know / You know  
that you can do everything,  
that no plan can be held back from you"
3. **[that you said / You said:]**  
"Who restricts a plan without knowledge?"

If the first option is correct, then the text is a "discourse within a discourse;" if the second option is correct, then the text is in the form of two succeeding discourses. Both readings imply that verse 3a refers back to a statement previously uttered by YHWH.

Job's discourse continues with לִכֵּן. Van Wolde asserts that use of לִכֵּן (almost invariably used in discourse) by the 'embedded' speaker makes a connection with the preceding situation, and therefore may be translated as 'in this situation' or 'given this situation' as well as 'thus', or 'therefore.' She further suggests that לִכֵּן in combination with the *qatal* form הִגִּדְתִּי that follows may point to a connection with "I/you know" in verse 2 and with the statement by YHWH in verse 3a. Thus:

1. Job said to YHWH:
2. "I know / You know  
that you can do everything,  
that no plan can be held back from you"

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<sup>103</sup> Van Wolde, 229 (fn. 17) notes that alternatively this question may be resolved by viewing both verses 3 and 4 as intrusions (not belonging to the original text). She cites the positions of G. Forher, G. Mohn, and D. Patrick as examples of this perspective.

3. [You said:]  
    "Who restricts a plan without knowledge?"  
    Therefore I told  
    But had no insight,  
    About things too wonderful for me  
    But I did not know.

Whichever syntactic solution is selected, the difference between the knowledge and the speech of the second person (YHWH) and those of the first person (Job) is central to Job's address. Wolde finds additional support for the contrast between the speakers in the parallel use of מִן: "nothing can be held back from you" (verse 2) and "for me they are miracles" (verse 3). Thus, she concludes that in Job's discourse we as readers look through his eyes and hear his words. Although the wording of the text allows diverse syntactic readings, the distinction between Job's and YHWH's perspectives is central to all of them.

The second part of Job's discourse (verse 4) begins with an imperative "Listen, I will speak." The explicit use of the personal pronoun "I" attracts the reader's attention, because it is somewhat unexpected. To whom does the pronoun refer? Two considerations bear on this question. First, since Job has been speaking in the first person in the immediately preceding verses, the personal pronoun is not needed to signal a change in speaker from someone else to himself. Second, since Job has repeatedly stated that he speaks 'without knowledge or insight,' it seems equally unlikely that he would wish to place additional emphasis on his own speaking. Thus, it seems that the most likely explanation for the use of the personal pronoun is to indicate a change in perspective to another speaker. Van Wolde argues that, as in verses 2-3, one should assume an ellipsis which must be supplemented with "you said." In this way Job appears to point to the previous statement by YHWH a second time; however, the pronoun "I" indicates a difference from verse 3. Van Wolde suggests that the difference here is a change in reference as Job transfers the perspective from himself to YHWH.

Thus, Job brings the reader along with him as for the first time he actually sees through the eyes of YHWH. Van Wolde states, “Initially, Job saw through his own eyes and spoke in his own words or in the words of YHWH, but in verse 4 he sees through the eyes of YHWH and with the words of YHWH.” Thus,

1. Job said to YHWH:
2. “I know / You know  
that you can do everything,  
that no plan can be held back from you”
3. [You said:]  
“Who restricts a plan without knowledge?”  
Therefore I told  
But had no insight,  
About things too wonderful for me  
But I did not know.
4. [You said:]  
“(You) listen  
and I will speak:  
“I shall ask you  
and you will make me know”.
5. (Job said:) Through ear’s hearing I hear you  
And now my eye sees you.

In verse 5 (and 6) the point of reference returns to Job and discloses the effect of this brief change in perspective. Verse 5 may allude to a deepening of Job’s understanding, which is likened to the difference between knowledge derived from hearing alone as compared to knowledge that comes from the combination of hearing and seeing. The change in Job’s perspective afforded through the Divine speeches and acknowledged in Job’s response appear to have produced a change in Job himself, which is communicated in verse 6 by the two verb forms, a *x-yiqtol* form and a *w<sup>e</sup>qatal* form, both in the first person singular referring back to Job.

The foregoing syntactic analysis of Job 42:1-5 demonstrates both the complexity and inherent ambiguity of the text. The abrupt changes in speaker and perspective embedded in this utterance are typical of actual dialogue and admit several possible renderings which form the basis of the ambiguity inherent in this textual unit. The

meaning(s) which may be attributed to the individual elements of verse 6 are considered below.

### Lexical Considerations

The semantic ranges of the key constituent elements of 42:6 must be ascertained primarily on the basis of OT usage (a synchronic approach). The meanings of the verbs, **נָאֵס** and **נָחַם**, are difficult to establish and have been the subject of considerable debate. These verbs appear to have overlapping semantic ranges and even to be interchangeable. What distinction, if any, is implied by this juxtaposition? Answering this question is made all the more difficult because this is the only occurrence in BH of both verbs within a single verse.

### The Biblical Function of **נָאֵס**

In Biblical Hebrew (BH) **נָאֵס** (“reject, refuse”) is attested only in the *Qal* (71x) and in the *Niph'al* (5x).<sup>104</sup> Lexicons frequently ascribe two of these *Niph'al* occurrences to a related root **נָאֵס** II, usually translated as “flow, run;” implying that this is a variant of the intransitive root **נָאֵס**, “dissolve, melt, faint.” However, this assignment is less than certain.<sup>105</sup> **נָאֵס** is generally transitive in BH. Outside the book of Job, an object is specified in every instance, as is true for 7 of its 11 occurrences of **נָאֵס** within the book of Job. In Job the objects of **נָאֵס** include: “the discipline of the Almighty” (5:17), “[a man of] integrity” (8:20), “my life” (9:21), “the labor of my hands” (10:3), “me” (19:18), “their

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<sup>104</sup> See Appendix I for a complete listing of all occurrences of this verb in BH.

<sup>105</sup> Cf. BDB, 549, 587; KB, 490, 542.



fathers” (30:1), and “the claim of my servant ...” (31:13). In each of these instances the verb has the meaning “reject.”

However, in four verses, including 42:6, **נָאָץ** occurs without an object. In each of these verses the absence of a specified object is the reason for its semantic ambiguity. For example, the verb **נָאָץ** in 42:6 has been variously translated as “despise *myself*” (RSV, NIV), “abase *myself*” (Gordis), “melt away” (NEB), “sink down” (Dhorme), “recant” (Pope), “retract” (JB, NASB), and “ashamed of” (GNB).

Apart from its occurrence in 42:6, **נָאָץ** lacks an object only in Job 7:16, 34:33, and 36:5. In these verses the absence of an object may indicate that the verb is intransitive. Alternatively, the verb may be transitive with the object omitted because it is implied from the context. Unfortunately, these few verses are themselves difficult to translate, limiting their helpfulness in establishing the meaning of 42:6. All four, however, seem to resist an intransitive rendering. Therefore, commentators have proposed a variety of emendations in an attempt to supply an appropriate object.

Hartley, following Driver, supplies a personal pronoun, translating **נָאָץ** in 7:16 as “I despise it.”<sup>106</sup> Habel concurs, assigning the object on the basis of the parallel idea expressed in the previous verse, “I reject life.”<sup>107</sup> Wolfers suggests that if this verb really is intransitive, then the meaning must be rendered along the lines of “I am disgusted!” However, he prefers to translate **נָאָץ** transitively in 7:16, “I reject that I should live forever.”<sup>108</sup> In an attempt to render the verb intransitively in 7:16 the NASB reads, “I

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<sup>106</sup> Hartley, 148 (fn. 8); Driver, 72, employs a similar approach understanding the antecedent for the supplied pronoun to be “life” (cf. 9:21).

<sup>107</sup> Habel, 153.

<sup>108</sup> Wolfers, 325.

waste away,” perhaps reading **נָסַח**. While such a rendering seems to suit the context it is far from certain and lacks textual support.

In 34:33 **נָסַח** is treated as transitive by most translations and commentators, who deduce the missing object from the immediate context.<sup>109</sup> With respect to the third occurrence, 36:5 may be a quotation of 8:20, so that **נָסַח** may be properly understood as the object, as attested in the LXX. In each of these instances, a transitive rendering seems to be preferred. Thus, it is reasonable to postulate a transitive interpretation of **נָסַח** in 42:6 as well.

In an attempt to capture an intransitive sense of **נָסַח** in 42:6, some commentators have sought to render the verb reflexively. However, this seems to be a stretch. Hebrew verbs in the *Qal* stem are rarely reflexive. Therefore, it becomes incumbent on the interpreter to demonstrate the necessity and legitimacy of such an unusual reading. Habel, citing L. Kuyper and D. Patrick, argues that **נָסַח** in 42:6 is not reflexive.<sup>110</sup> As noted above, it generally conveys the idea of “rejecting” someone or something and so, requires an object. Kuyper suggests that the implied object is “Job’s words,” while Patrick translates the verb “repudiate” and suggests that “dust and ashes” should be understood as the object. Both of these options are possible. Kuyper’s view finds support from the immediate context in that Job has just acknowledged the inadequacy of his own understanding and his former declarations (43:3). Such a realization may have led Job to reconsider his previous positions and to reject (i.e. take back, retract) some of his earlier statements. Patrick’s position that the prepositional

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<sup>109</sup> Cf. Habel, 474, assumes parallelism with the previous line and therefore supplies “his [terms]” to correspond to the preceding “your terms.”

<sup>110</sup> Habel, 576; many other commentators express similar sentiments.

phrase (עַל-עֶפְרַיִם וְאַפְרַיִם) is the explicit object of the verb is also possible. This phrase may be the distributed object of both verbs. Such a view may suit the context better if the phrase is understood metaphorically (referring to Job's humanity) rather than literally (referring to the physical elements surrounding him).

In contrast Habel, noting the legal metaphor of Job's response, suggests that 31:13 yields a clue about the proper object of מִאֵס. There Job asserts that he did not "dismiss/reject the case" of his manservant. Thus, Habel takes the implied object of מִאֵס in 42:6 as Job's case against God, which he "dismisses/ retracts."<sup>111</sup> Habel's suggestion is a good one. While it is not without difficulties of its own, it does attempt to assign a meaning to מִאֵס which is consistent with its use in other OT texts, it is supported by the "lawsuit" motif in the larger work, and it fits the current context.

The LXX employs approximately 20 distinct words to translate the various instances of מִאֵס in BH. Most of these words convey the meaning of "reject" or "despise." In Job 42:6, however, the LXX rendering appears to be more of a paraphrase than a precise translation. The LXX employs two verbs to render מִאֵס, "ἐφάμιλλισα ἑμαυτὸν (I disparage myself) καὶ ἐτάκην (and faint/melt away)." This paraphrase suggests uncertainty on the part of the LXX translator(s). There appears to be some confusion with respect to which Hebrew root מִאֵס / מָסַס (reject/melt) is employed and with respect to the verbal aspect. Note that the translator employs the equivalent of a reflexive construction (verb + explicit reflexive pronoun) in combination with a stative form. Alternatively, the LXX rendering may reflect an attempt to smooth out a difficult Hebrew text. The LXX translator supplies an explicit object ἑμαυτὸν "myself" which

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<sup>111</sup> Habel, 576.

relieves the ambiguity of the Hebrew text. The LXX rendering connotes an attitude of self-deprecation, humility, and even helplessness.

A similar treatment of the text may be seen in the Targum of Job (11QtgJob). The targumic translation of 42:6 also appears to be a paraphrase. However, because of the poetic character of the Hebrew text, it is often difficult to determine whether the translator is paraphrasing or translating from a different text. The Targum translates מָאָס in 42:6 with the Aramaic term אֲתִנְסֵךְ “I am poured out,” which appears to be derived from the root מָאָס II (*Niphal*), usually translated as “flow, run.”<sup>112</sup> According to Sokoloff the Aramaic form should be analyzed as *hitpé‘el*. It is possible that the targumist was influenced by the LXX in his attempt to relieve the ambiguity of the Hebrew text.

On the basis of the preceding discussion it would seem that it is not possible to advance a definitive translation of the term מָאָס in 42:6. Two major options are genuinely possible, depending on the root one assumes to be represented. If מָאָס, then a transitive rendering with the meaning “reject” is likely, although, as noted above, precisely what is being rejected is not immediately clear from the context. If מִסָּס, then an intransitive rendering with the meaning “emptied,” or “poured out “ (i.e. humbled) is likely. Thus, the ambiguity of the text under consideration derives not only from the syntactic relations among the various elements of the utterance, but is also encountered with respect to the meaning of the words themselves. Unfortunately, it is not presently possible to resolve this inherent ambiguity.

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<sup>112</sup> Michael Sokoloff, The Targum to Job from Qumran Cave XI, Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University, 1974, 100, 167.

### An analysis of the OT usage נחם

In Biblical Hebrew נחם is attested in the *Niphal* (48x), *Piel* (51x), *Pual* (2x), and *Hithpael* (7x).<sup>113</sup> Hebrew grammars have traditionally invested verbal stems with semantic content. While certain general relations among the verbal stems may exist (e.g. the *Niphal* functioning as the passive of the *Qal*, or the *Hiphil* functioning as the causative of the *Qal*), there are sufficient examples of deviation from the general pattern to warrant caution. For example, with respect to Hebrew verbs attested in the *Niphal*, statistical analyses have demonstrated a semantic relationship to the *Qal* stem in about 60% of the cases. An additional 20% appear to be related to either the *Piel* or *Hiphil* stems. The remaining *Niphal* forms have no apparent relation to any other active stem.<sup>114</sup> Similarly, Waltke & O’Conner observe that “although the *Niphal* normally stands in juxtaposition to the *Qal*, with some verbs it serves as a middle-reflexive counterpart to the *Piel*.<sup>115</sup> They state further that this is seen most clearly in verbs where the *Qal* is unattested, citing דבר, כבר, כסה, מלט, and קדש as examples. נחם shares these characteristics and, therefore, may also belong to this category.

Verbal stems are identified principally on the basis of form, depending on both consonantal clues (e.g. the *nun* prefix of the *Niphal*) and characteristic pronunciation (vowel points, dageshot, etc.). Around 600-750 C.E., the Masoretes are believed to have begun to add vowel points and accents to the Hebrew text primarily to preserve

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<sup>113</sup> See Appendices II (D-stems) and III (Niphal) for a listing of all occurrences of נחם in BH.

<sup>114</sup> van der Merwe, 78 cites P. A. Siebesma, *The Function of the Niph'al in Biblical Hebrew*, in *Studia Semitica Neerlandica* 28, Assen: Van Gorcum, 1991, 92-96) for the statistics.

<sup>115</sup> Waltke & O’Conner, 393-394.

traditional pronunciation.<sup>116</sup> However, we do not know the precise nature of the criteria they employed, nor to what extent their choices were informed by external influences such as Talmudic tradition and extant translations, including the Peshitta and LXX. In the absence of such knowledge any semantic content assigned to a verbal stem needs to be adduced strictly on the basis of usage. However, even this approach is complicated in the case of verbs, such as נָחַם, where the verbal stem cannot always be unambiguously identified on the basis of form.

The I-*nun*, II-guttural composition of נָחַם produces deviations from the standard morphological patterns (vocalization). These deviations are due to Hebrew conventions regarding stem formation. In the formation of the *Niphal* stem a *nun* is prefixed to the verbal stem. In the case of I-*nun* verbs, this generates a closed syllable with a final *nun*. In such cases the final *nun* routinely assimilates with the consonant immediately following, resulting in a “doubling” of that consonant. When a guttural letter stands in the second position, as in נָחַם, it is not “doubled.” This assimilation and absence of “doubling” leads to ambiguity in the form. A similar, but unrelated, deviation in vocalization is associated with the formation of the “D-stems” (*Piel*, *Pual* and *Hithpael*), which are typified by a doubling of the second radical. However, the absence of “doubling” in II-guttural verbs along with consequent vowel changes also leads to an ambiguity in form. This ambiguity is relieved by other features in the *Pual* and *Hithpael* stems. However, the end result is that with I-*nun*, II-guttural verbs such as נָחַם, there is

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<sup>116</sup> For a helpful discussion of the history of the Masorah see, P. H. Kelley, D. S. Mynatt, and T. G. Crawford, *The Masorah of the Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmanns, 1998), 13-30. Note: At least three different Masoretic traditions, Palestinian, Babylonian, and Tiberian, each with its own tradition of pronunciation, and employing its own symbols depicting vowels and accents is attested. The Tiberian system eventually gained dominance and is the tradition reflected in BHS.

no difference in vocalization (i.e. vowel pointing) between the *Niphal* and *Piel* stems for many of the inflected forms.

Thus, in several instances the *Niphal* and *Piel* are morphologically indistinguishable. The potential for confusion may be illustrated with the 1cs perfect form of נחם found in Job 42:6 - וַיִּנְחַם־נִי, which is parsed as *Niphal* by most lexicons, and the identically pointed form (plus a 3mp suffix) found in Jer. 31:13 - וַיִּנְחַם־מֵתִים, which is routinely parsed as *Piel*. Because of the ambiguity of the vocalization of I-*nun*, II-guttural verbs, it is not possible on the basis of form alone to ascertain whether the form in 42.6 is *Piel* or *Niphal*.<sup>117</sup> In instances where the Hebrew form is ambiguous, the stem parsings of Hebrew verbs found in various lexica and concordances must be assigned on the basis of multiple factors including: (1) form, (2) traditional ascription, (3) Hebrew context, and (4) translational influence (e.g. LXX). For example, according to the standard concordances נחם occurs 60 times in the D-stems, *Piel* (51), *Pual* (2), and *Hithpael* (7). The LXX translates these occurrences with an amazing consistency, using παρακαλεω (“to comfort, console”) in all but 9 of the 60 instances.

On two of these nine occasions, Jer. 31:13 and Ez. 5:13, the Hebrew verb is not represented in LXX. The remaining seven instances appear to be interpretive renderings used by the LXX translators to bring out the meaning of the text more clearly. In Gen 5:29 נחם is translated by διαναπαύω (“to allow to rest for awhile”). The compound objects - deeds and toil of our hands - suggest that the “comfort” in view is equivalent to

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<sup>117</sup> Cf. Habel, 576, who observes that “while the verb taken as a niphal, is usually rendered ‘repent,’ it can also be taken as a piel and translated as ‘find consolation in.’” Hatch & Redpath, 602c & 603b, and Heidi M. Szpek, Translation technique in the Peshitta to Job: A Model for Evaluating the Text with Documentation from the Peshitta to Job, (Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series no. 137, ed. David L. Peterson and Pheme Perkins. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 282, parse נחם in 42:6 as *Piel*; while Kohler & Baumgartner, 608, and Brown, Driver, and Briggs, 637, and most commentators parse נחם in 42:6 as *Niphal*.

“rest.” In Ez. 16:54 the LXX paraphrases the Hebrew text translating נָחַם as παροργίζω (“to provoke to anger”). Here the act of giving comfort to the wicked (the daughters of Sodom) is equated with the consequence of that action, namely inflaming the anger of YHWH. In three additional instances (Is. 12:1; 52:9; Zech. 10:2), the LXX employs ἐλεέω (“to have pity on, to show mercy”). In each of these verses God’s work of “comforting” is set against the backdrop of turning away his anger and the redemption of Jerusalem. These acts undoubtedly were associated with God’s “mercy.” Thus, the “comfort” in view was that which is the result of God’s merciful dealings with His people.

In the remaining two instances (Gen 27:42; Num. 23:19) the *Hithpael* of נָחַם is translated by ἀπειλέω (to be threatened). In both passages the LXX translators appear to have paraphrased the Hebrew text. In Gen 27:42 the LXX translators replaced the reflexive form (Esau is consoling himself by planning to kill you) with an active form (Esau threatens to kill you) capturing the sense of the verse. The translators’ interpretation of Num. 23:19 is a bit more difficult to discern. It is possible that they were either troubled by the idea that God would have any need to “comfort or console Himself” or could not see how such a sense fit the larger context. In searching for possible alternatives, the LXX translators very likely considered both the immediate context and the exegetical choices made with respect to the only other occurrence of this form (Gen 27:42). With respect to context, the Hebrew verb is used by the non-Israelite prophet Balaam to express God’s reply to Balak, king of Moab, who had sought to thwart God’s plans by having the Israelites cursed. The idea that Balak’s efforts amount to an attempt to “threaten” God is a reasonable inference. Thus, consistent with the rendering in Gen. 27:42, the LXX translators render this verse: “God is not like a man that he [= His will or plans] should be interrupted (διαρτηθῆναι; aor. pass. infin.), nor like a son of man that he should be threatened” (ἀπειληθῆναι; aor. pass. infin.). In contrast,



modern translators have interpreted this instance of the *Hithpael* of נִחַם as conveying a meaning usually attributed to the *Niphal* stem, namely, “to repent” in the sense of a “change of mind or heart.” Thus, the NASB states, “God is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent.” This verse serves to illustrate the impact of various exegetical assumptions on the translation of difficult Hebrew texts. Both groups of translators reject the predominant rendering (“comfort”) of D-stem forms of נִחַם as contextually unsuitable. The LXX translators appear to have been influenced predominately by the context surrounding the verse, opting for a creative rendering consistent with the sense of the narrative. Modern translators appear to be more heavily influenced by synchronic and theological considerations, seeking a meaning consistent with the use of this root in other OT texts.

Overall, there is an impressive consistency with respect to the use of παρακαλέω in the LXX’s rendering of the apparently *Piel* occurrences of נִחַם in BHS (with the few exceptions explained as above). However, it is not possible to determine the reason for this consistency. An important underlying question may be framed as follows. Have the interpretations of ancient lexicographers (and possibly of the Masoretes themselves) been influenced by the choices of the LXX translators? Or is the apparent consistency due to textual or lexical nuances which elude modern interpreters?

Interestingly, if one undertakes a similar analysis of the traditionally *Niphal* occurrences of נִחַם, LXX demonstrates no such consistency, instead using at least 14 different verbs to render the *Niphal* of נִחַם.<sup>118</sup> In order of frequency they are μετανοέω “to

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<sup>118</sup> L. Kohler and W. Baumgartner, eds., A Bilingual Dictionary of the Hebrew and Aramaic Old Testament (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1998), 608-9, states that 16 different translations are used in the LXX for the *Niphal* of נִחַם. However, my own careful analysis of the LXX (Ralph’s) translation of

change one's mind, repent" (15x), παρακαλέω "to be consoled, comforted, encouraged, grieved" (12x), μεταμέλομαι "to regret, repent, change intent" (6x), παύω "to cease, stop, desist" (5x), and one occurrence each of ἐνθυμέομαι "to consider, reflect on, ponder," ἀποστρέφω "to turn back/away," ἱλάσκομαι "to appease, conciliate, be gracious towards," ἐλεέω "to have pity upon, show mercy to," ἀνίμι "to send back, to let go free," θυμώ "to make/be angry," ἡγεομαι "to lead, hold, regard, believe, think," ἀναπαύω "to cease, stop, desist, rest," ἵλεως γίνομαι "to become merciful," and ὀργίζω "to make angry, provoke".

A number of relevant observations emerge from such an analysis. First, in 44% of the OT occurrences of the *Niphal* of מִנַּח, the LXX translates the Hebrew using either μετανοέω (31%) or μεταμέλομαι (13%), indicating that the action in view involves a change of mind about something (e.g. "regret", "relent", "repent"). These terms appear to be synonymous in meaning in both the LXX and the NT. When the LXX uses μετανοέω to represent the *Niphal* of מִנַּח, it uses only active voice forms. However, in spite of the form the "action" implied by this verb always affects the subject and not the object (i.e., is "reflexive"). For example, consider the sentence "Joe regretted his words." Grammatically, "words" is the direct object of the verb. However, the action implied by the verb (i.e. a change in attitude) is experienced by the subject (Joe) and not by the object (words). Thus, verbs such as μετανοέω possess a middle or reflexive sense which is inherent in their meaning. When μεταμέλομαι translates the *Niphal* of מִנַּח the form (passive voice) and meaning both direct the action back to the subject.

Second, in an additional 25% of the occurrences the LXX translators employ παρακαλέω to translate the *Niphal* of מִנַּח. Here the action in view is the receipt of comfort or consolation. In 11 of 12 occurrences the Greek verb is either middle or

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each of the 48 occurrences of מִנַּח only yielded 14 distinct translations. See Appendix 2, where

passive (the exception is in Ez. 31:16). Third, the remaining 15 occurrences of the *Niphal* of נחם in BH are rendered into Greek using 11 different words or phrases. In 12 of these occurrences (80%) the Greek verb is in the middle or passive voice.

Together these observations suggest that the LXX translators viewed the *Niphal* of נחם as usually connoting a middle/passive aspect. Interestingly, the LXX translators handled the “D-stem” forms of נחם with a similar consistency with regard to verbal aspect. All of the *Piel* forms of נחם were translated into Greek using the active voice, while both *Pual* forms and six of seven *Hithpael* forms were translated using the passive. Additional study is required before this observation can be generalized to other Hebrew verbs. In addition, the variety of Greek verbs used to translate the *Niphal* of נחם suggests that either the semantic range of נחם in BH is quite broad or, more likely, that the meaning of the Hebrew was often in doubt. The latter seems to be the more likely explanation with respect to the LXX translation of 42:6.

Only in Job 42:6 is נחם translated by the Greek word ἡγομαι, which seems to denote the activity of “thinking about, regarding, or considering” oneself as “dust and ashes.” This rather general expression in the LXX is no doubt employed as a paraphrase of the admittedly ambiguous Hebrew text. According to Hatch and Redpath (602c), ἡγομαι is employed in the LXX to translate no less than 35 distinct Hebrew words and phrases. In the LXX of Job ἡγομαι translates חשב (“think”, “plan”, “count”) five times (3:24, 19:11; 33:10; 35:2; 41:19 [Eng. 27]). It translates once each נאס (“reject”, “refuse”; 30:1), ירה (“throw”, “cast”, “teach”; 30:19), הפך (“turn”, “overturn”;

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the LXX translations for each occurrence are listed.

41:20 [Eng. 28]), שׂים (“put”, “place”, “set”, “make”; 41:23 (Eng. 31)), and נחם (“be sorry”, “repent”, “regret”, “comfort”, “console”; 42:6).

At this point some inferences may be drawn with respect to the LXX translators’ understanding of נחם in 42:6. First, the LXX appears to be a paraphrase rather than an attempt at a literal rendering. The lack of a close correspondence between the LXX and the Hebrew text suggests either that they possessed a Hebrew text different from the MT, which seems unlikely (above), or that they found the Hebrew difficult to translate and therefore attempted to capture the general sense of the passage (see chart below). Assuming that the text available to them was not substantially different from the MT, their exegetical choices are informative.

**Chart: Job 42:6 - BH compared to LXX**

Translation of BH	BH	LXX	Translation of LXX
Therefore	עַל־כֵּן	διὸ	Therefore
I reject	אֶמְאָס	ἐφάυλισα ἐμαυτὸν καὶ ἐτάκην	I despise myself and I melt
and I <i>nhm</i>	וְנִחַמְתִּי	ἡγῆμαι δὲ ἐμαυτὸν	and I consider myself
on/about/against dust and ashes.	עַל־ עָפָר וְאַפְרָיִם	γῆν καὶ σποδόν	earth and ashes.

Second, in Job 42:6 the LXX translators did not use either μετανοέω or μεταμέλομαι to render נחם, suggesting that they did not consider the action described in 42:6 to be primarily that of repenting, or relenting, or regretting. Third, the translators also did not use παρακαλέω, suggesting that they also did not consider the action to be primarily one of giving or receiving comfort or consolation. Thus, it would appear that the Hebrew text was no clearer to the translators of the LXX than to modern exegetes. It

is likely that the choice of a general term such as ἡγεομαι reflects their appreciation of the inherent ambiguity of the Hebrew text. In the face of such ambiguity, they apparently tried to bring this text into conformity with the two other texts (Gen 18:27, Job 30:19) which may be viewed as expressing a parallel idea on the basis of the use to the phrase (עַל-עֶפֶר וְאַפֶּרֶ). In Gen 18:27 the words occur in a nominal clause (with an implied copulative): “although I am dust and ashes”. Here the LXX translators supplied the verb εἶμι, “to be.” In Job 30:19 the verbal idea is expressed by the *hitpael* of מָשַׁל. Although the root occurs 7 times in BH in the sense of “become like, be comparable to”, this is its only occurrence in *hitpael*. In the LXX translation of this verse, the verb ἡγεομαι is used in the first line; in the second line a subject is supplied (“my portion” or “lot”) and ἐστίν is implied, as this table shows:

**Chart: Job 30:19 - BH compared to LXX**

Translation of BH	BH	LXX	Translation of LXX
He threw me to the clay;	הֲרַנִּי לְחֵמֶר	ἡγήσασαι δέ με ἰσα πῆλῳ	You considered me like clay;
and I became like dust and ashes.	וְאַתְּמַשֵּׁל כְּעֶפֶר וְאַפֶּרֶ:	ἐν γῇ καί σποδῶ μου ἡ μέρις	In earth and ashes [is] my lot

Thus, the choice of ἡγεομαι in 42:6 may be seen as conveying a verbal idea similar to those associated with the use in BH of the phrase “dust and ashes” in its other occurrence in Job”.<sup>119</sup>

<sup>119</sup> While I have suggested that the LXX translators have rendered מָשַׁל in 42:6 by ἡγεομαι another possibility must be acknowledged. It is possible that the LXX translators have simply ignored the Hebrew verb and substituted an expression that they considered to be more suitable.

## Frequency and significance of יְהוָה as the subject of נָחַם

While it is linguistically axiomatic that the meaning of any word in an utterance must be ascertained on the basis of the context in which it is used, a broader consideration of its usage often provides insight into the semantic range of a word. Therefore, an analysis of the frequency of the occurrence in BH of נָחַם with a “Divine” subject may be informative. The frequency of such occurrences sorted according to the usually assigned designation of verbal stem is summarized in the following table.

### **Occurrences in BH of נָחַם with a “Divine” subject:**

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Piel/Pual</b>	<b>Hithpael</b>	<b>Niphal</b>
YHWH	11/53 (21%)	3/7 (43%)	30/48 (63%)
YHWH's possession*	2/53 ( 4%)	0/7 ( 0%)	0/48 ( 0%)
YHWH (?)**	2/53 ( 4%)	0/7 ( 0%)	2/48 ( 4%)
God (El/Elohim)***	1/53 ( 2%)	1/7 (14%)	2/48 ( 4%)
<b>Totals</b>	<b>16/53 (30%)</b>	<b>4/7 (57%)</b>	<b>34/48 (71%)</b>

\* Occurs only in Ps. 23:4 (YHWH's rod & staff) and Ps. 119:76 (YHWH's lovingkindness).

\*\* In 4 verses the subject of the verb is difficult to establish (Is. 51:19, 57:6, 61:2, and Joel 2:14), however, in each instance it is reasonable to infer that YHWH is in view [e.g. see E. J. Young's commentary (The Book of Isaiah, vol. 3, pp. 321, 403, 458-460) for a discussion of the Isaiah passages].

\*\*\* “El” occurs only in Num 23:19; “Elohim” occurs in Ps. 71:21, Jon. 3: 9, 10.

Overall, in one-half (54/108) of all the OT occurrences of נָחַם (in any stem or conjugation) the doer of the action is stated to be YHWH. This observation is independent of the precise nature of the action in view. Whether the action denoted by נָחַם involves the provision of comfort/consolation or the act of repenting/changing one's mind, such actions are freely attributed to YHWH. The “Divine” subject is associated with נָחַם with an even higher frequency (34/48 = 71%) when consideration is limited to those instances where נָחַם is believed to be in the *Niphal* stem. Restricting the subset

even further to include only those occurrences usually parsed as “*Niphal* Perfect,” as is the case in Job 42:6, yields a similarly high frequency ( $14/20 = 70\%$ ).<sup>120</sup> Thus, in nearly 3 out of every 4 uses in BH of נחם in the *Niphal*, the action in view may appropriately be attributed to YHWH. Therefore, apart from compelling evidence to the contrary, it is reasonable to conclude that whatever action is being ascribed to Job (as the subject of נחם) in 42:6, it is very likely an action which may be appropriately undertaken by YHWH. While not definitive, such data certainly mitigate against any interpretation which seeks to view the activity specified by נחם as involving repentance from sin (sinful acts).

#### Usage of the expression על נחם in Job 42:6

Some commentators have suggested that the verbal meaning in Job 42:6 is determined by the combination of verb נחם with preposition על. For example, in his commentary Habel observes that the expression על נחם “regularly means ‘repent’ in the sense of ‘change one’s mind about.’”<sup>121</sup> While this statement may be regarded as correct, it does not adequately reflect the frequency of usage. Excluding Job 42:6, there are 16 instances in BH where נחם is followed immediately by על (see Appendix IV for a complete listing). In approximately half of these instances (Ex. 32:12; I Ch. 21:15; Jer. 8:6; 18:8, 10; Joel 2:13; Jon 4:2) modern English translations, such as the NASB and the NIV, render על נחם using expressions such as “change [one’s] mind about, [be] sorry

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<sup>120</sup> Without conducting a more extensive analysis of the frequency of occurrences of the divine subject with other verbs possessing both similar and disparate semantic ranges, it is difficult to know how much interpretive emphasis to place on the observations made in regard to נחם. However, for purposes of comparison, in BH God occurs as the subject of נאם with about half the frequency (~ 37%; 28/76 instances) of נחם.

over/for, repent of, relent concerning/of, think better of” which convey a meaning consistent with Habel’s observation. However, in the other half of these instances ( 2 Sa. 13:39; I Ch. 19:2; Ps. 90:13; Is. 22:4; Jer. 16:7, 31:15; Ez. 14:22, [32:31; Zech. 10:2]) these same translations use expressions such as “was comforted concerning/for, to console concerning” to render the verbal idea.<sup>122</sup> There is some disagreement with respect to the meaning of this term in Ps. 90:13. The NASB translates **עַל נַחַם** as “be sorry for [your servants],” while the NIV translates it as “have compassion on [your servants].” While both renderings are possible, the larger context of Psalm 90 seems to favor the latter option. Thus, it would appear that Habel could have stated with equal confidence (and accuracy) that the expression **עַל נַחַם** regularly means “to comfort or console [someone] concerning [someone/something].”

Further analysis of these uses of **עַל נַחַם** provides some helpful observations. First in 6 of 7 passages where this expression is translated using an equivalent of “to repent” the subject of the verbal idea is YHWH. In 5 of these instances the object of the verbal expression is **רָעָה** (lit. “evil,” but variously rendered in English by terms such as “harm, calamity”). Thus, biblical texts ascribe to YHWH the action of regretting or relenting of **רָעָה**. In the remaining instance (Jer. 18:10) YHWH “repents” of “the good with which I had promised to bless.” Interestingly, in the only instance where a divine subject is not in view (Jer. 8:6), the subject of the verbal expression is **אִין אִישׁ** “no man.” Thus, the use of **עַל נַחַם** to convey the idea of “repenting of or regretting evil” is

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<sup>121</sup> Habel, 583; Cf. Driver and Gray, II, 348. Wolfers, 461, while acknowledging the possibility of Habel’s view, notes that another common use of this phrase is “to be comforted for.”

<sup>122</sup> The bracketed references may not properly belong in this category. See the discussion in the text with respect to Ez. 31:31. Zech 10:2 may not belong in this category because the **עַל** in this



attributed to humans only in the negative sense of something that they do not do.

Therefore, if this same expression in Job 42:6 is intended to convey the idea that Job is “repenting of some evil, wicked or sinful deed(s),” such a use in a positive assertion would be unique. While there is ample attestation of YHWH “repenting of רעה,” no such attestation with respect to human subjects is found in BH.

In the remaining passages where **על נחם** is translated using an equivalent of “to comfort” the subject of the verbal idea is generally a human being (e.g. David [or his messengers], the hearers [“you”], the Teraphim). The only exception (noted above) is Ps. 90:13 where YHWH is the subject, which may be the reason for the difference in emphasis between the NASB and the NIV translations in this verse. Similarly we find that the “object” of the verbal idea is also a person(s). Those being comforted and the reasons for which they are being comforted (the object of **על**) are specified as: Amnon for his dead father, me [Isaiah] concerning the destruction of the daughter of my people, anyone for the dead, Rachel for her children, you for the calamity brought against Jerusalem, Pharaoh for all the multitude slain by the sword. This final example (Ez. 32:31) is somewhat debatable. Although both the NASB and the NIV render the verb in Ez. 32:31 as “comfort/console”, this does not appear to fit the context as well as rendering the term “was sorry for” or “regretted.” Throughout chapter 32 the prophet is speaking of the judgment of Egypt. This judgment is compared to the judgments of other nations, including Assyria, Elam, Meshach, Tubal, Edom, the chiefs of the north, and the Sidonians. It is difficult to see how Pharaoh would be comforted or consoled concerning the deaths of his own army by seeing the devastation of other nations. Is the prophet suggesting that he should find some comfort in knowing that he is not alone in

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verse is actually **על־כֵּן**, (“therefore”) and so may not derive any meaning from its juxtaposition to **נחם**.

his disgrace? Although possible, it seems at least as likely that the response in view is not so much “comfort” as “sorrow or regret.”

Thus, in BH the expression **נחם על** appears to be used to communicate both the verbal activity of “relenting or repenting” (7X; almost exclusively attributed to YHWH) and the verbal activity of “comforting, consoling” a human being (7X; almost exclusively attributed to people) with equal frequencies of usage. As discussed above, Ez. 32:31, usually placed with the latter group, may in fact belong with the former, while Zech 10:2 is probably not a legitimate example, as the form employed is actually **על-כן**. Thus, the tendency of many commentators to translate **נחם** in Job 42:6 as “repent” on the basis of its association with **על** is not warranted.<sup>123</sup> While it may be asserted that the expression **נחם על** does indeed indicate the broad idea of repentance when a divine subject is in view, no such assertion (whether or not sin is in view) may be made with respect to a human subject. To support such an interpretation of Job 42:6 the interpreter must conclude that this instance constitutes a unique occurrence in BH.

#### The OT usage of **עפר** and **אפר** alone and in combination

As noted above several key questions need to be addressed in order to interpret the phrase **על-עפר ואפר**. What are the meanings of the two nouns **עפר** and **אפר**? Are they being used literally or metaphorically? Does their significance lie in their individual meanings or in their combination (e.g. as compound elements, a hendiadys, or an idiomatic expression) in this text?

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<sup>123</sup> Cf. Gordis, 576.

The masculine noun עפר is a relatively common term in BH (~ 109 occurrences according to TWOT), and is generally translated "dust." The semantic range includes "earth, ground, ashes (synonymous with אפר "ash(es)" and אשפת "ash heap"), debris, finely ground powder, mortar, and rubbish." עפר is used literally in many contexts to denote "dirt", "dust", or "loose earth" and occurs in parallelism with ארץ "earth " (e.g. Is. 25:12, 26:5). Examples of the literal use of this term include the following: (1) the Philistines filled the wells dug by Abraham with loose dirt (Gen. 26:15); (2) the dust from the ground of the tabernacle was to be taken by the priest and added to the holy water and was to be used as a potion in the ritual test for adultery (Num. 5:17); (3) dust was thrown on the head as a sign of grief and mourning (Jos. 7:6; Ez. 27:30; Lam. 2:10; Job 2:12; Mic. 1:10); (4) man in his physical body was formed from dust, and it is to dust that his physical body returns (Gen. 3:19; Ecc. 3:20, 12:7; Job 4:19, 8:19, 10:9, 34:15; Ps. 104:29). In this last sense עפר is also used figuratively to represent "the grave" (Job 7:21, 17:16, 40:13; Ps. 22:29 [H 30]; Is. 26:19). The fact that man comes from the dust of the earth is a reminder of the sovereignty of God in His creative acts, and of the relative insignificance of man.

Additional figurative uses reflect both the abundance and commonness of dust. Thus, the term dust serves as a figure for abundance in God's gracious promise to Abraham of innumerable descendants (Gen. 13:16), a promise renewed to Jacob (Gen. 28:14; cf. 2Ch. 1:9). Dust also serves as a figure for worthlessness (Zeph. 1:17; cf. Zech. 9:3; Job 22:24). Dust may also serve as a symbol for the scattered: "the king of Syria had destroyed them and made them like the dust at threshing" (2Ki. 13:7).

עפר occurs more often (26 times) in the book of Job than in any other biblical book.<sup>124</sup> In fact the number of occurrences in Job exceeds its use in the Pentateuch (24 times). After Job it occurs most frequently in Isaiah (15x), Psalms (13x), and Genesis (10x). The difference is even more impressive if the data are analyzed on the basis of word frequency (Appendix V). עפר appears 10 times more frequently in Job (3.1 occurrences per 1000 words) than it does in the Pentateuch (0.3 per 1000 words). This unusually high frequency of usage in Job suggests that עפר may serve as a significant thematic element. This suggestion is further supported by the distribution of עפר within the book of Job. The 26 uses occur in 22 separate chapters (2 - 42) throughout the story.

The noun אפר occurs 24 times in BH. According to TWOT it usually denotes that which is the result of burning. For example, the ashes derived from a red heifer were used in an Israelite rite of purification (Num. 19:9-10, 17). The term is also employed figuratively to signify worthlessness (Is. 44:20; Job 30:19), misery (Ps. 102:9; BHS v. 10), shame (2Sa. 13:19), and humility before God (Gen. 18:27; Job 42:6; Dan. 9:3). In BH sackcloth in combination with ashes frequently denotes repentance and humility, and is often coupled with fasting (Est. 4:1, 3; Is. 58:5, Jer. 6:26). Ashes placed upon the head were a token of humiliation and disgrace (2Sam 13:19). In times of deep distress a mourner might sit upon heaps of ashes (Job 2:8).

Despite the relative frequency of the individual terms, they are combined only three times (Job 42:6; 30:19; Gen 18:27). In all three instances the phrase is embedded in direct discourse. In Gen 18:27 and Job 42:6, the person directly addressed is

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<sup>124</sup> עפר occurs in 2:12, 4:19, 5:5, 7:5, 21, 8:19, 9:9, 14:8, 19, 16:15, 17:16, 19:25, 20:11, 21:26, 22:24, 27:16, 28:2, 6, 30:6, 19, 34:15, 38:38, 39:14, 40:13, 41:25, 42:6. An analysis of its usage is

identified as the “Lord” and “YHWH,” respectively. In Job 30:19 a broader audience is in view, but it is reasonable to assume that Job wants his remarks to be heard by YHWH as well. In all three instances the phrase “dust and ashes” is most likely used figuratively to convey the humble position of the speaker in comparison to that of his creator. Thus, this phrase communicates a picture of the frailty and relative insignificance of the human condition.

The correspondences between the use of “dust and ashes” in Genesis 18 and Job 42 are striking. In both passages a conversation between a righteous servant (Abraham or Job) and his God are in view. In both instances, the servant is questioning and/or challenging God’s plan and purpose. In both instances, the servant employs the phrase “dust and ashes” to describe himself following a spoken response from God. In Genesis 18:23-24, Abraham initially speaks rashly and calls into question God’s righteousness and justice with respect to His plans for Sodom. The Lord then replies, without apparently taking any offense. Abraham then persists, albeit with greater humility, recognizing the presumptuousness of his words in view of his humble estate (he is “dust and ashes”). Similarly, Job in the midst of his trial also speaks rashly challenging YHWH’s justice and calling upon YHWH to explain himself. Following YHWH’s reply, he has a similar sense of his own insignificance in comparison to YHWH and applies the same expression (“dust and ashes”) to himself. This close correspondence was almost certainly not lost on early translators and may have influenced their approach to the Joban text.

In Job 30:19, Job employs the phrase “dust and ashes” to describe the present lowly estate in which he finds himself as a result of YHWH’s actions toward him (cf. 30:16-22). Job asserts: “God has cast me into the mud” and as a result Job has “become like dust and ashes.” Occurring as it does in Job’s final speech, the phrase

“dust and ashes” becomes a pivotal marker with respect to the flow of the narrative. At the beginning of the Joban discourses we find Job sitting upon a literal ash heap (2:8), which symbolized his current physical and emotional state and the complete separation from his former way of life. In 30:19 we find Job summing up his limited understanding of the cause and extent of his trial. It is God who has ordained these things and who has ultimately brought Job to his present state. Following this declaration, the reader encounters the Elihu speeches, followed immediately by YHWH’s intervention. Thus the phrase “dust and ashes” in Job 42:6 brings a measure of closure to the story. Job has been changed by his encounter with YHWH and these changes have become effectual even while Job is “in (the midst of) dust and ashes.” In other words Job derived all of the essential benefits of his encounter with YHWH despite his dismal estate.

## Chapter V - Evaluation of Interpretative Options

Based on the foregoing lexical, syntactic, and discourse level analyses, it should be evident that the ambiguity of the Hebrew text in Job 42:6 does not permit a definitive resolution. Therefore, exegetical conclusions about the meaning of the verse under study must be based upon a preponderance of the evidences. There are essentially three options for understanding the meaning of נָחַם in Job 42:6. First, the term may be intended to convey the concept of “comfort” or “consolation” in the sense of receiving relief from suffering. Second, the term may be intended to convey the concept of repentance in the sense of “a change of mind” (i.e. a fundamental change in one’s understanding or perspective). Third, the term may be intended to convey the concept of “repentance” in a technical sense (i.e. an expression of “regret” or “sorrow” with respect to sin). We will consider each of these possibilities in turn. As will be argued below on the basis of the foregoing analyses, the first option is the best supported among the three.

### Option 1: נָחַם conveys the idea of “comfort/consolation”

A very substantial argument can be advanced in support of the first option – understanding נָחַם in the sense of “to be comforted”. The evidence in support of such an interpretation may be outlined as follows:

#### 1. The semantic range of נָחַם naturally includes the concept of “comfort / consolation.”

In at least 66 of the 108 occurrences (61%) of נָחַם in BH the action being described involves comfort or consolation. This is true irrespective of whether the stem is

- understood as *Niphal* or *Piel*.<sup>125</sup> Kohler and Baumgartner identify seven occurrences in BH (apart from Job 42:6), where the *Niphal* of נחם conveys such a meaning.<sup>126</sup>
2. The use of נחם in Job to convey the idea of “comfort / consolation” is well-attested.
- All six occurrences of this verb in Job, apart from 42:6, clearly convey this meaning. This is supported by the LXX translators’ consistent use of παρακαλεω to express the corresponding idea in Greek.<sup>127</sup> Therefore, if נחם conveys a different meaning in 42:6, it would represent a singular usage in Job. Although possible, it should be noted that neither lexical, syntactical, nor discourse considerations demand that נחם in 42:6 possess a meaning other than “comfort” or “consolation.”
3. The syntactical argument that the combination על נחם in 42:6 necessitates a sense other than “comfort / consolation” is not sustainable. As discussed previously, in approximately half of the 16 occurrences of על נחם in BH (leaving aside Job 42:6),

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<sup>125</sup> In Job 42:6 it is not possible to determine the stem of נחם employed (*Piel* or *Niphal*) on the basis of form. However, the Aramaic translation (Targum of Job) employs a “*hithpael*” stem, lending support to the notion that the form employed in BH is may be view as *Piel* (see Appendix V).

<sup>126</sup> Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament (HALOT); Revised By Walter Baumgartner And Johann Jakob Stamm With Assistance From Benedikt Hartmann, Ze'ev Ben-Hayyim Eduard Yechezkel Kutscher, Philippe Reymond. Transl. and ed. by M.E.J. Richardson © 1994-2000 Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden, The Netherlands. The compilers list Gen 24:67, 38:12; 2Sa 13:39; Isa 1:24; Eze 14:22, 31:16, 32:31 as examples where the *Niphal* of נחם is used with the sense of “comfort/console.” They do cite Job 42:6 as an example of this usage of the *Niphal* of נחם. However, they also cite Job 42:6 as an example of the use of the *Niphal* of נחם to mean “repent” in the sense of “regret,” reflecting the ambiguity of the usage.

<sup>127</sup> In contrast to the six other occurrences, the LXX translators do not employ παρακαλεω to translate נחם in Job 42:6. Neither do they employ any of the Greek terms meaning “regret” or “repent.” Instead they choose to paraphrase the Hebrew text, possibly reflecting their uncertainty due to the inherent ambiguity of the text.



- the concept being communicated involves the idea of “comfort / consolation.”<sup>128</sup> The remaining instances communicate the idea of a “change of mind or disposition”.
4. Discourse considerations provide compelling support for understanding נחם in 42:6 as communicating the idea of “comfort / consolation.” On the basis of the discussion advanced in chapter III, drawn from a consideration of the content of the story as a whole, understanding נחם in 42:6 to express the idea of “comfort / consolation” provides for greater overall continuity and relieves the principle tension within the story in a more satisfactory manner than other alternatives (discussed more fully below).

Consistent with this exegetical interpretation I would suggest the following translation of Job 42:6 – **Therefore, I reject, yet am consoled in (the midst of) dust and ashes.** Such a translation does minimal violence to the Hebrew text in that it employs the first verb נחם in its usual (and best attested) sense. The verb is understood to be employed transitively with the following prepositional phrase serving as the required object, avoiding the need to supply an object from the larger context. The prepositional phrase is understood figuratively to refer to Job’s human condition. It calls to mind both Job’s present estate (in the midst of undeserved suffering) and his humble position (a creature addressing his creator). This translation also attempts to take account of the disjunctive accent attested in the MT, by understanding the prepositional phrase to stand in relation to both verbs and by rendering the conjunction to indicate a mild contrast as opposed to a simple connective (i.e. “yet” vs. “and”). Finally, נחם is understood to convey the idea of comfort/consolation, consistent with its usage in each of the other six occurrences of this

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<sup>128</sup> Cf. discussion on pages 81 – 84 and Appendix IV. This is also attested in Aramaic (Appendix

verb in the book of Job. Such a translation of נָחַם conveys the passive / reflexive sense of the *Niphal*, favored by most commentators. However, the verb could as easily be rendered as “find consolation,” if the form is understood as *Piel*.

Thus, on the basis of lexical and syntactical considerations, the translation proposed above is shown to be desirable in that it (1) accepts the Hebrew text as written, (2) comports well with the available internal evidence regarding the usage of נָחַם and נִחַם (in Job and in the MT), (3) understands the verbs to be employed in their usual senses, and (4) does not require the interpreter to supply an object for נִחַם from outside the immediate context (a course upon which many commentators have embarked, but which has not resulted in any general agreement among scholars).

Additional evidence in support of this proposed interpretation may be adduced from a discourse level consideration of the story (discussed in detail in chapter 3). Any interpretation of Job 42:6 must be consistent with the key elements of the story. In the prologue and epilogue Job is presented as a righteous servant with whom YHWH is pleased (Job 1:8; 2:3 and 42:7). Yet, despite his “righteousness,” Job experiences a degree of suffering, which his compatriots recognize as the judgment (wrath), which God ordinarily reserves for the punishment of sinners. From the perspective of Job’s “would be” comforters, the focus is predominately on Job’s physical circumstances. Thus, they reject Job’s claims of innocence and urge him to repent (in a technical sense) from whatever hidden sins beset him. In contrast, in the midst of this suffering, Job seeks understanding, and cries out to YHWH for vindication and relief. Through this process the reader comes to appreciate that the real source of Job’s anguish derives not so much from his physical suffering, but rather is the result of his broken fellowship with his Creator, which Job perceives as rejection and abandonment. Although YHWH never

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V; Cf. Zech. 10:2, where נָחַם עַל the clearly conveys the idea of “comfort / consolation.”).

explains His actions nor directly addresses the majority of Job's specific complaints, He does ultimately supply Job's greatest need (restoration of fellowship) by engaging Job in a conversation which reshapes Job's perspective of the nature of God, creation and himself. As a consequence of this encounter Job is brought to the point where he no longer desires an explanation, or even his own vindication before men. While "rejecting" the "dust and ashes" which symbolize his unjust suffering, Job nonetheless is able to experience the comfort / consolation, which derives from his restored fellowship with YHWH, even in the midst of his physical suffering.

There is also a sweet irony here that is drawn out most fully if Job's statement in 42:6 is understood to acknowledge that he has now received the comfort for which he has longed. The wise men of the day, who had come to "sympathize with" and to "bring comfort to" Job (2:11), had ultimately failed in their quest. Drawing upon the collected wisdom of the ages and the prevailing understanding of the manner in which God most assuredly worked, they were unable to achieve their desired end. Instead of bringing sympathy, they ultimately communicated derision and loathing, and instead of bringing comfort or consolation, they increased the measure of Job's suffering, by rejecting him (and his integrity) and by bringing unfounded accusations against him. Their inadequate and incorrect theology (42:7) had blinded them to the spiritual reality unfolding before them, and so, despite their good intentions, they merely served as pawns of **הַשָּׂטָן**, the one who initially accused Job of exhibiting a false piety before YHWH (1:9-11).

In contrast, it is YHWH, the One whom Job rightly accuses of bearing responsibility for his circumstances, and the One whose actions Job's friends seek to defend, who ultimately brings the measure of comfort that Job seeks. YHWH accomplishes this neither by identifying to Job the sin for which this suffering is deserved (which would have vindicated the position of the counselors and His own justice) nor by explaining to

Job His reason for bringing suffering upon an innocent man (which would have reassured Job with respect to his integrity and relieved Job's anxiety and consternation). Instead YHWH brings the true comfort, which Job seeks, by entering into communion with him. The restoration of fellowship with the living God is thus seen to satisfy all of man's deepest needs. In the light of this restored communion, all of Job's other questions/concerns fade into obscurity. Job no longer demands an explanation of God's actions, or a vindication of his own integrity, or a reinstatement of his privilege and position before men. YHWH's ways may be inscrutable and His plans beyond human reason, but Job's fears have been assuaged; he is complete and content in the context of his restored communion with YHWH. Thus, understanding Job 42:6 as an explicit statement of Job's apprehension of this reality emphasizes the irony and resolves the conflict in a most satisfying manner.

Option 2: נחם conveys the idea of "repent" in the sense of a change of mind

A substantial, although somewhat less robust, argument may also be advanced in support of the second option – understanding נחם to mean "to repent" in the sense of a change in one's understanding or perspective. The evidence in support of such an interpretation may be summarized as follows:

1. The semantic range of נחם also naturally includes the concept of "repentance" in the sense of a "change of mind." In approximately 41 of the 108 occurrences (38%) of נחם in BH the action being described involves a change in perspective, often leading to a change in intention or action. As discussed above (pp. 89 ff.) this usage is principally applied in instances where the form of נחם is understood to be *Niphal*.

However, since there is no reason to conclude that the verbal form in Job 42:6 is anything other than *Niphal*, this does not present any difficulty.

2. While the use of נחם to convey the idea of “repent” in the sense of a change of mind is well-attested in BH, this usage in Job is not. As discussed above, all six occurrences of this verb in Job, apart from 42:6, clearly convey the meaning of “comfort/consolation,” a view which is supported by the consistent use of παρακαλεω in the LXX. Thus, if נחם conveys a different meaning in 42:6, it would represent a singular usage in Job. However, it must be noted that neither lexical, syntactical, nor discourse considerations prevent נחם in 42:6 from being understood in this sense.
3. The combination על נחם in 42:6 may be translated as “repent” in the sense of “a change of mind”. As discussed previously, in approximately half of the occurrences of this phrase BH על נחם is understood to convey the idea of “repent” in the sense of a change in perspective. However, it must be acknowledged that in virtually all of those instances (6 of 7 occurrences) where על נחם is translated as “repent,” the subject of the verb is YHWH and not a human being. The only exception to this occurs in Jer. 8:6, the subject of the verbal expression is אִין אִישׁ “no man.” Thus, the use of על נחם to convey the idea of “repentance” is attributed to humans only in the negative sense of something that they do not do. Thus, if על נחם were to be understood in this manner in Job 42:6 it would also represent a unique usage of this phrase in BH.
4. Perhaps, the strongest argument for understanding נחם in 42:6 as communicating the idea of “repentance” in the sense of a change in perspective may be deduced on the basis of discourse considerations. As noted in the discussion of option one

above, it is clear that Job's encounter with YHWH had a profound effect on his understanding, reshaping his perspective of the nature of God, creation and himself. Therefore, it is reasonable to suggest that Job may be employing נחם in 42:6 to emphasize this change in perspective with respect to his former position.

Consistent with this exegetical interpretation I would suggest the following translation of Job 42:6 – **Therefore, I retract and relent in (the midst of) dust and ashes.** This is essentially the same as the NASB translation “Therefore I retract, And I repent in dust and ashes.” Such a translation, while perhaps a bit more subtle and complex than option one, is certainly permitted by the text. In this instance the emphasis is on the change in Job's perspective following his encounter with YHWH. Consistent with this emphasis the verb נחם is translated here by the English word “retract.” A retraction is essentially a rejection or repudiation of a prior utterance; thus the interpretation in view here communicates the idea that Job now desires to “take back” or “cancel” one or more of the statements which he uttered previously. Thus, the phrase “I retract” should be understood to have the force of “I reject [my words]” or something to that effect.<sup>129</sup> As in option one the verb is understood to be employed transitively, as it is in the vast majority of its occurrences in BH, with the required object being understood from the larger implied context. This rendering captures some of the ambiguity of the BH text in that it is not clear to the reader whether Job has one or more specific utterances in view or whether he is referring to all of his prior statements.

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<sup>129</sup> Pope, 291-2, observes that the object of נחם supplied by the JPS translators, i.e. “my words,” is undoubtedly the correct understanding. To express this idea he suggests translating Job 42:6 as “Therefore, I recant and repent in dust and ashes.” In Pope's view what Job now despises, loathes, and rejects is his former attitude and utterances.

However, on the surface at least, such an understanding of נִאָם appears to introduce an additional point of tension in the story. In Job 42:7 YHWH rebukes the “comforters” because they have not “spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has.” The clear implication is that Job has spoken correctly (at least with respect to some of the statements which he made concerning YHWH) in contrast to the statements made by Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar (and perhaps Elihu as well). Thus, a global retraction must be discounted in order to avoid introducing an unnecessary conflict with YHWH’s subsequent assertion. If this view is to be advanced, the reader must conclude that Job is retracting a specific statement(s) which were uttered “without knowledge,” and were therefore incorrect. While such an interpretation is certainly possible, it is not fully satisfactory as the reader is left to conjecture about which statement(s) Job has in view. Is Job retracting his stated desire for a legal hearing before YHWH, or his accusation that YHWH is ultimately behind his suffering, or his assertion that despite his innocence YHWH has numbered him among the accursed, or something else? The context does not admit a definitive resolution of this issue.<sup>130</sup>

Capturing the nature of “the change in perspective” denoted by נִחַם in Job 42:6 by using a single English word is very challenging. In current usage the term “repent” has acquired the status of a technical term. Although this technical meaning is restricted to a theological context, the virtually exclusive use of this term in such a technical sense has rendered it poorly suited to communicate the meaning of Job’s utterance to the modern reader. The theological baggage associated with this term brings a layer of meaning, which most likely was not intended by the author of Job. Among the options which might

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<sup>130</sup> It is possible to understand the phrase “in [the midst of] dust and ashes” as the object of “reject” as in option one above to avoid the introduction of this additional tension. The idea would something like “I reject [myself/my suffering] and repent of [my human frailty/ignorance]. However, such a rendering introduces other concerns.

be advanced, based on various renderings of this term in other biblical passages, are “change of mind,” “regret,” or “relent.” The first two options emphasize a change in attitude or perception alone, while the third option suggests an accompanying change in action.

While none of these options is fully satisfactory, perhaps “relent” may come closest to communicating the profound effect of Job’s encounter with YHWH. Not only does Job see with new eyes, but these new insights cause Job to cease striving to seek an explanation for his sufferings, and to rest in his restored communion with his God. Thus, in view of YHWH’s renewed mercy towards him, Job may be viewed as “retracting” (i.e. withdrawing) his requests for answers, and “relenting” in his pursuit of vindication, accepting the inscrutability of YHWH’s wisdom, and submitting to God’s divine plans. Such a view resolves the principle tensions of the story. It also presupposes no wrongdoing on the part of Job, which is consistent with the manner in which Job is presented to the reader - as a righteous man, whose faith and piety have been tried beyond all reason, and yet as a man who maintained his integrity throughout the ordeal and refused to “curse God to His face” as his Adversary had predicted. Such a view is positively affirmed in the epilogue through the words (affirmation of Job) and actions (restoration of Job’s fortune and status) of YHWH Himself.

Thus, on the basis of lexical and syntactical considerations, the rendering of נָחַם as “repent” in the sense of a change in understanding or perspective is less well supported than “comfort/consolation.” However, on the basis of discourse considerations, this option is at least acceptable.



Option 3: נחם conveys the idea of “repent” in the sense of sorrow for or repudiation of sin.

This interpretation is the least well-supported among the options under consideration. The same lexical and syntactical reservations delineated with respect to option two apply here as well. Not only does such an interpretation constitute a singular usage of נחם in the book of Job, but (as discussed previously) it would also constitute a singular usage of this term in BH. In virtually all of the instances where נחם clearly communicates the concept of “repenting” or “relenting” or “regretting of” evil (רעה), a term which does not necessarily connote sin, the doer of the action is identified as YHWH and not a human being.<sup>131</sup> Thus, whatever the nature for the action in view, it is something which may be readily attributed to YHWH.

Virtually all commentators acknowledge that Job’s trial and his consequent suffering had nothing to do with any identifiable sin prior to the initiation of the events depicted in the story. Yet many appear to be perplexed by the tone of YHWH’s reply to Job (Job 38:2 ff.) and by Job’s contrite response (Job 40:3-5, 42: 42:1-6). A major challenge faced by interpreters is how to understand the statements made by Job which appear to accuse God of wrongdoing. Job appears to accuse God of acting capriciously (9:22-23), of treating him unjustly (9:17; 10:7), of condoning and rewarding the wicked (10:3; 12:6; 21:7ff; 24:12, 22ff.), of forsaking the righteous (24:1), of acting as an enemy toward him (13:24; 16:9, 11; 19:11). On the basis of such statements various interpreters have judged Job to be guilty of the sin of “arrogance” or “pride.” Their assumption being that such apparently blasphemous statements about God could only come from a man who is guilty of exalting himself in a sinful manner. Therefore, they

conclude that sinful pride must lie at the root of Job's accusations, necessitating a response which involves repentance of this sin.

Some interpreters, such as Newell, have sought to delineate multiple specific sins of which Job was guilty. Newell concedes that Job's sins may have been committed unintentionally. However, on the basis of the rhetorical questions uttered by YHWH from the whirlwind, he argues that YHWH accuses Job of three specific sins: Job has used "words without knowledge" (38:2); he has contended with the Almighty and accused him (40:2); and he has discredited God's justice, condemning God to justify himself (40:8).<sup>132</sup> While it is possible to construe YHWH's remarks as accusations, Newell's analysis fails to convince. First, Newell's assessment of the tenor of YHWH's remarks is of necessity highly subjective (see earlier discussion, pp. 57-61). This is evident from the wide variety of interpretations offered by scholars. Newell fails to demonstrate that these three rhetorical questions are best understood as accusations of wrongdoing (sin), while the remaining rhetorical questions, which comprise YHWH's remarks, are not. Second, Newell never demonstrates that each of these "charges" rise to the level of a sinful act (of which Job is guilty). With respect to the first charge, two issues are important. First, it must be admitted that there is considerable debate about the identity of the person to whom these words (38:2) refer. While Job is most assuredly being addressed, due to the ambiguity of the text, scholars have argued that the words in question may refer to Job, or Elihu, or even the comforters. Second, it is not clear from Newell's discussion that "speaking out of ignorance" must necessarily be construed

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<sup>131</sup> See discussion p. 89. One possible exception to this observation may be Jer 31:19, although the doer of the action (the tribe of Ephraim?) and the nature of the action in view are not certain.

<sup>132</sup> B. Lynne Newell, "Job, Repentant or Rebellious." (Th.M. Thesis., Westminster Theological Seminary, 1983), 102. See also Newell, "Job: Repentant or Rebellious?" in Sitting with Job: Selected Studies on the Book of Job ed. Roy B. Zuck (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992, 441-456; reprinted from Westminster Theological Journal 46(2): 298-316, 1984), 446-447.

as a sinful act.<sup>133</sup> The second charge regarding “contending with and accusing the Almighty” is even more difficult to sustain. As we have previously noted, the Bible contains multiple examples of individuals (e.g. Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Jeremiah, etc.) whose contending with and accusing of the Almighty is not portrayed as sinful. Thus, it is incumbent on Newell to demonstrate that Job’s actions somehow crossed a line respected by the others. The third “charge” that Job sinned because he discredited God’s justice and condemned God is also problematic. While the questions asked in 40:8 comes closer to being accusations than any of the others, it is not clear that these rhetorical questions are necessarily different (accusatory rather than instructive) than the others which comprise YHWH’s speeches. There are also many examples in the Psalms and Prophets where the speaker laments the prosperity of the wicked, questions God’s justice and even accuses God of failing to act justly (e.g. Ps. 10:1-12; Ps. 82; Ecc. 8:14, 9:1-3a; Jer 12:1; Hab 1:1-13). Yet, never is such an assertion portrayed as sinful.

In responding to the assertion that Job sinned against YHWH during the period of his testing, which resulted in YHWH’s rebuke from the whirlwind and Job’s subsequent repentance, we will briefly consider the following: (1) the nature of Job’s accusations, (2) the nature of YHWH’s response, and (3) the resulting change in Job’s viewpoint.

In order to properly understand Job’s “incriminating” accusations, we must assess them with an eye toward context as well as content. If viewed in isolation some of Job’s statements may certainly be viewed as blasphemous (e.g. 9:22-23), however, such statements are attributed to Job by the author within a particular context. This context includes both conceptual and literary concerns. From a conceptual perspective,

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<sup>133</sup> Although, it is possible to sin through error or ignorance (Ez. 45:20), it is not at all apparent that this applies to Job. While, YHWH requires atonement (an animal sacrifice) for the words

Job utters these statements in the midst of intense suffering as he tries to accurately interpret the meaning of the events which have befallen him. The underlying presuppositions which appear to inform his view of the world are a recognition of God's absolute sovereignty over all of his creation, a deep and abiding conviction that his God is a just God, a keen awareness of his own innocence before God, typified by his lifelong faithfulness and obedience, and a confidence that his knowledge of God and God's ways, albeit limited, is essentially correct. These presuppositions inform Job's "world view," and consequently, his responses to his circumstances and differentiate him from his "comforters."

Job's understanding of God's absolute sovereignty leads him to assign ultimate responsibility to God for his current circumstances. Therefore, he directs his most salient comments, pleas, and reproaches to God alone. While it is clear to the reader that Job does not perceive the entire picture, nevertheless, it is not at all assured that possessing such knowledge would have changed Job's response in any way. From Job's perspective such additional knowledge would be essentially irrelevant. Whether or not the immediate cause of Job's troubles was the action of some created intermediary (e.g. the Satan) or could properly be assigned to the direct activity of God himself, Job recognized that ultimately God was in charge. It was God who assigned blessing or condemnation, reward or punishment. Therefore, Job's cries were most appropriately directed to the only one who could bring redress and rectify what Job perceived to be a grievous wrong.

Job's deep and abiding conviction that his God was a God of justice and righteousness led him to expect that if he could address God directly, God would both acknowledge his innocence before men and either provide an explanation to account for

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spoken without knowledge by the comforters, he makes no such demand with respect to Job. In fact, he commends the correctness of Job's utterances with respect to himself (Job 42:7).

Job's circumstances or provide redress, righting this unfortunate wrong. Such an expectation lies behind the many legal metaphors which constitute Job's challenge to God.

Job's keen awareness of his own innocence is the basis for his hope and expectation that God would respond to his pleas and grant him an audience. Job judges himself by recounting the past actions which attest to his lifelong faithfulness and obedience. He then challenges God to consider this self-evaluation. If God does not agree and is able to level any substantial charge against him, then he offers to withdraw his challenge and to affirm that he is indeed deserving of penalties even more severe than the suffering that he has already experienced. Thus Job's boldness in confronting YHWH appears to be predicated upon confidence in his own demonstrable innocence before God and not upon some prideful view of the significance of his own accomplishments or the magnitude of this stature before men. Furthermore, this same awareness of his innocence is what prevented him from acquiescing to the demands of the so-called comforters. Without being able to level any specific charges against him, they insisted that he confess his guilt, repent of his sins, and then hope for God's mercy. It is precisely because Job was a man of great personal integrity that he could not abide such a course. To behave in that way would have been little more than a farce intended to curry the favor of men and would have been an implicit acknowledgment that God is indeed capricious and that one might successfully curry favor, if one attempted to pacify him with flattering words.

Finally, Job's belief that his knowledge of God and God's ways (albeit limited) was essentially correct, is what led him to reject the interpretation of his circumstances proffered by his comforters. In his replies to Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar he repeatedly acknowledged the finiteness of human knowledge in general and the limitations of his own knowledge in particular. However, he asserts that his own knowledge of God is at

least as correct and substantial as the knowledge which they claim. Job's experience was contrary to the expectations of all of these men, yet Job alone was willing to maintain the tensions of these conflicts. He persisted in maintaining what he knew to be true of both God and himself, refusing to accept the obviously inadequate and incorrect explanations of his comforters, as he waited for God himself to speak and in so doing to enlighten his understanding. Ultimately, God did affirm Job's speaking and, by implication, the correctness of his understanding regarding the things of God.

Thus, from a conceptual standpoint Job's accusations appear to have been motivated by an essentially correct, if limited, understanding of both himself (i.e. innocence of wrongdoing; personal integrity) and of God (i.e. sovereignty, justice). If Job's statements were derived from correct thinking, how then did they become sinful utterances? Some commentators (including Newell) have tried to answer this question by suggesting that the sin happened unintentionally. They suggest that Job in his attempts to understand the reasons for his intense and apparently undeserved suffering, while in the midst of his anguish, crossed the line of propriety and sinned against God through the words that he uttered. However, such a conclusion is by no means obvious. Therefore, the burden of proof lies with those who would champion such a view.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

As discussed in chapter 2, the lack of a scholarly consensus with respect to questions of authorship, date of composition, and genre reflect the obscurity of this text under study. The absence of such contextual information adds to the difficulty of interpreting the book of Job and in establishing its place within the canon. Furthermore, a careful survey of putative ancient near-eastern literary parallels demonstrates that their similarities to the book of Job are at most superficial, and therefore of minimal value with respect to our task. Evaluation of extant Greek (LXX) and Aramaic (e.g. Targums, Peshitta)

translations and paraphrases of the book of Job provided helpful insights, but such observations did not provide conclusive data. Thus, the interpretive choices need to be decided on the merits of internal textual evidence.

A consideration of the structure and narrative flow of the book of Job, discussed in chapter 3, demonstrates the essential unity of the composition. Job is presented as a man of integrity without equal among his peers, who is chosen by YHWH as his champion in a contest with “the Satan.” As the story unfolds Job’s faith is severely tried as he is subjected to intense physical, spiritual and psychological suffering. Yet, Job is presented as a man who maintains his integrity, and who ultimately triumphs over these adversities. Job’s assertions about himself and about YHWH are ultimately shown to be correct in light of his public vindication (42:7 ff.). The principle tensions which develop in the story are related to the conflicts between Job and his putative “comforters” and between Job and his God. These tensions are resolved in the climax which consists of YHWH’s speeches and Job’s response (Job 38:1 – 42:6). Any interpretation of Job 42:6 must be consistent with the resolution of these tensions. It is on this basis, that interpretive option three (above) is largely discounted. Viewing YHWH’s rhetorical questions as accusations, requiring Job 42:6 to be interpreted as an acknowledgement of “repentance of sin,” is unnecessary and runs counter to the narrative flow. Instead of resolving the principle tensions, such an interpretation generates new tensions with respect to YHWH’s proclamations about Job in both the prologue and epilogue. It also appears to vindicate (at least in part) the Satan’s assertions about the “selfish basis” of Job’s apparent piety, and thereby demeans YHWH’s confidence in his chosen champion.

In contrast, both options one and two fulfill this requirement. Both acknowledge the fundamental change in Job’s perspective following YHWH’s revelations, but differ in

respect to their understanding of the Hebrew verb נָחַם. Option one understands the verb to principally communicate a change in attitude “I am comforted / I find consolation,” while option two understands the verb to principally communicate a change in activity: “relent.” Whichever option is embraced, Job’s integrity is not impugned and YHWH’s confidence in his champion is vindicated. Deciding between these options must be done on the basis of other considerations.

Syntactical and lexical analyses (chapter 4) demonstrate the inherent ambiguity of the Hebrew expression in Job 42:6 and do not permit a definitive resolution. While both options 1 and 2 may be substantiated exegetically, the preponderance of evidence (as enumerated above) would seem to favor understanding נָחַם in Job 42:6 to convey the idea of “comfort” or “consolation.” Such an interpretation satisfactorily resolves the principle tensions in the story, draws support from the widespread usage of this term in the same sense elsewhere in the book of Job and in BH, while developing more fully the sense of irony with respect to the miserable “comforters.” Understanding Job 42:6 in this way, we observe that Job continues to reject his condition (maintaining his integrity), yet he now also finds consolation (through the renewed communion with his God) even in the midst of his suffering. The restoration of fellowship with YHWH provides full satisfaction. Job’s encounter with YHWH has permitted him to transcend his present circumstances, and to accept His inscrutable decrees.

This leads very naturally into the epilogue which follows. Job’s personal vindication attested by YHWH’s admitting Job into his presence (Cf. 13: 15-16) is followed by his public vindication. Through his experience of suffering, Job was led to a deeper understanding of the ways of YHWH. As a result, Job’s public position was restored and enlarged. This was true with respect to Job’s family, wealth, and prestige within the community. It also may be seen to apply to Job’s priestly office. In the



prologue we find Job offering sacrifices on his own initiative for the benefit of his family; in the epilogue we find Job offering sacrifices at the behest of YHWH for the benefit of the larger community. This enlargement of the mediatorial role of a “suffering servant” of YHWH resonates with similar passages in Isaiah (49-56) and in the life of Jesus portrayed in the NT (Cf. Heb 5:8-10).

## Chapter VI

### Appendices

**Appendix I:** Occurrences of נאם in Biblical Hebrew (BH) with LXX translations.

**Appendix II:** Occurrences of נחם (putative D-stems) in BH with LXX translations.

**Appendix III:** Occurrences of נחם (putative *Niphals*) in BH with LXX translations.

**Appendix IV:** Occurrences of נחם על in Biblical Hebrew.

**Appendix V:** Aramaic usage of נחם in the Targumim.

**Appendix VI:** Usage Analysis of עפר and אפר in Biblical Hebrew.

**Appendix VII:** Excursis – A consideration of the purpose of suffering in Job.

## Appendix I: מָאָס All Forms in BH (Sorted by stem and conjugation)

Search BHS *מָאָס*		Subject of Verb	BHS Form	BHS Parsing P/G/N Stem Conj.			Suffixes	NASB	NIV	LXX Form	LXX Parsing	Breton's Translation of LXX
<b><u>Niph'al Forms</u></b>												
Isa. 54:6	she (= wife of one's youth)	תִּמָּאָס	3fs	N	F			[when] she is rejected	only to be rejected	μεμισμημένην	Acc. fs Pf. P. Ptc.	[a woman] hated [from her youth]
Ps. 58:8	them (= the wicked)	יִמָּאָסוּ	3mp	N	F (Ju)			Let them flow away [like water] (58:7)	Let them vanish [like water] (58:7)	ἐξουδενωθήσονται	3p F. P. I.	They shall utterly pass away (57:8)
Job 7:5	my skin (= Job)	יִמָּאָס	3ms	N	Pr			[my skin hardens] and runs	[my skin is] and festering	ἀπὸ ἰχῶρος ξύων	[noun: Gen. ms]	... from my eruption.
Ps. 15:4	[a reprobate/vile man]	נִמָּאָס	ms	N	Ptc			is despised	who despises	ἐξουδένωται	3s Pf. P. I.	[the evil worker] is set at nought (14:4)
Jer. 6:30	them (= the wicked)	נִמָּאָס	ms	N	Ptc			[they call them] rejected [silver]	[they call them] rejected [silver]	ἀποδοκιμασμένους	Acc. ns P. P. Ptc	[Call ye them] reprobate [silver]
<b><u>Qal Imperfects</u></b>												
Lev. 26:15	you (= sons of Israel) v. 25:1	תִּמָּאָס	2mp	Q	F			[if] you reject [my statutes]	[if] you reject [my decrees]	ἀπειθήσητε	2p Aor. A. S.	[but] disobey [them]
1 Sam. 15:23	he (= YHWH)	יִמָּאָסְךָ	3ms	Q	Pr	2ms		he has rejected [you]	he has rejected [you]	ἐξουδενώσει	3s F. A. I.	[the Lord] will [also] reject [you]
1 Sam. 15:26	he (= YHWH)	יִמָּאָסְךָ	3ms	Q	Pr	2ms		he has rejected [you]	he has rejected [you]	ἐξουδενώσει	3s F. A. I.	[the Lord] will reject [you]
2 Ki. 17:15	they (= Israelites)	יִמָּאָסוּ	3mp	Q	Pr			they rejected [his statutes]	they rejected [his decrees]	οὐκ ἐφύλαξαν	3p Aor. A. I.	[and] they kept not [his charges]
2 Ki. 17:20	(t)he(y) (= YHWH)	יִמָּאָס	3mp	Q	Pr			he rejected [all ... Israel]	he rejected [all ... Israel]	ἀπεώσαντο	3p Aor. M. I.	[the Lord] was angry
Job 5:17	[you] (= Job) [Ephz. speaks]	תִּמָּאָס	2ms	Q	F (Ju)			[so] do not despise	[so] do not despise	μὴ ἀπαναίνου	2s P. M. Imper.	[and] do [not] reject
Job 8:20	God (EI)	יִמָּאָס	3ms	Q	F			[Lo! God] will [not] reject	[Surely God] does [not] reject	οὐ μὴ ἀποποιήσεται	3s Aor. M. S.	[the Lord] will by no means reject
Job 9:21	I (= Job)	אֲמָאָס	1cs	Q	F			I despise [my life]	I despise [my own life]	ἀφαίρειταί	3s P. P. I.	[but my life] is taken away
Job 10:3	you (= YHWH)	תִּמָּאָס	2ms	Q	F			to reject [the labor of your hands]	to spurn [the work of thy hands]	ἀπείπω	2s Aor. M. S.	you have disowned [the work ...]
Job 31:13	I (= Job)	אֲמָאָס	1cs	Q	F			[if] I have despised [the claim]	[if] I have denied justice	ἐφάυλισα	1s Aor. A. I.	[if] I despised [the judgment]
Job 36:5	God (EI)	יִמָּאָס	3ms	Q	F			[God] does not despise [any]	[God] does not despise [men]	οὐ μὴ ἀποποιήσεται	3s Aor. M. S.	[the Lord] will not cast off [a ... man]
Job 42:6	I (= Job)	אֲמָאָס	1cs	Q	F			I retract	I despise [myself]	ἐφάυλισα	1s Aor. A. I.	I have counted myself vial
Ps. 36:5	the ungodly man	יִמָּאָס	3ms	Q	F			plans wickedness [upon his bed] (36:3)	[upon his bed] he plots evil (36:4)	διελογίσατο	3s Aor. M. I.	he devises [evil upon his bed]
Ps. 78:59	God (Elohim)	יִמָּאָס	3ms	Q	Pr			He greatly abhorred Israel	He rejected Israel completely	ἐξουδένωσεν	3s Aor. A. I.	[And greatly] despised [Israel] (77:59)
Ps. 78:67	Lord (יְהוָה)	יִמָּאָס	3ms	Q	Pr			He also rejected [the tent of Jos.]	Then he rejected [the tents ...]	ἀπώσατο	3s Aor. M. I.	he rejected [the tabern. of Jos.] (77:67)
Ps. 89:39	YHWH (Lord God of Hosts, v. 8)	יְהוָה יִמָּאָס	2ms	Q	Pr			But you have ... and rejected	you have spurned	ἐξουδένωσας	2s Aor. A. I.	you have set at nought
Ps. 106:24	Israelites	יִמָּאָסוּ	3mp	Q	Pr			Then they despised [the land]	Then they despised [the land]	ἐξουδένωσαν	3p Aor. A. I.	They set at nought [the land] (105:24)
Prov. 3:11	my son	תִּמָּאָס	2ms	Q	F (Ju)			do [not] reject [Y's discipline]	do [not] despise [Y's discipline]	ὀλιγώρει	[2s] P. A. Imper.	despise [not the chastening of YHWH]
Isa. 31:7	every man/one	יִמָּאָסוּן	3mp	Q	F (parag. n)			every man will reject [his idols]	every one will reject [his idols]	ἀπαρνήσονται	3p F. M. I.	[men] shall renounce [their idols]
Jer. 6:19	these people	יִמָּאָסוּ	3mp	Q	Pr			[my law], they have rejected [it]	they have rejected [my law]	ἀπώσαντο	3p Aor. M. I.	they have rejected [my law]
Jer. 31:37	YHWH	אֲמָאָס	1cs	Q	F			...then I will cast off [Israel]	...will I reject [Israel]	οὐκ ἀποδοκιμῶ	1s F. A. I.	I will [not] cast off [Israel]

## Appendix I: מָאָס All Forms in BH (Sorted by stem and conjugation)

Search BHS *מָאָס*	Subject of Verb	BHS Form	BHS Parsing P/G/N Stem Conj.			Suffixes	NASB	NIV	LXX Form	LXX Parsing	Breton's Translation of LXX
Jer. 33:24	he (= YHWH)	וַיִּמָּאָס	3ms	Q	Pr	3mp	he has rejected them	[the Lord] has rejected them	No parallel - LXX unrelated		
Jer. 33:26	I (= YHWH)	אֶמָּאָס	1cs	Q	F		I would reject [the descendants]	I will reject [the descendants]	No parallel - LXX omitted		
Hos. 4:6	you (= YHWH)	וְאֶמָּאָסְךָ	1cs	Q	F (+v)	2ms	I will reject you [being my priest]	I reject you [as my priests]	ἀπώσομαι	1s F. M. I.	I will [also] reject [you]
Hos. 9:17	God (Elohim)	יִמָּאָס	3ms	Q	F	3mp	God will cast them away	God will reject them (Ephraim)	ἀπόσεται	3s F. M. I.	[God] shall reject [them]
<b>Qal Infinitives</b>											
Isa. 7:15	[He (= Jesus ?)]	מָאָס		Q	NA		to refuse [evil]	to reject [the wrong]	προελέσθαι	Aor. M. Infin.	to prefer (i.e. decide about) [evil]
Isa. 7:16	[the boy]	מָאָס		Q	NA		to refuse [evil]	to reject [the wrong]	ἀπειθεῖ πονηρίᾳ	3s P. A. I.	he refuses [evil]
Lam. 5:22	You (= YHWH)	מָאָס		Q	NA		"intensifying use": utterly	"intensifying use": utterly	ἀπωθοῦμένους	Nom. ms P. M. Ptc.	"intensifying use": indeed
Jer. 14:19	you (= YHWH)	הִמָּאָס		Q	NA (interr. h)		"intensifying use": completely	"intensifying use": completely	μὴ ἀποδοκιμάζων	Nom. ms P. A. Ptc.	"intensifying use": utterly
Isa. 30:12	you (= rebellious Judah)	מִמָּאָסְכֶם		Q	NC	2mp	since you have rejected	because you have rejected	ὅτι ἠπειθήσατε	2p Aor. A. I.	[Because] you have refused to obey
Amos 2:4	they (= Judah)	מִמָּאָסְכֶם		Q	NC	3mp	they have rejected [the law]	they have rejected [the law]	ἀπόσασθαι	Aor. M. Infin.	they have rejected [the law of the Lord]
<b>Qal Perfects</b>											
Lev. 26:43	they (= sons of Israel) v. 25:1	מָאָסוּ	3cp	Q	P		they rejected my ordinances	they rejected ny laws	ὑπερεῖδον	3p Aor. A. I.	they neglected [my judgments]
Lev. 26:44	I (= YHWH)	מִמָּאָסִים	1cs	Q	P	3mp	I will not reject them	I will not reject them	ὑπερεῖδον	1s Aor. A. I.	I did not overlook them
Num. 11:20	You (= Israelites)	מִמָּאָסְתֶם	2mp	Q	P		you have rejected [YHWH]	you have rejected [YHWH]	ἠπειθήσατε	2p Aor. A. I.	you disobeyed [the Lord]
Num. 14:31	You (= Israelites)	מִמָּאָסְתֶם	2mp	Q	P		[which] you have despised	[which] you have rejected	ἀπέστητε	2p Aor. A. I.	[which] you rejected
Jdg. 9:38	you (= Gaal; son of Ebed)	מִמָּאָסְתָּה	2ms	Q	P		[people whom] you despised	[men] you ridiculed	ἐξουδένωσας	2s Aor. A. I.	[whom] you despised
1 Sam. 8:7	they (= Israelites)	מָאָסוּ	3cp	Q	P		they have [not] rejected [you]	[not you] they have rejected	ἐξουθενήκασιν	3p Pf. A. I.	[for] they have [not] rejected [you]
1 Sam. 8:7	they (= Israelites)	מָאָסוּ	3cp	Q	P		they have rejected [me]	they have rejected [me]	ἐξουδενώκασιν	3p Pf. A. I.	[but] they have rejected [me]
1 Sam. 10:19	you (= Israelites)	מִמָּאָסְתֶם	2mp	Q	P		you rejected [your God]	you have rejected [your God]	ἐξουθενήκατε	2p Pf. A. I.	you have rejected [God]
1 Sam. 15:23	you (= Saul)	מִמָּאָסְתָּ	2ms	Q	P		you have rejected [the word]	you have rejected [the word]	ἐξουδένωσας	2s Aor. A. I.	you have rejected [the word]
1 Sam. 15:26	you (= Saul)	מִמָּאָסְתָּה	2ms	Q	P		you have rejected [the word]	you have rejected [the word]	ἐξουδένωσας	2s Aor. A. I.	you have rejected [the word]
1 Sam. 16:1	I (= YHWH)	יִמָּאָסִיו	1cs	Q	P	3ms	I have rejected [him]	I have rejected [him]	ἐξουδένωκα	1s Pf. A. I.	I have rejected [him]
1 Sam. 16:7	I (= YHWH)	וַיִּמָּאָסֵיהוּ	1cs	Q	P	3ms	[because] I have rejected him	[for] I have rejected him	ἐξουδένωκα	1s Pf. A. I.	[for] I have rejected [him]
Job 7:16	I (= Job)	יִמָּאָסִי	1cs	Q	P		I waste away	I despise [my life]	ἀπόστα	2s Aor. A. Imper.	[that] I should [patiently] endure
Job 19:18	they (= children)	מָאָסוּ	3cp	Q	P		[young children] despise [me]	[little boys] scorn [me]	ἀπεποιήσαντο	3p Aor. M. I.	they rejected [me forever]
Job 30:1	I (= Job)	יִמָּאָסִי	1cs	Q	P		I would not have set	I disdained to put	ἐξουδένουν	1s I. A. I.	[whose fathers] I set at nought
Job 34:33	you (= Job) (Elihu speaks)	מִמָּאָסְתָּ	2ms	Q	P		[because] you have rejected it?	[when] you refuse to repent?	ἀπόσῃ	2s Aor. M. S.	[whereas] you will put it far from you?

## Appendix I: מָאָס All Forms in BH (Sorted by stem and conjugation)

Search BHS מָאָס*	Subject of Verb	BHS Form	BHS Parsing P/G/N Stem Conj.			Suffixes	NASB	NIV	LXX Form	LXX Parsing	Breton's Translation of LXX
Ps. 53:6	God (Elohim)	מָאָסָם	3ms	Q	P	3mp	[for God] had rejected them (53:5)	[for God] despised them (53:5)	ἐξουδένωσε	3s Aor. A. I.	[God] has despised [them] (52:6)
Ps. 118:22	The builders	מָאָסוּ	3cp	Q	P		[The stone] which they rejected	[The stone] they rejected	ἀπεδοκίμασαν	3p Aor. A. I.	[The stone] which they rejected (117:22)
Isa. 5:24	[the wicked]	מָאָסוּ	3cp	Q	P		they have rejected [the law]	they have rejected [the law]	ἠθέλησαν	3p Aor. A. I.	for they rejected [the law]
Isa. 8:6	[this people]	מָאָסוּ	3ms	Q	P		have rejected	has rejected	τὸ μὴ βούλεσθαι	P. M. Infin.	[this people] chooses not ...
Isa. 33:8	he (= Assyria ?) see Young's commentary	מָאָסוּ	3ms	Q	P		he has despised [the cities]	[It's witnesses] are despised	αἴρεται	3s P. P. I.	the covenant] is taken away
Isa. 41:9	I (= YHWH)	מָאָסָתִי	1cs	Q	P	2ms	I have [not] rejected you	I have [not] rejected you	οὐκ ἐγκατέλιπόν σε	1s Aor. A. I.	I have [not] forsaken [you]
Jer. 2:37	YHWH	מָאָסוּ	3ms	Q	P		for YHWH has rejected [those]	for YHWH has rejected [those]	ἀπώσατο	3s Aor. M. I.	[the Lord] has rejected [thine hope]
Jer. 6:30	YHWH	מָאָסוּ	3ms	Q	P		the Lord has rejected [them]	the Lord has rejected [them]	ἀπεδοκίμασεν	3s Aor. A. I.	[for the Lord] has rejected [them]
Jer. 7:29	YHWH	מָאָסוּ	3ms	Q	P		YHWH has rejected	YHWH has rejected	ἀπεδοκίμασεν	3s Aor. A. I.	[the Lord] has reprobated
Jer. 8:9	they (= wise men)	מָאָסוּ	3cp	Q	P		they have rejected [the word]	they have rejected [the word]	ἀπεδοκίμασαν	3p Aor. A. I.	they have rejected [the word ...]
Jer. 14:19	you (= YHWH)	מָאָסָתָא	2ms	Q	P		Have you rejected [Judah]	Have you rejected [Judah]	ἀπεδοκίμασας	2s Aor. A. I.	Have you utterly rejected [Judah]
Lam. 5:22	You (= YHWH)	מָאָסָנוּ	2ms	Q	P	1cp	you have [utterly] rejected us	you have [utterly] rejected us	ἀπώσω	2s Aor. m. I.	you have [indeed] rejected [us]
Ezek. 5:6	They (= the nations)	מָאָסוּ	3cp	Q	P		they have rejected [my ord.]	[she] has rejected [my laws]	ἀπώσαντο	3p Aor. M. I.	they have rejected [my ordinances]
Ezek. 20:13	they (= Israel)	מָאָסוּ	3cp	Q	P		they rejected [my ordinances]	they rejected [my laws]	ἀπώσαντο	3p Aor. M. I.	they rejected [mine ordinances]
Ezek. 20:16	they (= Israel)	מָאָסוּ	3cp	Q	P		they rejected [my ordinances]	they rejected [my laws]	ἀπώσαντο	3p Aor. M. I.	they rejected [mine ordinances]
Ezek. 20:24	they (= Israel)	מָאָסוּ	3cp	Q	P		they had rejected [my statutes]	they had rejected [my decrees]	ἀπώσαντο	3p Aor. M. I.	they rejected [my commandments]
Hos. 4:6	you (= sons of Israel v. 4:1)	מָאָסָתָא	2ms	Q	P		you have rejected [knowledge]	you have rejected [knowledge]	ἀπώσω	2s Aor. M. I.	you have rejected [knowledge]
Amos 5:21	I (= YHWH)	מָאָסָתִי	1cs	Q	P		I reject [your festivals]	I despise [your religious feasts]	ἀπώσμαι	1s Pf. M. I.	I reject [your feasts]
Jer. 4:30	Your lovers	מָאָסוּ	3cp	Q	P (+b)		Your lovers despise [you]	Your lovers despise [you]	ἀπώσαντό σε	3p Aor. M. I.	[your lovers] despise [you]
2 Ki. 23:27	I (= YHWH)	מָאָסָתִי	1cs	Q	P (+v)		I will cast off [Jerusalem]	I will reject [Jerusalem]	ἀπώσομαι	1s F. M. I.	I will reject [this city ...]
<b>Qal Participles</b>											
Prov. 15:32	He who neglects discipline	מָאָס	ms	Q	Ptc		despises [himself (nephesh)]	despises [himself (nephesh)]	μισεί ἐαυτόν	3s P. A. I.	hates [himself]
Isa. 33:15	he who (walks righteously)	מָאָס	ms	Q	Ptc		he who rejects [un]just gain]	he who rejects [gain from extort.]	μισῶν	Nom. ms P. M. Ptc.	hating [transgression and iniquity]
Ezek. 21:15	[rod of My son/sword]	מָאָסָתָא	fs	Q	Ptc		[rod] despising [every tree]	[sword] despises every [...stick]	σφάζε ἐξουδένει ἀπωθοῦ	2s Aor. A/A/M Imper.	slay, set at nought, despise [every tree]
Ezek. 21:18	[rod/sword]	מָאָסָתָא	fs	Q	Ptc		[the rod] which despises	which [the sword] despises	ἀπώσθη	3s Aor. P. I.	[what if even the tribe] be rejected?

## Appendix II: נחם D-stem Forms in BH (Sorted by stem and conjugation)

Search BHS *נחם*	Subject of Verb	BHS Form	BHS Parsing					NIV	LXX Form	LXX Parsing	Breton's Translation of LXX
P/G/N	Stem	Conj.			Suffixes NASB						
<u>Pi'el Imperfects</u>											
Gen. 5:29	This one/He (= Noah)	יְנַחֲמוּ	3ms	D	F	1cs	shall give us rest	will comfort us	διαναπαύσει	3s F. A. I.	[This same] shall comfort us
Gen. 50:21	Joseph	וַיְנַחֵם	3ms	D	Pr		comforted [them]	reassured [them]	παρεκάλεσεν	3s Aor. A. I.	[And] he comforted [them]
2 Sam. 12:24	David	וַיְנַחֵם	3ms	D	Pr		comforted [them]	comforted	παρεκάλεσεν	3s Aor. A. I.	comforted
Job 7:13	my bed	תְּנַחֲמֵנִי	3fs	D	F	1cs	will comfort me	will comfort me	παρακαλέσει	3s F. A. I.	will comfort [me]
Job 21:34	you (= Job's friends)	תְּנַחֲמוּנִי	2mo	D	F	1cs	comfort me	console me	παρακαλεῖτέ	2p P. A. I.	comfort [me]
Job 29:25	I (= Job)	יְנַחֵם	3ms	D	F		one who comforted	one who comforts	παρακαλῶν	Nom. ms P. A. Ptc.	as one comforting [mourners]
Job 42:11	Job's relatives & friends	וַיְנַחֲמוּ	3mp	D	Pr		comforted [him]	consoled [him]	παρεκάλεσαν	3p Aor. A. I.	comforted
Ps. 23:4	YHWH's rod & staff	יְנַחֲמֵנִי	3mp	D	F	1cs	comfort me	comfort me	παρεκάλεσαν	3p Aor. A. I.	comfort [me]
Ps. 71:21	You (= Elohim, v. 19)	תְּנַחֲמֵנִי	2ms	D	F	1cs	turn to comfort me	comfort me once again	παρεκάλεσάς	2s Aor. A. I.	comfort [me]
Ps. 119:82	you (= YHWH)	תְּנַחֲמֵנִי	2ms	D	F	1cs	comfort me	comfort me	παρακαλέσεις	2s F. A. I.	you comfort [me]
Isa. 12:1	You (= YHWH)	וְתִנְחֲמֵנִי	2ms	D	F (+v)	1cs	dost comfort me	have comforted me	ἡλέησάς	2s Aor. A. I.	thou hast pitied [me]
Isa. 51:19	? (Isaiah or YHWH)	אֲנַחֲמֶיךָ	1cs	D	F	2fs	who can console you	how shall I comfort you	παρακαλέσει	3s F. A. I.	who shall comfort you?
Isa. 66:13	a mother	תְּנַחֲמֵנִי	3fs	D	F	3ms	[she] comforts	[she] comforts	παρακαλέσει	3s F. A. I.	[his mother] should comfort
Isa. 66:13	I (= YHWH)	אֲנַחֲמֶכֶם	1cs	D	F	2mp	I will comfort you	will I comfort you	παρακαλέσω	1s F. A. I.	will I [also] comfort you
Lam. 2:13	Jeremiah ?	וְאֲנַחֲמֶיךָ	1cs	D	F(+v, coh)	2fs	as I comfort you	that I may comfort you	παρακαλέσει σε	3s F. A. I.	who shall ... comfort you?
Zech. 10:2	they (= diviners)	יְנַחֲמוּן	3mp	D	F (Parag. n)		comfort [in vain]	give comfort [in vain]	παρεκάλουν	3p Imperf. A. I.	they have given [vain] comfort
<u>Pi'el Infinitive Constructs</u>											
Gen. 37:35	Jacob's children	לְנַחֲמוֹ		D	NC (+I)	3ms	to comfort him	to comfort him	παρακαλέσαι	Aor. A.Infin.	to comfort [him]
2 Sam. 10:2	David's delegation	לְנַחֲמוֹ		D	NC (+I)	3ms	to console him	to expres sympathy	παρακαλέσαι	Aor. A. Infin.	to comfort [him]
1 Chr. 7:22	relatives	לְנַחֲמוֹ		D	NC (+I)	3ms	to comfort him	to comfort him	παρακαλέσαι	Aor. A. I.	to comfort [him]
1 Chr. 19:2	messengers/delegation	לְנַחֲמוֹ		D	NC (+I)	3ms	to express sympathy	to console him	παρακαλέσαι	Aor. A. I.	to console [him]
1 Chr. 19:2	[same as above]	לְנַחֲמוֹ		D	NC (+I)	3ms	to express sumpathy	to console him	παρακαλέσαι	Aor. A. I.	to comfort [him]
Job 2:11	Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar	וְלְנַחֲמוֹ		D	NC (+I,v)	3ms	to comfort him	to comfot him	παρακαλέσαι	Aor. A. I.	to comfort [him]
Ps. 119:76	YHWH's lovingkindness	לְנַחֲמֵנִי		D	NC (+I)	1cs	comfort me	my comfort	παρακαλέσαι	Aor. A Infin.	to comfort [me]
Isa. 22:4	[you] (= hearers)	לְנַחֲמֵנִי		D	NC (+I)	1cs	to comfort me	to console me	παρακαλεῖν	P. A Infin.	to comfort [me]
Isa. 61:2	me (= Isaiah/Jesus) ?	לְנַחֵם		D	NC (+I)		to comfort	to comfort	παρακαλέσαι	Aor. A. Infin.	to comfort [all who mourn]
Jer. 16:7	men/food	לְנַחֲמוֹ		D	NC (+I)	3ms	to comfort	to comfort	παράκλησιν	[noun: Acc, fs]	[for] consolation
Ezek. 16:54	you (= Jerusalem)	בְּנַחֲמוֹךְ		D	NC (+b)	2fs	you ... a consolation ...	in giving them comfort	παροργίσει με	Aor. A. Infin.	in provoking [me] to anger

## Appendix II: נחם D-stem Forms in BH (Sorted by stem and conjugation)

Search BHS *נחם*		BHS Parsing									
Subject of Verb	BHS Form	P/G/N	Stem	Conj.	Suffixes NASB		NIV	LXX Form	LXX Parsing	Breton's Translation of LXX	
<b>Pi'el Perfects</b>											
Ruth 2:13	you (= Boaz)	נִחַמְתִּי	2ms	D	P	1cs	have comforted me	have given me comfort	παρεκάλεσάς	2s Aor. A. I. have comforted [me]	
Ps. 86:17	YHWH	וְנִחַמְתִּי	2ms	D	P (+v)	1cs	have comforted me	have comforted me	παρεκάλεσάς	2s Aor. A. I. have comforted [me]	
Isa. 49:13	YHWH	נָחַם	3ms	D	P		has comforted	comforts	παρεκάλεσεν	3s Aor. A. I. has had mercy	
Isa. 51:3	YHWH	נָחַם	3ms	D	P		will comfort	will comfort	παρακαλέσω	1s F. A. I. I will comfort	
Isa. 51:3	YHWH	נָחַם	3ms	D	P		will comfort	will have compassion	παρεκάλεσα	1s Aor. A. I. I have comforted	
Isa. 52:9	YHWH	נָחַם	3ms	D	P		has comforted	has comforted	ἤλῃσεν	3s Aor. A. I. has had mercy	
Jer. 31:13	I (= YHWH) Cf. v. 1, 7, 15	וְנִחַמְתִּים	1cs	D	P (+v)	3mp	will comfort them	will give them comfort	[no parallel form - idea omitted]		
Ezek. 14:23	you (as in v. 22 ; exiles)	וְנִחַמוּ	3cp	D	P (+v)		they will comfort [you]	[you] will be consoled	παρακαλέσουσιν	3p F. A. I. they shall comfort [you]	
Zech. 1:17	YHWH	וְנָחַם	3ms	D	P (+v)		will comfort [Zion]	will comfort [Zion]	ἐλεήσει	3s F. A. I. will have mercy [upon]	
<b>Pi'el Participles</b>											
2 Sam. 10:3	[David's delegation]	מְנַחֲמִים	mp	D	Ptc		consolers	to express sympathy	παρακαλοῦντας	Acc. mp P. A. Ptc. comforters	
1 Chr. 19:3	[David's delegation]	מְנַחֲמִים	mp	D	Ptc		comforters	to express sympathy	παρακαλοῦντας	Acc. mp P. A. Ptc. comforters	
Job 16:2	[Job's friends]	מְנַחֲמִי	mp	D	Ptc		comforters	comforters	παρακλήτορες	noun: Nom. mp comforters	
Ps. 69:21		וְלִמְנַחֲמִים	mp	D	Ptc (+l, def, v)		for comforters	for comforters	παρακαλοῦντας	Acc. mp P. A. Ptc. comforters	
Eccl. 4:1	[the oppressed]	מְנַחֵם	ms	D	Ptc		no one to comfort	have no comforter	παρακαλῶν	Nom. ms P. A. Ptc. they had no comforter	
Eccl. 4:1	[the oppressed]	מְנַחֵם	ms	D	Ptc		no one to comfort	have no comforter	παρακαλῶν	Nom. ms P. A. Ptc. they had no comforter	
Isa. 51:12	I (= YHWH) Cf. v. 3	מְנַחֵמְךָ	ms	D	Ptc	2mp	he who comforts you	he who comforts you	ὁ παρακαλῶν	Nom. ms P. A. Ptc. he that comforts [thee]	
Lam. 1:2	[the city (= Jerusalem)]	מְנַחֵם	ms	D	Ptc		none to comfort [her]	none to comfort [her]	ὁ παρακαλῶν αὐτήν	Nom. ms P. A. Ptc. [none] ... to comfort [her]	
Lam. 1:9	[she (= Jerusalem)]	מְנַחֵם	ms	D	Ptc		[she has] no comforter	none to comfort [her]	ὁ παρακαλῶν αὐτήν	Nom. ms P. A. Ptc. [none] ... to comfort [her]	
Lam. 1:16	[I (= Jerusalem)]	מְנַחֵם	ms	D	Ptc		[far from me is] a comforter	no one to comfort [me]	ὁ παρακαλῶν με	Nom. ms P. A. Ptc. he that should comfort [me]	
Lam. 1:17	[her (= Zion)]	מְנַחֵם	ms	D	Ptc		no one to comfort [her]	no one to comfort [her]	ὁ παρακαλῶν αὐτήν	Nom. ms P. A. Ptc. [there is] none to comfort [her]	
Lam. 1:21	[me (= Zion)]	מְנַחֵם	ms	D	Ptc		no one to comfort [me]	no one to comfort [me]	ὁ παρακαλῶν με	Nom. ms P. A. Ptc. [there is] none to comfort [me]	
Nah. 3:7	I (= all who see Ninevah)	מְנַחֲמִים	mp	D	Ptc		comforters [for you]	anyone to comfort [you]	παράκλησιν	[noun: Acc. fs] comfort	
<b>Pi'el Imperatives</b>											
Isa. 40:1	[you] (= hearers)	נִחַמוּ	mp	D	V		comfort	comfort	παρακαλεῖτε	[2p] P. A. Imper. comfort ye	
Isa. 40:1	[you] (= hearers)	נִחַמוּ	mp	D	V		comfort	comfort	παρακαλεῖτε	[2p] P. A. Imper. comfort ye	

## Appendix II: נחם D-stem Forms in BH (Sorted by stem and conjugation)

Search BHS נחם*		BHS Form	BHS Parsing			Suffixes NASB	NIV	LXX Form	LXX Parsing	Breton's Translation of LXX
Subject of Verb			P/G/N	Stem	Conj.					
Pu'al Forms										
Isa. 54:11	afflicted one	נִחְמָה	3fs	Dp	P	not comforted	not comforted	οὐ παρεκλήθης	2s Aor. P. I.	thou has not been comforted
Isa. 66:13	you	תִּנְחַמְנִי	2mp	Dp	F	you shall be comforted	you will be comforted	παρακληθήσεσθε	2p F. P. I.	ye shall be comforted
Hithpe'al Forms										
Num. 23:19	God (EI)	יִתְנַחֵם	3ms	Dt	F (Ju, + v)	should repent	change his mind	ἀπειληθῆναι	Aor. P. Infin.	to be threatened
Deut. 32:36	YHWH	יִתְנַחֵם	3ms	Dt	F	have compassion on	have compassion on	παρακληθήσεται	3s F. P. I.	shall be comforted
Ps. 119:52	I (= Psalmist)	וְאִתְנַחֵם	1cs	Dt	Pr	comfort myself	find comfort [in them]	παρεκλήθην	1s Aor. P. I.	was comforted
Ps. 135:14	YHWH	יִתְנַחֵם	3ms	Dt	F	have compassion	have compassion	παρακληθήσεται	3s F. P. I.	will comfort [himself]
Gen. 37:35	Jacob	לִתְנַחֵם		Dt	NC (+I)	to be comforted	to be comforted	παρακαλεῖσθαι	P. P. Infin.	he would [not] be comforted
Ezek. 5:13	I (= YHWH)	וְהִנְחַמְתִּי	1cs	Dt	P (+v)	I shall be appeased	I will be avenged	[no parallel form - idea omitted]		
Gen. 27:42	[Esau]	מִתְנַחֵם	ms	Dt	Ptc	is consoling himself	is consoling himself	ἀπειλεῖ	3s P. A. I.	threatens



### Appendix III: נִחַל Niph'al Stem Forms in BH (Sorted by stem and conjugation)

Search BHS *נִחַם*	Subject of Verb	BHS Form	BHS Parsing P/G/N Stem Conj.			Suffixes NASB	NIV	LXX Form	LXX Parsing	Breton's Translation of LXX
<b><u>Niph'al Imperfects</u></b>										
Gen. 6:6	YHWH	וַיִּנָּחֵם	3ms	N	Pr	was sorry	was grieved	ἐκεθυμήθη	3s Aor. P. I.	[God] laid it to heart = was sorry
Gen. 24:67	Isaac	וַיִּנָּחֵם	3ms	N	Pr	was comforted	was comforted	παρεκλήθη	3s Aor. P. I.	[Issac] was comforted
Gen. 38:12	Judah	וַיִּנָּחֵם	3ms	N	Pr	when the time of mourning had ended	when Judah had recovered from his grief	παρακληθεὶς	Nom. ms Aor P. Ptc.	[Judah] being comforted
Exod. 13:17	the people	וַיִּנָּחֵם	3ms	N	F	change their minds	change their minds	ἀποστρέψῃ	3s Aor. A. S.	return
Exod. 32:14	YHWH	וַיִּנָּחֵם	3ms	N	Pr	changed his mind	relented	ἰλάσθη	3s Aor. P. I.	was prevailed upon; lit be merciful, have mercy
Jdg. 2:18	YHWH	וַיִּנָּחֵם	3ms	N	F	was moved to pity	had compassion	παρεκλήθη	3s Aor. P. I.	was moved by
Jdg. 21:6	The sons of Israel	וַיִּנָּחֲמוּ	3mp	N	Pr	were sorry for	grieved for	παρεκλήθησαν	3p Aor. P. I.	relented toward
1 Sam. 15:29	Glory of Israel (= YHWH)	וַיִּנָּחֵם	3ms	N	F	change his mind	change his mind	μετανοήσῃ	3s F. A. I.	repent
2 Sam. 24:16	YHWH	וַיִּנָּחֵם	3ms	N	Pr	relented	was grieved	παρεκλήθη	3s Aor. P. I.	repented
1 Chr. 21:15	YHWH	וַיִּנָּחֵם	3ms	N	Pr	was sorry	was grieved	μετεμελήθη	3s Aor. P. I.	repented
Ps. 106:45	YHWH	וַיִּנָּחֵם	3ms	N	Pr	and he relented	and he relented	μετεμελήθη	3s Aor. P. I.	[and he] repented
Ps. 110:4	YHWH	וַיִּנָּחֵם	3ms	N	F	change his mind	change his mind	μεταμεληθήσεται	3s F. P. I.	will [not] repent
Isa. 1:24	I (= YHWH)	וְאֶנִּי	1cs	N	F (coh.)	I will be relieved	I will get relief	οὐ παύσεται	3s F. M. I.	[for my wrath] will not cease
Isa. 57:6	? (Isaiah or YHWH)	וְאֶנִּי	1cs	N	F	shall I relent	should I relent	ὀργισθήσομαι	1s F. P. I.	[not] be angry
Jer. 26:13	YHWH	וַיִּנָּחֵם	3ms	N	F (Ju, +v)	will change his mind	will relent	παύσεται	3s F. M. I.	[33:13] will cease [from the evils]
Jer. 26:19	YHWH	וַיִּנָּחֵם	3ms	N	Pr	changed his mind	did not [YHWH] relent	ἐπαύσατο	3s Aor. M. I.	[33:19] ceased [from the evils]
Ezek. 24:14	I (= YHWH)	וְאֶנִּי	1cs	N	F	I shall [not] be sorry	[nor] will I repent	οὐδὲ μὴ ἐλεήσω	1s F. A. I.	neither will I have any mercy
Ezek. 31:16	the trees	וַיִּנָּחֲמוּ	3mp	N	Pr	were comforted	were consoled	παρεκάλουν αὐτὸν	3p Imperf. A. I.	[Trees of Delight] comforted [him]
Jon. 3:10	הָאֱלֹהִים God	וַיִּנָּחֵם	3ms	N	Pr	relented	had compassion	μετενόησεν ὁ θεὸς	3s Aor. A. I.	[God] had mercy
<b><u>Niph'al Infinitive Constructs</u></b>										
1 Sam. 15:29	He (= YHWH)	לְהִנָּחֵם		N	NC (+I)	change his mind	change his mind	μετανοῆσαι	Aor. A. Infin.	repent
Ps. 77:3	my soul	לְהִנָּחֵם		N	NC	to be comforted	to be comforted	παρακληθῆναι	Aor. P. Infin.	(76:3) to be comforted
Jer. 15:6	I (= YHWH)	לְהִנָּחֵם		N	NC	I am tired of relenting	I ... show compassion	οὐκέτι ἀνήσω	1s F. A. I.	will no longer spare thee
Jer. 31:15	Rachel	לְהִנָּחֵם		N	NC (+I)	[refusing] to be comforted	[refuses] to be comforted	παύσασθαι	Aor. M. Infin.	[38:15] [would not] cease [weeping]

### Appendix III: נחם Niph'al Stem Forms in BH (Sorted by stem and conjugation)

Search BHS *נחם*	Subject of Verb	BHS Form	BHS Parsing			Suffixes NASB	NIV	LXX Form	LXX Parsing	Breton's Translation of LXX
Niph'al Perfects										
Gen. 6:7	I (= YHWH)	נִחַמְתִּי	1cs	N	P	am sorry	am grieved	ἐθυμώθην	1s Aor. P. I.	for I am grieved
Jdg. 21:15	the people	נָחָם	3ms	N	P	were sorry for	grieved for	παρεκλήθη	3s Aor. P. I.	relented
1 Sam. 15:11	I (= YHWH)	נִחַמְתִּי	1cs	N	P	regret	am grieved	παρακέκλημαι	1s Pf. M. I.	have repented
1 Sam. 15:35	YHWH	נָחָם	3ms	N	P	regretted	was grieved	μετεμελήθη	3s Aor. P. I.	repented
2 Sam. 13:39	he (= David)	נָחָם	3ms	N	P	was comforted	was consoled	παρεκλήθη	3s Aor. P. I.	was comforted
Job 42:6	I (= Job)	וַנִּחַמְתִּי	1cs	[N]	P (+v)	repent	repent	ἤγημαι ??	1s Pf. M. I.	I esteem myself ...
Jer. 4:28	I (= YHWH)	נִחַמְתִּי	1cs	N	P	I will [not] change my mind	I will [not] relent	οὐ μετανοήσω	1s F. A. I.	I will not repent
Jer. 18:8	I (= YHWH)	וַנִּחַמְתִּי	1cs	N	P (+v)	I will relent	I will relent	μετανοήσω	1s F. A. I.	I will repent
Jer. 18:10	I (= YHWH)	וַנִּחַמְתִּי	1cs	N	P (+v)	will think better of [good]	will reconsider [the good]	μετανοήσω	1s F. A. I.	will I repent of [the good]
Jer. 20:16	YHWH	נָחָם	3ms	N	P	without relenting	without pity	οὐ μετεμελήθη	3s Aor. P. I.	and repented not
Jer. 26:3	I (= YHWH)	וַנִּחַמְתִּי	1cs	N	P (+v)	[I] may repent	[I] will relent	παύσομαι	1s F. M. I.	[33:3] will cease [from the evils]
Jer. 31:19	I (= Ephraim)	נִחַמְתִּי	1cs	N	P	I repented	I repented	μετενόησα	1s Aor. A. I.	[38:19] I repented
Jer. 42:10	I (= YHWH)	נִחַמְתִּי	1cs	N	P	I shall relent	I am grieved over	ἀναπέπαιμμαι	1s Pf. M. I.	[49:10] I have ceased [from]
Ezek. 14:22	you (= Ez. ± v1, ± exiles)	וְנִחַמְתֶּם	2mp	N	P (+v)	you will be comforted	you will be consoled	μεταμελεθῆσεσθε	2p F. P. I.	you shall mourn [regret/change mind]
Ezek. 32:31	he (= Pharoah)	וְנָחָם	3ms	N	P (+v)	he will be comforted	he will be consoled	παρακληθήσεται	3s F. P. I.	shall be comforted
Joel 2:14	he (= YHWH) ?	וְנָחָם	3ms	N	P (+v)	[he will] relent	he may ... have pity	μετανοήσσει	3s F. A. I.	[if] he will repent
Amos 7:3	YHWH	נָחָם	3ms	N	P	changed his mind	relented	μετανόησιν	[2s] Aor A. Imp.	Repent, [O LORD] ...
Amos 7:6	YHWH	נָחָם	3ms	N	P	had pity	changed his mind	μετανόησιν	[2s] Aor A. Imp.	Repent, [O LORD] ...(end of v.5)
Jon. 3:9	הָאֱלֹהִים God	וְנָחָם	3ms	N	P (+v)	[God may] relent	and with compassion	εἰ μετανοήσῃ ὁ θεός	3s F. A. I.	If God will repent
Zech. 8:14	YHWH	נִחַמְתִּי	1cs	N	P	I have not relented	[and] showed no pity	οὐ μετενόησα	1s Aor. A. I.	[and] I repented [not]
Niph'al Participles										
Jer. 8:6	no one	נָחָם	ms	N	Ptc	No man repented	No one repents	οὐκ ... μετανοῶν	Nom. ms P. A. Ptc.	[no man] who repents
Joel 2:13	[YHWH]	נָחָם	ms	N	Ptc (+v)	relenting [of evil]	[he] relents from	μετανοῶν	Nom. ms P. A. Ptc.	[he] relents [of evils]
Jon. 4:2	[you (= YHWH)]	נָחָם	ms	N	Ptc (+v)	one who relents	[a God] who relents	μετανοῶν	Nom. ms P. A. Ptc.	[and] repentest [of evil]
Niph'al Imperatives										
Exod. 32:12	[YHWH]	וְנָחָם	ms	N	V (+v)	change thy mind	relent	ἴλεως γενοῦ	[2s] Aor M Imp.	be merciful
Ps. 90:13	YHWH	וְנָחָם	ms	N	V (+v)	be sorry for	have compassion on	παρακληθῆτε	[2s] Aor. P. Imp.	be entreated = comfort

## Appendix IV

### Occurrences of על נחם in Biblical Hebrew.

**Exod. 32:12** - "Why should the Egyptians speak, saying, 'With evil *intent* He brought them out to kill them in the mountains and to destroy them from the face of the earth'? Turn (שוב) [*m s Q Imp.*] from Thy burning anger and change Thy mind (וְהִנָּחֵם) [*m s N Imp. + v*] about (עַל-הָרָעָה) doing harm to Thy people. (NASB); "Turn ... relent and do not bring disaster ..." (NIV).

**2 Sam. 13:39** - And *the heart of* King David longed to go out to Absalom; for he was comforted (כִּי-נִחַם) [*3ms N Perf.*] concerning (עַל-) Amnon, since he was dead. (NASB)

**1 Chr. 19:2** - ...So David sent messengers to console him (לְנַחֲמוֹ) [*D Inf. C; 3ms*] concerning his father (עַל-אָבִיו). And David's servants came into the land of the sons of Ammon to Hanun, to console him (לְנַחֲמוֹ) [*D Inf. C; 3ms*]. (NASB)

**1 Chr. 21:15** - And God sent an angel to Jerusalem to destroy it; but as he was about to destroy it, the LORD saw and was sorry (וַיִּנָּחֵם) [*3ms N Pr.*] over the calamity (עַל-הָרָעָה), and said to the destroying angel, "It is enough; now relax your hand." And the angel of the LORD was standing by the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. (NASB)

**Job 42:6** – Therefore I retract (אֲמַאֵס) [*1cs Q Imperf.*], And I repent (וַיִּנָּחֵמָהּ) [*1cs N Perf. + v*] in (עַל-) dust and ashes. (NASB); Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes. (NIV)

**Ps. 90:13** - Do return (שׁוּבָה) [*ms Q Imp (paragogic h)*], O LORD; how long *will it be*? And be sorry (וְהִנָּחֵם) [*ms N Imp.*] for Thy servants (עַל-עַבְדֶּיךָ). (NASB); "Relent, O LORD ... have compassion on your servants (NIV).

**Isa. 22:4** - Therefore I say, "Turn your eyes away from me, Let me weep bitterly, Do not try to comfort me (לְנַחֲמוֹנִי) [*D Inf. C; 1cs*] concerning the destruction (עַל-שֹׁד) of the daughter of my people." (NASB)

**Jer. 8:6** - "I have listened and heard, They have spoken what is not right; No man repented (נָחַם) [*ms N Ptc.*] of his wickedness (עַל-רָעָתוֹ), Saying, 'What have I done?' Everyone turned (שָׁב) [*ms Q Ptc.*] to his course, Like a horse charging into the battle. (NASB)

**Jer. 16:7** - "Neither will men break *bread* in mourning for them, to comfort anyone (לְנַחֲמוֹ) [*D Inf. C; 3ms*] for the dead (עַל-מָוֶת), nor give them a cup of consolation (כּוֹס תְּנַחֲמוֹת) to drink for anyone's father or mother. (NASB)

## Appendix IV (cont.)

### Occurrences of נחם על in Biblical Hebrew.

**Jer. 18:8** - ... if that nation against which I have spoken turns (וְשָׁב) [3mc Q Perf. + v] from its evil, I will relent (וְנָחַמְתִּי) [1cs N Perf. + v] concerning the calamity (עַל־הָרָעָה) I planned to bring on it. (NASB); "and if the nation I warned repents of its evil then I will relent ..." (NIV)

**Jer. 18:10** - if it does evil in My sight by not obeying My voice, then I will think better (וְנָחַמְתִּי) [1cs N Perf. + v] of the good (עַל־הַטּוֹבָה) with which I had promised to bless it. (NASB); "I will reconsider the good I had intended for it." (NIV)

**Jer. 31:15** - Thus says the LORD, "A voice is heard in Ramah, Lamentation *and* bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children; She refuses to be comforted (לֹא־יִנְחָם) [N Inf. C] for her children (עַל־בְּנֶיהָ), Because they are no more." (NASB)

**Ezek. 14:22** - "Yet, behold, survivors will be left in it who will be brought out, *both* sons and daughters. Behold, they are going to come forth to you and you will see their conduct and actions; then you will be comforted (וְנָחַמְתֶּם) [2mp N Perf. + v] for the calamity (עַל־הָרָעָה) which I have brought against Jerusalem for everything which I have brought upon it. (NASB)

**Ezek. 32:31** - These Pharaoh will see, and he will be comforted (וְנָחַם) [3ms N Perf.] for all (עַל־כָּל־) his multitude slain by the sword, *even* Pharaoh and all his army," declares the Lord God. (NASB) [Note: NIV similar, but see discussion in text regarding rendering of נחם.]

**Joel 2:13** - And rend your heart and not your garments." Now return (וְשׁוּבוּ) [mp Q Imp. + v] to the LORD your God, For He is gracious and compassionate, Slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness, And relenting (וְנָחַם) [ms N Ptc.] of evil (עַל־הָרָעָה). (NASB)

**Jon. 4:2** - And he prayed to the LORD and said, "Please LORD, was not this what I said while I was still in my *own* country? Therefore, in order to forestall this I fled to Tarshish, for I knew that Thou art a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and one who relents (וְנָחַם) [ms N Ptc.] concerning calamity (עַל־הָרָעָה). (NASB)

**Zech. 10:2** - For the teraphim speak iniquity, And the diviners see lying visions, And tell false dreams; They comfort (וְנִחְמוּ) [3mp D Imperf. (paragodic nun)] in vain. Therefore (עַל־כֵּן) *the people* wander like sheep, They are afflicted, because there is no shepherd. (NASB)

## Appendix V

### Aramaic usage of נחם in the Targumim

#### Frequency

- 62 occurrences (in 58 verses) attested in BH
- 10 occurrences (in 8 verses) not attested in BH [bracketed references]

**Gen.** 5:29; 24:67; 37:35; 38:12; 46:30; 50:21; **Jdg.** 21:6, 15; **2 Sam.** 10:2, 3; 12:24; 13:39; **Isa.** 1:24; 22:4; 49:13; 51:3 (2x), 12, 18, 19; 52:9; 54:11; 61:2; 62:1; 66:8, 13 (3x); **Jer.** 16:7; 31:13, 15, 19; **Ezek.** 14:22, 23; 31:16; 32:31; **Nah.** 3:7; **Zech.** 1:17; 10:2; **Psa.** 23:4; 71:21; 77:3; 86:17; 119:52, 82; **Job** 2:11; 7:13; 16:2; 21:34; 29:25; 42:6, 11; **Ruth** 2:13; [**Qoh** 4:1; 7:2]; **Lam.** 1:16, 17; 2:13; **Esth.** 6:1; **1Chr.** 7:22; 19:2 (2x), 3; [**Lay** 1:16, 17 (3x), 21; 2:13; **Law** 1:21; 2:13].

#### General observations:

1. In the targumim texts attested in BH נחם is routinely used to translate the corresponding Hebrew term נחם, especially to convey the idea of “comfort or consolation.”
2. There is also a close correspondence between the Aramaic and Hebrew forms (stem, conjugation, etc.) employed.
3. In instances where נחם is explicitly employed in the BH text, the idea of comfort or consolation is usually in view. Two possible exceptions to this may be Jdg. 21:15 and Jer. 31:19 where נחם is used in the BH in the sense of “to grieve” for, or to “be sorry” for [something]. (See notes on these verses below).
4. In instances where נחם is not explicitly employed in the corresponding BH text, the idea of comfort or consolation is generally in view. For example, consider Gen. 46:30, Isa. 51:18; 62:1; 66:8; and Est. 6:1. (See notes on these verses below).

#### Usage in the Joban texts:

1. The Aramaic use of נחם in the Job texts closely corresponds to the use of the term in the BH texts. All seven occurrences are attested.
2. Apart from the occurrence in 42:6, the Aramaic stems are all “paal” in form corresponding to the *Piel* stems employed in BH. The idea communicated in each instance is that of “comfort / consolation.”
3. In the case of Job 42:6 the Aramaic form ואתניחמית is “hithpeel.” The close correspondence between Aramaic and Hebrew for the other occurrences in Job (and in BH in general), suggests that the Aramaic translators probably understood the form of נחם used in the Hebrew text of Job 42:6 to be *Piel* in form (as opposed to *Niphal*).

## Appendix V (cont.)

### Aramaic usage of נחם in the Targumim

#### Notes on selected verses:

Gen. 46:30 – A paraphrase of BH (נחם not used), however, the idea of comfort/consolation clearly present in the BH text.

Jdg. 21:15 – נחם is used in the BH in the sense of “to grieve”, “to regret,” or “to be sorry for” [something]. Koehler and Baumgartner (HALOT) have observed that “to comfort, and to regret, [convey] a similar emotion of relieving one’s feelings.”

Isa. 51:3 – Two occurrences of נחם in the BH text meaning comfort/consolation are translated correspondingly in the Aramaic text.

Isa. 51:18 – A paraphrase of BH (נחם not used). The term in the Aramaic text appears to correspond to נהל in the BH text. The idea of comfort/consolation (in a negative sense) is clearly in view.

Isa. 62:1 – A paraphrase of BH (נחם not used), however, the general idea of comfort/consolation (“for the sake of Jerusalem”) appears to be in view.

Isa. 66:8 – A paraphrase of BH (נחם not used). BH: “For as soon as Zion was in labor she brought forth her children.” The concept being communicated appears to be the idea of a quick, relatively easy birth. Thus, the idea of “comfort / consolation” may be in view in the sense the expected level of “discomfort” usually associated with childbirth is greatly reduced or minimized.

Isa. 66:13 – The three occurrences in BH text, which all convey the idea of comfort/consolation, are translated correspondingly in the Aramaic text.

Jer. 16:7 – In the BH text both the verbal form and a cognate noun derived from the same root (both meaning comfort/consolation) are translated correspondingly in the Aramaic text.

Jer. 31:19 – נחם is used in the BH in the sense of “to grieve”, “to be sorry for” (possibly “to repent of sin”?) (see note on Jdg 21:15 above)

Zech 10:2 – The phrase נחם על is used in both the BH text and the Aramaic translation conveying the meaning of “comfort / consolation.”

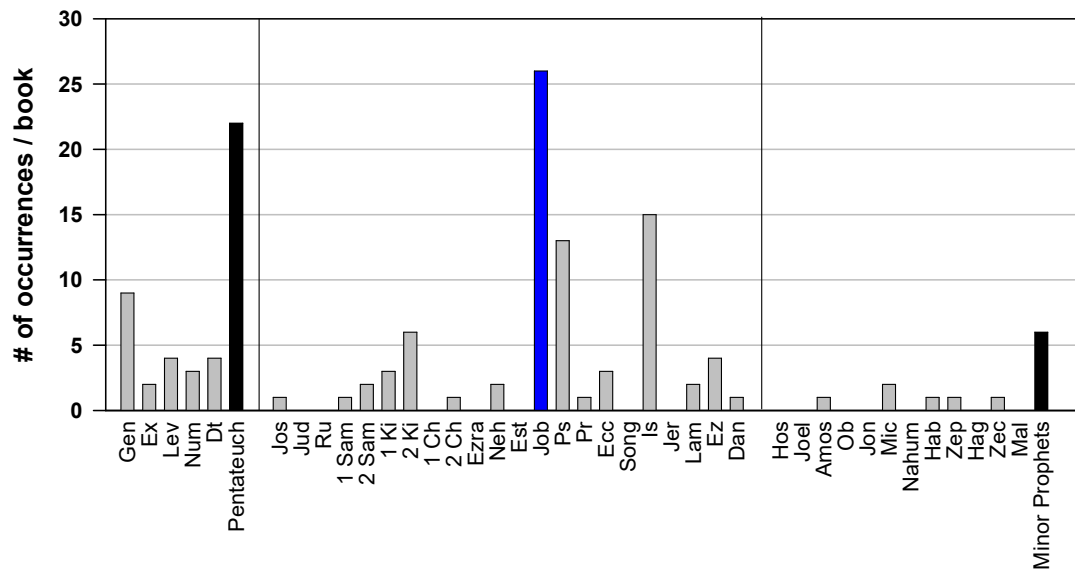
Est. 6:1 – An extensive paraphrase of the BH (נחם not used). However, the idea of comfort/consolation (in a negative sense) is clearly in view.

In the other 44 verses attested in BH (not specifically discussed above) נחם in the Aramaic translates the corresponding form in the BH text, where the meaning in the BH text is invariably “comfort/consolation.”

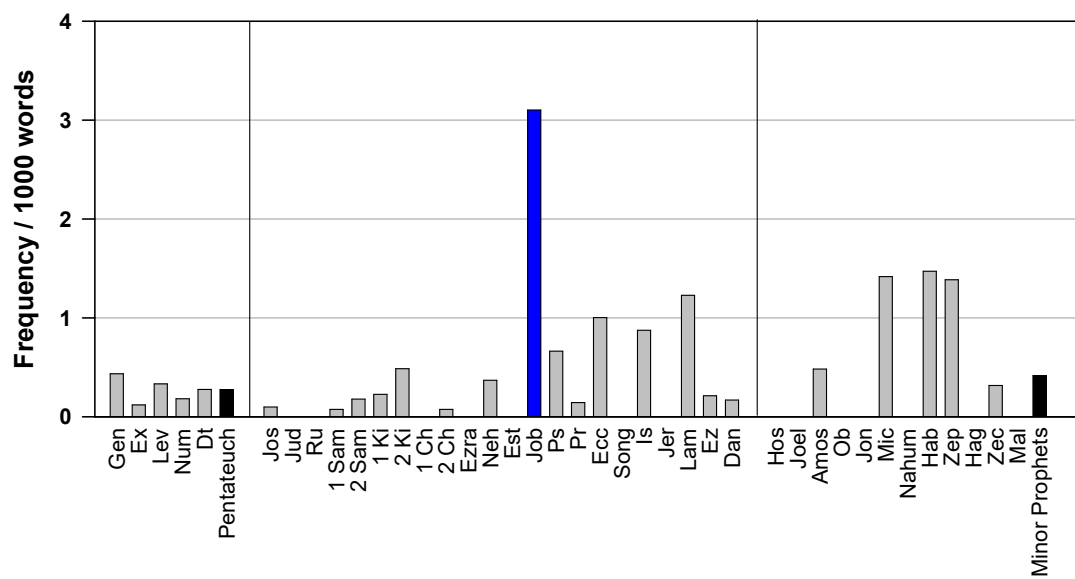
## Appendix VI

### עפר – Usage Analysis in Biblical Hebrew (120 occurrences)

# Occurrences / book



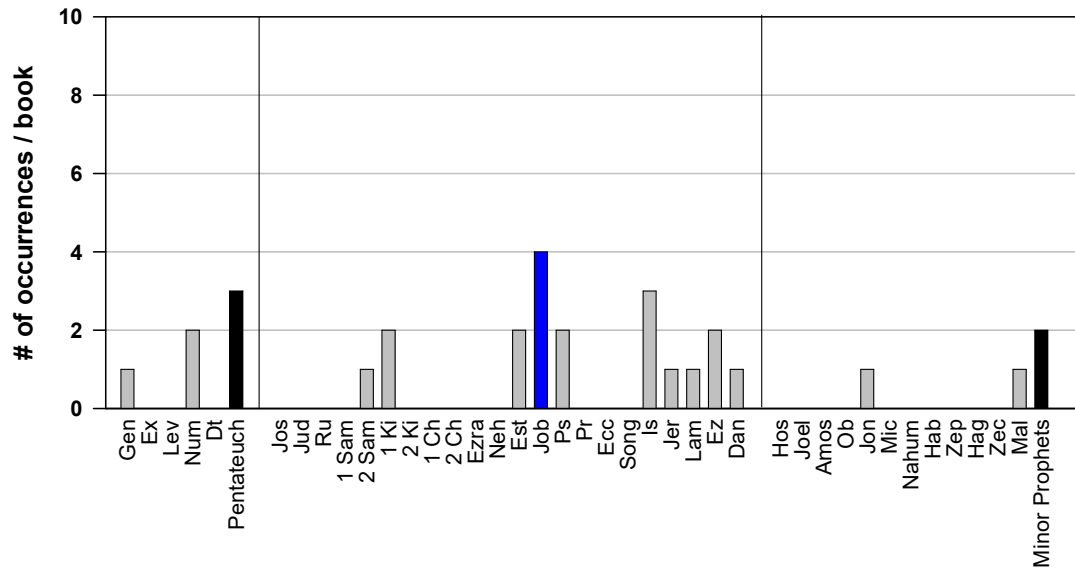
% (occurrences/words) per book



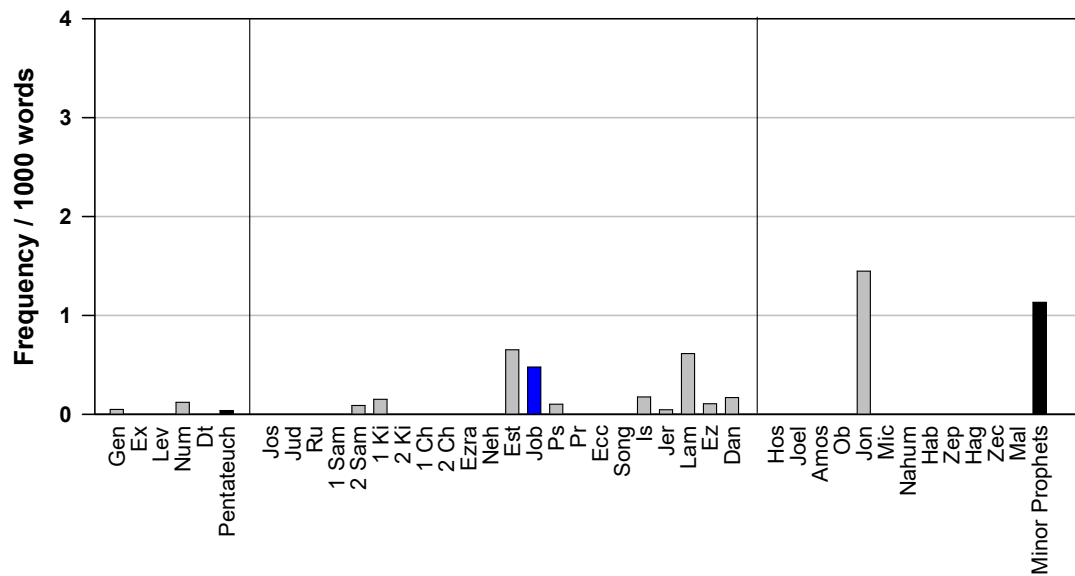
## Appendix VI (cont.)

### אפר – Usage Analysis in Biblical Hebrew (24 occurrences)

# occurrences / book



% (occurrences/words) per book





## **Appendix VII**

### **Excursus – A consideration of the purpose of suffering in Job**

In the minds of many throughout history the book of Job is broadly associated with the concept of human suffering. People have interrogated the book of Job, seeking answers to questions related to both the nature of human suffering and the proper response to it. These questions may be expressed as: How can a good God allow human suffering? Why do good people (e.g. Christians) suffer? How should people (individually, and as a community) respond to human suffering? While some insights with respect to these questions may be gleaned from a thoughtful consideration of the book of Job, the question of human suffering is not the central motif of the book. Therefore, it is necessary to ask what role does human suffering play in the book of Job.

On a literary level, Job's "suffering" clearly serves as a device for unifying the two major strands of the story. Job's "suffering" has both supernatural and natural dimensions, which are integral to the story. On the supernatural level Job appears to be a "righteous" servant, who is suffering at the pleasure of and for the sovereign purposes of his master. The suffering in view is principally of a spiritual nature – manifested as broken fellowship with God. On the natural level Job's suffering becomes the occasion for the assemblage of actors, the subsequent discussions related to the character of both Job and God, and the theology of retributive justice. The suffering in view is principally physical and psychological – manifested as physical affliction and communal rejection. What is the function of Job's "suffering," beyond its role as a literary device?

To gain a fuller perspective on the role of human suffering in Job, one must consider how human suffering is portrayed in Scripture as a whole. While it is never in itself the dominant theme in any biblical book, human suffering is a major motif (a sub-text) that finds expression throughout the Scriptures (Genesis - Revelation). The Bible

interrelates three major aspects in its portrayal of human suffering. First, human suffering is portrayed as the result of sin, both with respect to natural consequences and to divine judgment. Second, human suffering is also closely linked to the unfolding of salvation history, as the experience of suffering serves to turn the hearts (and attention) of God's people toward Him and becomes the back drop for God's acts of divine deliverance. Third, human suffering is also closely tied closely to the manifestation of God's glory.

With respect to the first category consider the suffering of God's people (Israel) in the book of Exodus (Cf. 2Thess 1:9), or the suffering of the people of Jerusalem as a consequence of God's judgment (Nehemiah). With respect to the second category considering the suffering servant passages (Isaiah) and possibly the suffering of Job [Cf. James 5:10-13]. Finally, there are numerous examples of human suffering as a pretext for the manifestation of God's glory – the centurion's servant (Mt. 8:5f); the hemorrhaging woman and the dead girl (Mk.5:21f, 5:35f); the epileptic boy (Mt:17:14f); the healing of the man born blind (John 9); the raising of Lazarus (John 11:1-44); Paul's rescues (2 Tim 3:11); and the suffering of Jesus himself (Mt 16:21f; Lk 7:25; Lk 22:39 ff. [the crucifixion]; Lk 24:26, 46; Act 3:18; 17:3; 26:22-23; Col 1:24; Heb 2:9; 10, 18; 5:8; 1 Pe 1:11; 3:18; ). In addition, several texts describe the suffering of Christians, such as the apostles (Act. 5:41, 9:16 [Paul; 2Tim 2:9]; 1Thess 2:2; 3:4; 2 Tim. 1:8, 12; ); and believers in general (Rom 5:3; Heb 10:32f; Rev 2:10 – toward endurance; Rom 8:17-18; 1Pe 3:14, 4:12-19; 5:10; – toward glory; 1Cor 12:26 1Thess 2:14f – as a part of the body of Christ; 2Cor 1:5-6 – to know the comfort of Christ; Gal 3:4, Php 1:29, 3:8, 10; 2Thess 1:5; 2 Tim 2:3; 1Pe 2:19-23; 3:17 – identification with Christ).

While Job is also ignorant of the real reasons for his suffering, his refusal to renounce his integrity, his insistence that God is afflicting him unjustly and his persistent pleas for God to explain or redress the wrong are more appropriate than any of the

positions advocated by the others. Although we cannot agree with the explanations offered by the comforters or Elihu, it would be equally wrong to conclude that Job's suffering is without reason. In Scripture there is one account of human suffering which resonates on many levels with Job's experience. In reference to Jesus the author Hebrews (5:7-10) states:

In the days of his flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death and He was heard because of His piety. Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation, being designated by God as a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek. (NASB)

This is in itself a difficult text to interpret. In what sense did "suffering" contribute to the sinless God-Man's learning obedience and being made perfect? And in what way was Jesus made perfect? Surely, the perfection in view was not moral, as Jesus already possessed that quality. Rather, it seems that in the process of learning obedience through suffering, Jesus was somehow "perfected" with respect to His propitiatory and mediatory roles. The end result was that Jesus became the source of eternal salvation and was designated by God as an eternal high priest. In some mysterious way the perfecting quality of His suffering supplied whatever may have been lacking (according to the author of Hebrews). By analogy, this passage may provide valuable insight into the purpose of Job's suffering. Like Jesus, Job was acknowledged before heaven and earth as a pleasing servant. Like Jesus, Job was tested at the hands of the Satan. Like Jesus, Job did not suffer because of his own sins. Like Jesus, Job was ultimately vindicated by God. Like Jesus, Job was designated a priest and provided an acceptable sacrifice on behalf of those who had previously opposed him. These are but a few of the many parallels which might be drawn between these biblical characters. My purpose for pointing these out is to suggest that insights about the nature of Job's suffering may be

gleaned from a consideration of NT texts which speak about Jesus' suffering. Like Jesus, Job's suffering occurred in accord with God's will. It was not the callous action of a capricious and uncaring God, as some have contended, but rather was very likely intended to "perfect" Job for God's sovereign purposes. Through his experience of suffering Job was prepared for God's more intimate self-revelation from the whirlwind and for his own enlarged role as a priest of God most high which is depicted in the epilogue of the story. Although the scale of Job's activities may not be compared with those of Jesus, yet in its own limited way, Job's life, suffering, vindication, and service foreshadow the ultimate example of innocent suffering. Perhaps, the suffering motif in Job, rather than being a rather unsatisfactory consideration of the nature and response to innocent suffering, is actually a thematic motif which integrates the book of Job into the fabric of the unfolding of salvation history which is the major function of the larger collection of OT texts.

## Chapter VII - Bibliography

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