Jamie Bissmeyer: "JOB'S ESCHATOLOGICAL HOPE: THE IMPLICATIONS OF JOB'S REDEEMER FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE"

Abstract

The purpose of this article is to identify the person of Job's perspective on issues pertaining to social justice, in order to show that Job places his hope of social justice issues being resolved in God's unique ability to make a just society in the end times. First, background material to the book of Job will be explained, to give context to Job's statements about a Redeemer. Second, statements in the book of Job regarding the oppression of the poor by the wicked in society will be examined, in order to establish that the book of Job relates to social justice issues. Third, Job's own perspective on social justice issues will be examined. Fourth, Job's solution to social justice issues will be explained, with a focus on Job 19:25–26. Finally, Job's solution to social justice issues will be applied to current social justice issues faced by pastors.

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Introduction

The topic of social justice is heavily debated in Evangelical circles. Some Christians argue that there is a divine command to pursue social justice.[1] Others would go so far as to say that, "Evangelism and social justice are inseparable elements of the proclamation of the good news in Jesus Christ…"[2] Still other Christians would say that social justice relates to the mission of the church, and that the mission of the church is to primarily proclaim the Gospel, not enact political or social change.[3] So which is it? Why is there so much disagreement over how the Church should pursue social justice?

A major reason for disagreement is confusion as to what the phrase "social justice" means. Some Christian leaders define social justice as simply ensuring that people receive equal treatment under a fair law.[4] However, many see social justice as the community or state ensuring equality of treatment and outcome of its citizens.[5] Still other define social justice as simply righting injustices in society.[6]

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[1] Stanley M. Burgess, "Christianity: Historical Setting," in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Religion and Social Justice*, ed. Michael D. Palmer and Stanley M. Burgess, Wiley-Blackwell Companions to Religion (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 46. Burgess' opinion is similar to official Catholic teaching on social justice. To Rome, pursuing social justice is part and parcel of the Christian's mission. See Vincent P. Mainelli, *Social Justice*, Official Catholic Teachings (Wilmington, NC: McGrath Publishing Company, 1978).

[2] John Franke, "Contextual Mission: Bearing Witness to the Ends of the Earth," in *Four Views on the Church's Mission*, ed. Jason S. Sexton, Counterpoints: Bible & Theology (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2017), 124. Franke plainly states that the Church is called to participate in political, cultural, and spiritual liberation: "These texts point to the calling of the church to participate in the temporal, here-and-now activity of liberation" (Ibid.).

[3] E.g. Jonathan Leeman, "Response to John R. Franke," in *Four Views on the Church's Mission*, ed. Jason S. Sexton, Counterpoints: Bible & Theology (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2017). His response points out two missing elements in Franke's discussion on the church's mission and social justice: 1) The holiness of God, and 2) the judgment of God (Ibid., 135–38).

[4] Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert, *What Is the Mission of the Church?: Making Sense of Social Justice, Shalom, and the Great Commission* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 182. They take a "constrained view" of justice, where justice is not a result (i.e., equality of outcome), but a process where people are treated fairly under the law: "Justice, in this vision, is upheld through the rule of law, a fair court system, and equitable treatment of all persons regardless of natural diversity" (Ibid.). However, they are hesitant to give a general definition of social justice, because it is poorly and variously defined depending on what person or group is using the term. See Ibid., 179. Their position contrasts the UN's report on social justice, which defines social justice as follows: "Social justice may be broadly understood as the fair and compassionate distribution of the fruits of economic growth." See United Nations, *Social Justice in an Open World: The Role of the United Nations* (New York: United Nations, 2006), 7.

[5] For a survey of some of these perspectives, see Vic McCracken, ed., *Christian Faith and Social Justice: Five Views* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014). McCracken himself implies that fairness in society, not just fair treatment under law, is a part of social justice. See Vic McCracken, "Social Justice: An Introduction to an Important Concept," in *Christian Faith and Social Justice: Five Views*, ed. Vic McCracken (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), 2–3.

[6] Curtiss Paul DeYoung, "Christianity: Contemporary Expressions," in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Religion and Social Justice*, ed. Michael D. Palmer and Stanley M. Burgess, Wiley-Blackwell Companions to Religion (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 62. He goes on to list various issues (poverty, AIDS, racism, sex trafficking, etc.) that social justice addresses.

This lack of clarity over how to define and carry out social justice is best explained as being a result of different theological presuppositions between Christians. The debate is fundamentally one of worldviews. Duncan B. Forrester's words are insightful here: "What is in dispute may be made increasingly clear in the course of discussion but, in the absence of some agreed standard, the choice between differing positions appears to be largely arbitrary. Only very rarely is an account of justice presented as resting on an ontology, or the nature of things, or as being in some sense 'true'."[7]

Fundamentally then, disagreements over social justice are issues of ontology or epistemology. What exactly does it mean to be just? Furthermore, who is knowledgeable enough or powerful enough to ensure that social justice is perfectly carried out to all groups and types of people? These are some of the challenges facing the Church as it thinks about how to define and carry out social justice.

Here is where the book of Job comes into play. This paper will argue that Job serves as a theological foundation to Christian thinking in all areas, including social justice. This paper will also argue that Job's suffering caused him to think about social injustices, and that Job connects his hopes with societies hopes. And this hope is most clearly found in Job 19:25–26, where Job hopes for eschatological justice through a mediator. [8] Job did not hope in the wisdom of man for vindication and an end to suffering, but in God's wisdom to be just and caring in the end. It is this perspective that the Church is to have when thinking through social justice—we apply a Christian worldview to address social injustices, but we ultimately need to give people the hope that God is just and can not only make them right, but create a just and right society in the end.[9]

Does the Book of Job Talk about Social Justice?

Before examining Job's hope, it needs to be established that the book of Job has relevance to the issues of social justice in the first place. Do Job or his friends talk about injustices in society? The answer is yes.

Zophar directly mentions the oppression of poor people in society by the wicked (Job 20:18–19). Eliphaz accuses Job of oppressing and robbing others less fortunate than in (Job 22:6–7). Job refers to how judges are blind to the injustices perpetrated by the wicked (9:24), and how evil man oppress those who are underneath them (24:1–10). To these men, social injustices are real and present in society. The rich oppress the poor, the wicked rob from others. Judges do not uphold standards of justice for the innocent. Although anachronistic, "social justice" was a concern of Job and his friends.

Social Justice and the Divine Retribution Principle

Although Job and his friends agree that there are injustices in society, they disagree on the reason why injustices in society exist in the first place. This is because Job's friends have a worldview that interprets how they view these injustices called the "Divine Retribution Principle."[10] In this worldview, everything is cause and effect. Bad things happen to bad people, and good things happen to good people. So even if the wicked oppress people, God will judge those wicked people in this life. The innocent sufferer will be vindicated by God, while those who cause the suffering will be punished by Him.

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[7] Duncan B. Forrester, *Christian Justice and Public Policy*, Cambridge Studies in Ideology and Religion 10 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 2.

[8] Unless otherwise noted, all English Scripture references come from the *New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update* (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

[9] John Donehue is not wrong point out how the book of Job describes the just person. They are someone who preserves the peace and wholeness of the community (Job 4:3–4; 29:12–15; 31:16–19; 29:16; 31:1–12). See John R. Donehue, "Biblical Perspectives on Justice," in *The Faith That Does Justice: Examining the Christian Sources for Social Change*, ed. John Haughey, C., Woodstock Studies 2 (New York: Paulist Press, 1977), 70. However, in chapter 31 it is more likely that Job is being self-righteous than actually just. Furthermore, Job directs his petitions to God rather than exhorting his fellow countrymen to do more for the community.

[10] Hereafter referred to as the "DRP." It is otherwise known as the Retribution Principle and it, "…Is the conviction that the righteous will prosper and the wicked will suffer, both in proportion to their respective righteousness and wickedness." John H. Walton and Kelly Lemon Vizcaino, *Job*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 39. For further information on this principle see Angelika Berlejung, "Sin and Punishment: The Ethics of Divine Justice and Retribution in Ancient Near Eastern and Old Testament Texts," *Interpretation* 69, no. 3 (July 2015): 272–287, but especially 273-4. This principle is shattered when Job, a righteous and God-fearing man, encounters immense suffering (Job 1:1–3). If God treats a righteous person like Job as if he was wicked, then what is man's hope of ever being made right in God's eyes? Debating over the validity of the Divine Retribution Principle is what drives the dialogue in the book.

Under a DRP system, Job's friends probably would not have thought of social justice as a big issue that needs to be addressed. If there is injustice in society, God will right it. There will be no evil left unpunished by God in this life. As Eliphaz says, "Remember now, who ever perished being innocent? Or where were the upright destroyed? According to what I have seen, those who plow iniquity and those who sow trouble harvest it. By the breath of God they perish, and by the blast of His anger they come to an end." (Job 4:7–9)

The worldview proposed by the DRP is undermined by Job's own innocent suffering. Job was a God-fearing, righteous man (Job 1:1). He was immensely blessed, such that he was the "greatest of all the men of the east" (Job 1:3). Yet instead of continuing in this state of material blessings, God through Satan takes away everything that Job has and causes him immense physical suffering (Job 1:8–2:8). If the DRP were true, then Job should never have suffered.

Job's suffering then becomes a window through which he asks fundamental questions about life. If the DRP cannot explain reality, then what does? Job agrees with his friends that ultimately God is in control over injustices in society. But his own suffering causes him to question if God really cares about those injustices. In Job's mind, if God does not care about him, then he certainly does not care about the broader evils that occur in society. (Job 9:20; 16:11–12; cf. Job 9:24; 24:12)

By thinking along these lines, Job frames the problem of social justice as not primarily economic or racial, but theological. There is oppression and injustice in this life, but the real question is not what the Church will do about it but this: What is God going to do about it? Does God care about what happens to the poor, or when righteous people suffer at the hands of evil men?

Job's Redeemer and Social Justice

Job's suffering also leads him to ask a fundamental question: How can man be in in the right (i.e., justified [יִצְדַּק, *yiṣdaq*]) before God? (Job 9:1–2)[11] To Job, the reason why he is suffering in the first place is that he cannot meet God's standard of righteousness. God is simply too strong and too wise (Job 9:3–4). There is an important implication in Job's question though—that if Job can be justified before God, then his suffering would cease, and God would be caring. This implication is not just a wish for God to stop hurting Job—it is a wish for an entirely new system. The DRP cannot make man right before God, so there must be a new system that does. He knows that if this new system were true, then God would be good and caring. God would be able to justify Job and end make his suffering worth it.

In other words, Job's personal suffering causes him to realize that societies in general suffer. Inversely then, Job knows that if God can justify him before Himself, societies in general will be made right by God in the end. This is Job's hope applied to social justice. This hope appears in multiple places in the book (e.g. Job 9:32–35; Job 16:19–21), but it finds arguably its clearest expression and connection to social justice in the aforementioned Job 19:25–26, where Job expresses belief in future vindication through a Redeemer.

The Genre and Dating of Job

Now that some theological issues pertaining to Job and social justice have been discussed, we need to ask ourselves: Is the book of Job historical? Or is it simply poetic fiction?[12] If it is the latter, then much of what the book

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[11] יִצְדַּק (*yiṣdaq*) in the Qal means, "to be in the right, be right, to justify, consider as just" (Ludwig Köhler et al., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994), 1003. Hereafter referred to as *HALOT*. It is translated as δίκαιος (*dikaios*) in the LXX, which means, "to be upright, just fair in view of certain requirements of justice." (Arndt, William et al., "Δίκαιος," *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000], 247). Hereafter known as BDAG. These two words are the standard biblical terms used whenever an author is talking about justification before God (cf. Silva Moisés, ed., "Δικαιοσύνη," *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 724. Someone involved in New Pauline Perspective scholarship like N.T. Wright might argue that Job could not have been thinking of classic Protestant legal view justification before God, because the term itself merely marks out those who have already become a part of the covenant people of God (See N. T. Wright, *Justification: God's Plan & Paul's Vision* [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009], 116). Under this definition of justification, not much changes. Job views himself as outside of the covenant people of God, and he sees the perfections/attributes of God as an insurmountable obstacle to becoming a member of that people.

[12] Marvin Pope is one who takes the stance that Job is fictional. See Marvin H. Pope, *Job*, vol. 15, The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1973), xxxiii. However, Pope bases this position upon an assumption that all biblical works underwent an oral history before being

says may not be true. Job will thus have no real relationship to the problem of social justice. If on the other hand, Job is a historical person, then his sufferings and subsequent declaration of a Redeemer provide real answers and hope to our society.

Job is generally considered *sui generis*, defying a single genre classification.[13] There are, however multiple lines of evidence that indicate that the book of Job is at least a historical account of real events. The opening of the book itself indicates that it is historical. Job 1–2 is prose in style and makes a truth claim by beginning with, "There was a man"[14] The way Job's possessions are described, as well as cultural references, are other indicators of a patriarchal Period setting. In light of this evidence, a 3rd millennium BC setting seems plausible.[15] Even if it is granted that Job was written at a late date, the author of the book intentionally wrote it to look like a patriarchal period work.[16]

This patriarchal setting is important because even if the book of Job's exact date of authorship is uncertain, it was crafted to serve as a sort of chronological and therefore theological prequel to the rest of the Bible. It gives Christians foundational pieces that they need to know when thinking through suffering, man's relationship to God, social justice, and more. And because the events in Job occurred in history, Christians can hope in the same things that Job hoped for and apply his hope to think through the problem of social justice.

The Setting of Job

The setting of the book of Job is also important to the topic of social justice. The book begins by mentioning that Job is from the land of Uz, which is most likely a city in Edom (Jer 25:20; cf. Lam 4:21).[17] So although the book of Job is a part of the Hebrew canon, its non-Israelite setting indicates that what it discusses has universal implications. What Job and his friends debate over thus concerns not only Israelites under Mosaic Law, but all of mankind. This means that what Job talks about and hopes for has direct impact on how we are to view the problems of social injustices in our own society.

Literary Themes in Job

Getting further into the book of Job itself, Job is a series of disputations, between both Job and his friends and between Job and God.[18] Job is personally seeking legal vindication before God in court (31:35–36). The trial is not just to vindicate himself before God—it is to put God Himself on trial, to hold Him accountable for the actions He

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written down, which by definition cannot be examined scientifically or historically. Jansen argues that Job is a post-exilic product of religious upheaval, even though he provides no support for this argument. See J. Gerald Janzen, *Job*, Interpretation, A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1985), 5.

[13] See Michael A. Grisanti, "The Book of Job," in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament*, Eugene H. Merrill, Mark F. Rooker, and Michael A. Grisanti (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2011).

[14] Abner Chou, "Authorship and Date of Job and Why It's Important" (Lecture, The Master's University, Santa Clarita, CA, January 22, 2014).

[15] For more information on the patriarchal background of the book, see Francis I. Andersen, *Job: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, vol. 13 (London: InterVarsity Press, 1976), 56.

[16] Pope admits that evidence for an early date is present within Job. He states that whoever wrote Job was at least a Jew who could write in a lost literary Hebrew and was conversant with a wide-range of lost Northwest-Semitic literature (Pope, *Job*, xxxiv). There is no evidence that post-exilic Jews could have composed a work like Job. Some point out that Job is late because of Aramaisms in the book. However, the Aramaic plural suffix has been found in early Canaanite literature (Andersen, *Job*, 58). Pope goes so far as to say that either Job was made to look like it was written in the Patriarchal Period, or it actually was. Charles Feinberg has shown that there are numerous Ugaritic pronominal forms as well as pronominal suffixes that parallel Job's Hebrew (e.g., Ugaritic III 17-8; cf. Job 5:19, 33:14, 40:5; see Charles Lee Feinberg, *Ugaritic Literature and the Book of Job*, [Baltimore, MD: PhD diss., Johns Hopkins University, 1945], 64–71). These forms were in use in the 3rd millennium B.C., again pointing to a Patriarchal date of writing. See also Edward Greenstein for further discussion on the early linguistic features in Job (Edward L. Greenstein, "The Invention of Language in the Poetry of Job," in *Interested Readers: Essays on the Hebrew Bible in Honor of David J. A. Clines*, ed. James K. Aitken, Jeremy M. S. Clines, and Christl M. Maier [Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013]).

[17] See Robert Alden's discussion in Robert L. Alden, *Job*, vol. 11, New American commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1993), 46.

[18] It has been noted that Job's disputations with God have similarities to certain Ancient Near Eastern Stories, including "Man and His God" and, "The Babylonian Theodicy". See James B. Pritchard, ed., "Man and His God," in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 3rd ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), 589–90; James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 3rd ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), 601–4.

has brought upon Job.[19] Meanwhile, Job's friends are attempting to get him to admit that he has sinned and deserves the calamity brought upon him. Yet Job's righteous status and subsequent downfall force him to realize he can never be right before God in his own power. He needs a mechanism that can put them both on an even playing field, which a legal environment provides.[20]

Job's desire for a day in court with God is important, because the courtroom theme that begins in chapter 1 between God and Satan in heaven results in a second courtroom scene between Job and his friends on earth. The human verdict on God's name is played out on earth in Job's mind, as he debates with his friends concerning the goodness of God and how He works in this world. Job knows he needs a mediator, someone who can allow him a fair hearing before God, as Job :33 suggests: "There is no arbiter between us, who might lay his hand on us both." This legal theme must be in mind when arriving at Job 19, because a third party who can enable a fair hearing before God is exactly what Job wishes for in his Redeemer.

The Structure of Job

The structure of the book also helps us understand why Job expressed belief in a Redeemer in chapter 19. Since the 18th century, the structure of Job has been divided into several parts: A prologue (1–2), followed by a lament (3), then a series of three cycles or debates between Job and his friends (4-14; 15–21; 22–6), then Job's monologue (27–31), Elihu's speeches (32–37), God's speeches (38–42:6), and the prologue (42:7–17).[21] The arguments for shifting the text of the book around and assigning them to different speakers are ultimately subjective and not persuasive.[22] Scholars are beginning to see that trying to find an original order of the Joban text is futile.[23] It is best to come to the text of Job with an open mind and to trust its canonical structure.

Job 19 falls in the second cycle of Job's debates with his friends. The dialogue has not yet broken down, as it will in the third cycle.[24] At this point in the book, Job is still in the middle of debate—although he is tiring of his friends' unwise counsel (16:1–3; 19:1–3). Job is losing hope that his friends will ever believe his defense, that his suffering is not the result of any sin that he committed. This is in addition to his losing hope that God will vindicate him, since he cannot even see, let alone talk to God (9:11). Chapter 19 will thus see Job move his hope in vindication from his friends and God in this life, to a future time when someone else will vindicate him before God.

The Context of Job's Redeemer of Chapter 19

With the preceding structural and contextual information, we can now properly approach chapter 19. This chapter is Job's response to Bildad, who has argued that the wicked are always punished by God in this life. His

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[19] Carol Newsom has pointed out that outside of the book of Job, only Jeremiah 12:1 entertains the idea of man putting God on trial as the accused. Carol A. Newsom, "The Invention of the Divine Courtroom in the Book of Job," in *The Divine Courtroom in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Ari Mermelstein and Shalom E. Holtz, vol. 132, Biblical Interpretation Series (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 246.

[20] Newsom puts it this way: "By envisioning a trial procedure, Job reconfigures the basic social relationship that governs the two parties. As noted above, Israelite law acknowledged that the parties to a dispute often might not be social equals. But for the purposes of the law, such differences were to be set aside (e.g., Exod 23:2). In thinking in terms of a trial, Job is not claiming actual equality with God but simply a stipulated, provisional, "as if" equality" (Ibid., 254). For more detail on Ancient Near Eastern courtroom motifs, see Tzvi Abusch, "Divine Judges on Earth and in Heaven," in *The Divine Courtroom in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Ari Mermelstein and Shalom E. Holtz, vol. 132, Biblical Interpretation Series (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

[21] Benjamin Kennicott, *Remarks on Select Passages in the Old Testament: To Which Are Added Eight Sermons* (Oxford: Oxford, 1787). For an argument for a four-fold structure of two cycles of speeches, see Andrew E Steinmann, "The Structure and Message of the Book of Job," *Vetus Testamentum* 46, no. 1 (January 1996): 85–100.

[22] For example, David Wolfers relies on thematic readings of chapters 25–27 to support his view that they are actually speeches of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar (David Wolfers, "The Speech-Cycles in the Book of Job," *Vetus Testamentum* 43, no. 3 [July 1993]: 400–01). Other authors like Gordis and Clines move the text around and find the missing third speech of Zophar, because it makes the book fit together better in their eyes (E.g., Robert Gordis, *The Book of Job: Commentary, New Translation, and Special Studies*, vol. 2, Moreshet Series: Studies in Jewish History, Literature, and Thought [New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1978], 291; David J. A. Clines, *Job 1–20*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 17 [Waco, TX: Word Books, 1989], 1189).

[23] See Christopher R Seitz, "Job: Full-Structure, Movement, and Interpretation," *Interpretation* 43, no. 1 (January 1989): 5–17.

[24] Lindsay Wilson notes that, "The dialogue breaks down in the third cycle, thus witnessing to the inability of the exponents of traditional wisdom to solve Job's dilemma." Lindsay Wilson, *Job*, Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 15. Tremper Longman III concurs. See Tremper Longman III, *Job*, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012), 109.

reasoning? It is because that is what Bildad always sees. To Bildad, the DRP is a closed system. There is never any hope for the wicked, only destruction (18:20–21).[25]

Job's response is to point out that Bildad's closed system is broken. If the wicked are always punished, then why does Bildad care to be with him in the first place (19:4)?[26] Furthermore, Bildad has missed the point: God Himself has brought suffering to Job, not because of Job's wickedness, but simply because it was willed by Him (19:6). Bildad's closed-system worldview cannot account for the reality Job faces, so it is inherently flawed. What Job needs is a new system of justice.

A Closer Look at Job 19:23–26

Job's wish for a new system of justice emerges most clearly in 19:23–26. In the immediate context of verses 23–24 Job realizes that if he cannot get vindication in this life, then maybe by permanently writing down his words someone in the future will vindicate him. This desire for future vindication from someone other than his friends moves Job to place his hope in a person that can vindicate him on the last day: a "Mediator" who can somehow resurrect Job and bring him eschatological redemption (vv. 25–26). Exegetical treatment of these verses follows.

Verses 23–24

There is general agreement as to the contents of verses 23–24. Verse 23 is begun and split into halves by the optative formula מִי־יִתֵּן, (*mî-yittēn*)which relays Job's wish that permanence might be given to his words.[27] Literally the sentence is, "Who will give?" This again points to Job's desperate status: He is unsure who can help him. Job's reference to writing in both halves of this verse (וְיִכָּתְבוּן, *wĕyikkotbûn*;וְיֵחָקוּ , *wĕyuḥāqû*) indicates a desire for someone to record his testimony so that someone in the future can vindicate his name.[28]

Verse 24 expands on Job's wish for future vindication through written testimony. The phrase, "with iron and lead" (בְּעֵט־בַּרְזֶל וְעֹפֶרֶת, *bĕʿēṭ-barzel wĕʿōpāret*) is referring to the means by which Job's testimony will be preserved: By engraving his words into stone.[29] This type of wish is for coming generations forever to see what Job has gone through. The purpose of engraving Job's words can only be in hope of future vindication that will come even after his own life ends. Otherwise, there is no need for a permanent record.[30]

The grammar suggests that Job has been setting a temporal frame of reference for what he is about to say. He has already established in this chapter that his friends and family, people who could vouch for his integrity before God, have all deserted him (vv. 13–19). This leaves no one to vindicate him in this life. So, Job wishes for a way to immortalize his words in stone so that someone in the future, even the far future, can vindicate him (vv. 23–24). It is important to keep this future-oriented frame of reference in mind when interpreting the crucial next verse.

Verse 25

Job begins verse 25 by shifting the frame of focus from what his friends and family think of him, to what he personally hopes, indicated by the *vaqatal* and the fronting of the subject (אֲנִי, *ʾănî*).[31] Recognition of the

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[25] Abner Chou, "Job 19" (Lecture, The Master's University, Santa Clarita, CA, March 3rd, 2014).

[26] Ibid.

[27] Edouard Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1984), 281.

[28] William David Reyburn, *A Handbook on the Book of Job*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1992), 361–62; C. L. Seow, *Job 1-21: Interpretation and Commentary, Volume I*, Illuminations (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 802.

[29] Dhorme prefers to see verses 24 as translated "With a tool of iron and lead" contrary to Rashi's explanation that liquid was poured onto a mold (cf. Ezek 22:20). The lead would serve the purpose of coloring matter to enable the engraver to mark out his letter before cutting into the stone. See Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job*, 282.

[30] Wilson, *Job*, 106. The prepositional phrase "to the end" (לָעַד, *lāʿad*) confirms that Job wants his words to last forever.

[31] The reduplication of the first-person pronoun in יָדַעְתִּי *(yādaʿtî)* emphasizes the fact that Job has a deep-seated conviction, a strong belief about what he is about to say. David Wolfers makes the statement that he sees no point in the reduplication of the 1st person pronouns here. See David Wolfers, *Deep Things Out of Darkness: The Book of Job: Essays and a New English Translation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 486. However, a couple paragraphs later he rightly points out that reduplication of the personal pronoun is used for emphasis, often in an adversative sense. The disjunctive *vav* supports this (Ibid.).

grammatical shift contradicts those who think that Job is just making a passing wish statement.[32] Job's declaration in verse 25 is not a random or throwaway wish—it is the result of realizing that he has no hope of vindication from any of his friends and family in this life. This also means that it is incorrect to say that Job was raised to a level of prophetic ecstasy.[33] Job is not claiming to have new or divine source of insight here. Rather, he is simply claiming to "know" something about the future status of his vindication.[34]

Job's Redeemer

The grammatical object of Job's knowing in verse 25 is חַי גֹּאֲלִי (*gōʾălî ḥāy*). Presently, it must be asked: What does גֹּאֲלִי (*gōʾălî*) mean? And more specifically, what does Job signify by using this word at this moment in the book? The answer to these questions forms an important part of Job's eschatological thinking, since we already know that Job is looking to a time beyond his own life.

The term גאל (*gʾl*), rightly translated "Vindicator," accurately captures its sense.[35] Fundamentally, the word is a technical legal term found in Israelite family law (Lev 25, 27; Num 35).[36] Edouard Dhorme notes that the Bible makes the connection between these family, legal functions of גאל (the *go'el*), and the broader theme of bringing justice to the oppressed: "Quite naturally the go'el becomes the defender in justice, he who vindicates the rights of the oppressed (Prov 23:10–11)."[37] This idea, that the *go'el* is someone who vindicates or justifies those who cannot help themselves, undergirds Job's use of the term here. Job cannot vindicate his name before God, so he is asking for outside help.

This moves the reader closer to understanding who Job's Redeemer is. Job has realized that his friends will not vindicate his name before God—whoever this Redeemer is, then, he must be more than a man.[38] Because of the absence of help from Job's friends and the reference to the "last" in the second half of this verse (וְאַחֲרוֹן,

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However, on the next page Wolfers then claims that the *vav* is actually conjunctive (Ibid., 487). He also claims that the lack of a *kî* particle, which is typical for ידע *(ydʿ)* is suspicious (Ibid., 486). This pushes him towards a different reading of the text. This is a subjective argument though, as Job has the freedom (being the speaker) to do what he wants.

[32] E.g., James Wood, *Job and the Human Situation,* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1966), 77.

[33] Mike Mason, *The Gospel According to Job* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1994), 217.

[34] Some scholars tend to lump this verse in with the previous few, arguing that Job is stating something that he knows is contrary to fact. However, these arguments do not satisfy the grammar and context. It is better to see Job here as expressing hope that he will one day be vindicated by his *go'el* (גֹּאֲלִי). This hope must be rooted in the justice of God. Job believes that God won't give him a fair trial, but he knows that God is ultimately just. So, there has to be a way for Job to be made right before God. For example, Clines rightly argues that "I know" (יָדַעְתִּי *yādaʿtî*) in forensic contexts often means, "I firmly believe." He then claims that Job is simply stating a strong wish that he knows isn't true. See Clines, *Job 1-20*, 457–59. While it is true that this phrase in forensic contexts refers to a deep-seated conviction, Clines reaches too far in arguing that Job actually knows what he is wishing for is not true. The text says that Job is expressing conviction, not something Job knows is not true, and Clines himself does not give evidence to support his conclusion, raising doubts about its veracity. In addition, three further reasons refute Cline's position: 1) Belief contrary to what one knows to be true is simply not within the semantic range of this word (cf. Willem VanGemeren, ed., "יָדַע," *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 409-10. 2) Based on the context, Job does not appear to be sarcastic or ironic in verse 25, but desperate and longing (19:21-22, 27). 3) To know something in the biblical sense, there is always a relationship involved (Ibid.). Clines might be correct to argue that Job did not think his Redeemer was alive—but Job did express hope that a Redeemer would one day bring about vindication.

[35] The NET Bible presents this translation. See Biblical Studies Press, *The NET Bible First Edition Notes* (Biblical Studies Press, 2006).

[36] Willem VanGemeren, ed., "גָּאַל," *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 789. In these cases, the function of the go'el would be to buy back a house or piece of land for a relative who had to sell it (Lev 25:26, 29–43). Since land was allotted to each tribe and family, people would need to sell their homes or land if they were in debt or poor. The purpose of the go'el in this context would be to vindicate the names of families who had sold their property by buying back what they had lost.

[37] Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job*, 283. This is seen even in English, where vindication is a synonym for forensic justification. Cf. . Merriam-Webster Inc., *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed. (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2003). This assumes the historical Protestant definition of justification as defined in footnote 2.

[38] Stephen Vicchio is one who holds that Job's vindicator is just a man. See Stephen Vicchio, *The Image of the Biblical Job: A History*, vol. 1, Job in the Ancient World (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006), 82. He is simply wrong to say that the term *go'el* is never used of God (cf. Ps. 19:14; 119:154). Seow believes Job's Redeemer is simply Job's imagination of what he hopes God to be. See Seow, *Job 1-21*, 805. Later though, he admits that an eschatological time period could be in view in 19:25–26 (Ibid., 806-07)

wĕʾaḥărōwn), many scholars see that Job is referring to God the Father or to a third party in heaven;[39] that Job is referring to Jesus;[40] or, that Job is simply expecting to be cleared in court by a heavenly vindicator in the next life.[41]

Although the Redeemer as God the Father is a popular option, it is not a viable option for one clear reason: God is the one whom Job feels will not give him a fair trial. Even if Job were innocent, God could condemn him simply because He is God and Job is not (9:19–20). That is the whole point of the legal metaphor Job has constructed: He needs to bring a third-party into the picture to enable a fair hearing with God.[42]

Marvin Pope presents a probable solution to the problem of viewing God as the Redeemer. Tying in Job's wishes for legal vindication he says, "The difficulty may be alleviated by understanding the term *go'el* here to refer to the agent elsewhere termed an umpire (ix 33) and a witness (xvi 19) who is to serve the same function as the personal god of Sumerian theology, i.e., act as his advocate and defender in the assembly of the gods; cf. xxxiii 23."[43] Wilson concurs, arguing that 9:33, 16:18, and 19:25 contain one hope, variously described: "Each passage has a call for an arbiter, is preceded by an angry protest, and succeeded by despair and the floating of unfulfilled hope."[44]

In light of the common themes between chapters 9, 16, and 19, there are compelling reasons to think that Job's Redeemer is a third party who is also equal to God, something Job has already wished for in 9:33. For one, the function of the biblical *go'el*, as mentioned earlier, is someone who avenges the blood of a relative or redeems an oppressed family member from a hopeless situation.[45] As John Hartley points out though, this word can also be used to refer to contexts in which God redeems His people.[46] And in Psalm 103:4, God is the *go'el* who redeems Israel from the pit of death.[47] This shows that the term can be used to refer to a divine being who saves people from death; Job chose the term for a specific reason, which has divine implications connected to it.[48]

The implications of a divine *go'el* support the future-oriented context of 19:25, because Job in 19:25 is referring to person who is not only alive in Job's day, but alive in the last days. Only a divine Redeemer can fulfill this role. Furthermore, the adjective "living" (חַיָּ, *ḥayyā*) has to do with someone who will outlast Job.[49] The phrase חַי גֹּאֲלִי (*ʾălî ḥāy*) is literally, "My Redeemer is alive." This means Job believed that his Redeemer was living when he spoke those words, even if that Redeemer was not on earth. Why would Job even hope in a redemption that would come after he dies though? At this point it is helpful to remember the context—all of Job's human kinsmen and redeemers have fled from him (cf. 19:13–14). Job has thus moved his hope of vindication before God from his present situation to the future, when only a divine person can make him right before God.

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[39] E.g., John E. Hartley, *The Book of Job*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 264; George Granville Bradley, *Lectures on the Book of Job, Delivered in Westminster Abbey*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1888), 148.

[40] E.g., Mason, *The Gospel According to Job*, 119.

[41] T. F. Royds, *Job and the Problem of Suffering*. (London: Wells Gardner, Darton, 1911), 58.

[42] So also Seow, *Job 1–21*, 804. Gordis sees the Redeemer as God, because Job is monotheistic (cf. Gordis, *The Book of Job*, 206). Again, Job sees God as His enemy, and Gordis does not take this into account. Job is a monotheist, but he knows that someone other than God will have to mediate for him. Wolfers may be correct that only God is referred to as a Redeemer in the participle form (cf. Wolfers, *Deep Things out of Darkness*, 488). This does not mean God is Job's Redeemer though, only that someone like God will have to vindicate Job. Wolfers assertion that this allegorically means God is the Redeemer for a fallen exilic Judah is baseless (see Ibid.). Clines has the unique claim that Job's redeemer is actually his "cry standing in heaven (cf. Clines, *Job 1–20*, 459). A cry is never referred to as a go'el in the Scriptures though. Furthermore, the personal pronouns in this context make it highly unlikely that Job is wishing for his "cry" to take its stand upon the dust.

[43] Pope, *Job*, 146.

[44] Wilson, *Job*, 107.

[45] Reyburn, *A Handbook on the Book of Job*, 362–63.

[46] Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 292. He references Exodus 6:6, 15:13 and Psalms 74:2, 77:15 as examples of this.

[47] Reyburn, *A Handbook on the Book of Job*, 363.

[48] Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 292–93. The LXX's translation of go'el as "the eternal one" (ἀέναός ἐστιν ὁ, *aenaos estin ho*) lends support to this stance. This shows that early Jewish translators thought that using a word with explicit divine implications was an accurate representation of the phrase חַי גֹּאֲלִי (*gōʾălî ḥāy*).

[49] Ibid.

The Eschatological Context of Job's Redeemer

The crucial phrase, "and at the last" (וְאַחֲרוֹן, *wĕʾaḥărôn*) has connotations that also extend beyond the life of Job. אַחֲרוֹן (*ʾaḥărôn)* is an adjective: "At the last."[50] In this context, Job must be referring to a specific point in time, because he is referring to an end period where the *go'el* will be performing an action (יָקוּם, *yāqûm*). A Redeemer who is alive right now and will also be alive at a point far in the future implies that the Redeemer will have divine qualities.[51] This means that Job has more than vindication alone in mind, because 19:25 does not just speak of vindication but the time period in which the *go'el* will come to bring about vindication for Job.[52] Job is thinking of vindication that will come in the eschaton.

The last clause of verse 25 describes what the Redeemer will do during the eschatological time frame indicated by וְאַחֲרוֹן (*wĕʾaḥărôn*). The phrase עַל־עָפָר (*ʿal-ʿāpār*) is not the typical word used when talking about the earth but would rather be אֶרֶץ (*ʾereṣ*).[53] עָפָר (*ʿāpār*) most commonly means, "fine dry top-soil, dust."[54] Semantically, עָפָר (*ʿāpār)* is often used to refer to human frailty, humiliation, creation, or death.[55] In the book of Job, עָפָר (*ʿāpār*) is usually used to refer to human frailty and death, physically and spiritually (4:19; 7:5, 21; 10:9; 16:15; 17:16). It is also used to refer to the place of creation and recreation (8:19).[56] This use of עָפָר (*ʿāpār*) in Job may carry implications for Job's own situation. As we saw in our semantic study of it, a significant percentage of the occurrences of עָפָר (*ʿāpār*) have to do with death or frailty.[57]There are only two occurrences of עָפָר (*ʿāpār*)in the Job that could be taken to refer to the earth as a whole: Job 19:25 and 41:33. It is therefore probable that at least in the case of 19:25, עָפָר (*ʿāpār*) primarily refers to death or the grave. Even so, there may be global implications to Job's use of עָפָר (*ʿāpār*) here. Job does not say "my dust" but "the dust," using the prepositional phrase עַל־עָפָר (*ʿal-ʿāpār*). And if Job is thinking eschatologically, then he could be thinking of a time when God makes all things on the surface of the earth right.

This thinking connects neatly with the issue of social justice—if Job's personal vindication proves to Job that God is ultimately just and caring, then by extension this just and caring God will in the eschaton also remedy social injustices on the earth.

The action the Redeemer takes also has eschatological implications. Within the eschatological, temporal frame of reference established by וְאַחֲרוֹן (*wĕʾaḥărôn*), the Redeemer will stand (יָקוּם, *yāqûm*). Not only does the imperfect nature of יָקוּם (*yāqûm*)allow for the future completion of this action—it has legal connotations (Deut

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[50] Ludwig Köhler et al., "אַחֲרוֹן," *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994–2000), 36. The word always refers to the end of something, be it acts (Exod 4:8; 2 Chr 9:29, 26:22; 29:29), people (Deut 24:3, 29:22) or the western geographical regions (Dan 11:29; Zech 14:8). Seow is hesitant to think that this word has eschatological connotations to it, even though he admits that the word has all of history in view (Seow, *Job 1-21*, 806–07). Surely this includes the eschaton.

[51] So also Seow, *Job 1–21*, 806.

[52] Dhorme translates this as "as the last", referring to a God having the last word. Cf. Isa. 48:12**,** where this word is used of God (Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job*, 283). But even here the word is not used adverbially—in that passage it is referring to temporality (albeit God's atemporality). Pope takes this adverbially but does not give a reason why. See Pope, *Job*, 146. This also contradicts how אַחֲרוֹן (*ʾaḥărôn)* is used in Scripture. Pope's translation of this word as "a guarantor" adverbially modifying "go'el" is not in the grammar of the text. This word is properly the antecedent of יָקוּם.

[53] Cf. *HALOT*, 90.

[54] Köhler et al., "862 ",אַחֲרוֹן.

[55] Cf. Gen 3:14,19a, 19b; 18:27; Deut 9:21a; 2 Sam 22:43; 2 Kings 13:7; Job 7:21; 10:9; 16:15; 17:16; 20:11; 21:26; 30:19; 34:15; 40:13; Pss 7:5; 18:42; 22:15; 29; 30:9; 44:25; 72:9; 103:14; 104:29; Eccl 3:20b; 12:7; Isa 26:19; 29:4a, 4b; 41:2; 49:23; 65:25; Lam 3:29; Dan 12:2; Mic 7:17; Zeph 1:17. My thanks to Dr. Aaron Shryock and his students at the Master's Seminary for this data.

[56] Dhorme is mistaken to see this word as always referring to earth in the book of Job. In 5:6 the location is the ground as origin of troubles, not the earth. 5:7 implies an origin and creation context. The same principle applies in 8:19 where dust as the source of creation, not the earth in general, is in view. See Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job*, 283.

[57] Seow rightly sees עָפָר (*ʿāpār*) as being associated with frailty and death. In this context, this means then that the Redeemer is standing over death in general, and in context, Job's grave (Seow, 808).

19:15; Pss 27:12; 35:11; 94:16; cf. with God as the subject: Zeph 3:8; Pss 12:6; 68:2, 76:10).[58] קום (*qwm*) is also used to specifically refer to the actions of legal witnesses in a courtroom setting (Deut 19:15ff; Pss 27:12; 35:11; Zeph 3:8). In this context, יָקוּם (*yāqûm*) must be taken in a legal sense, because Job has been wishing for a courtroom trial. Furthermore, the function of the Redeemer Himself in this passage is legal. So, Job wishes that his Redeemer will perform His legal function of vindicating Job in the end. Everything in verse 25 paints the vindicating work of the Redeemer as taking place in an eschatological context. The context therefore points to the Redeemer as likely being divine, for only a divine person who was alive when Job spoke his wish can take His stand on behalf of Job "at the last."

The connection between vindication in the *eschaton* and the righting of social wrongs cannot be missed either. Job believes that God has mistreated him, and if God mistreats even the godliest people, what does that say about how God administers justice to the world in general?: "The earth is given into the hand of the wicked; He covers the faces of its judges. If *it is* not *He,* then who is it?" If this logic is flipped around, we can see what Job is hoping for in 19:25–26—Job knows that if God cares enough to justify him through a Redeemer, then God through the Redeemer will make all things right in the eschaton: "And at the last He will take His stand on the earth" (Job 19:25b).

Job's Redeemer in His Eschatological Context

It is now clear from the exegesis of the passage thus far that Job has an eschatological time period in mind when he is thinking of the identity of his Redeemer. In fact, Job's Redeemer demands an eschatological context, and Job knows it. At this point Job believes that if he were to be vindicated before God, it would have to happen after he has died. It is an inescapable reality that Job's Redeemer must be a divine eschatological figure.

The end of verse 25 and the entirety of verse 26 fill out this picture, presenting a clear connection between Job's theology and the end times. If Job's train of thought is followed through verse 26, Job's eschatological framework becomes even clearer.

Verse 26: Job's Hope of Resurrection

Job hopes that his Redeemer will vindicate him before God. He does not believe it will happen during this life, but when he one day rises from the dead to see God face-to-face. Three contextual markers indicate Job is thinking of an eschatological resurrection: first, the future-oriented context discussed in the verses leading up to verse 25; second, the eschatological time frame indicated by וְאַחֲרֹון (*wĕʾaḥărōwn*); and third, the divine nature of the Redeemer. [59]

Verse 26 is heavily debated by scholars. Pope comments that this verse is impossible to understand, being, "notoriously difficult."[60] Vicchio overstates his case by claiming that it is impossible to understand what verse 26 is

[58] Cf. Ludwig Köhler et al., "קום," *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994–2000), 1086–87. Dhorme and Habel concur with the legal implications of this word in this context. See also Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job*, 283; Norman C. Habel, *The Book of Job: A Commentary*, Old Testament library (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1985), 293.

[59] The LXX affirms the general salvific nature of this passage with a dynamic translation: The Lord will be the one who will cause Job's flesh to come back (κυρίου ταῦτά μοι συνετελέσθη, *kyriou tauta moi synetelesthē*).Vicchio points out that the LXX is significantly shorter than the MT. He concludes that this is for theological reasons. See Vicchio, *The Image of the Biblical Job*, 105. This may be partly true, but it is not the entire answer. The LXX translators had a tendency to eliminate parallel passages, and explain things to make the text more understandable, as Vicchio himself admits (Ibid., 107). He also sees the LXX as contradicting the naturalistic worldview of MT 19:25–27, but the translation he gives (from the LXX) is spot on with the MT (Ibid.). He does rightly point out a tendency amongst the LXX translators for the book of Job to tone down language Job uses against God though (Ibid.). In general, it is widely acknowledged that the translation of Job was a free translation, i.e., the translators opted to translate the ideas and meanings of Job rather than every word. See J. H. Gailey, "Jerome's Latin Version of Job from the Greek. Chapters 1-26, Its Text, Character and Provenance" (ThD diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 1945), 14; Edwin Hatch, *Essays in Biblical Greek: Studies on the Value and Use of the Septuagint, on the Meanings of Words and Psychological Terms in Biblical Greek, on Quotations from the Septuagint, on Origen's Revision of Job, and on the Text of Ecclesiasticus, with an Index of Biblical Passages* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2004), 220; Emanuel Tov, *The Text-Critical Use of the Septuagint in Biblical Research*, 3rd ed. (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2015), 19; and Claude E. Cox, "The Nature of Luian's Revision of the Text of Greek Job," in *Scripture in Transition: Essays on Septuagint, Hebrew Bible, and Dead Sea Scrolls in Honour of Raija Sollamo*, ed. Anssi Voitila and Jutta Jokiranta, vol. 126, Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2008), 425.

[60] Pope, *Job*, 147. Habel uses the same phrase to refer to this verse (Habel, *The Book of Job*, 293. Pope adds that, "The ancient versions all differ and no reliance can be placed in any of them" (Pope, *Job*, 147).

saying and that the original Masoretic Text is unrecoverable.[61] Aron Pinker argues that the MT of Job 19:26 has been edited to reflect a bias towards physical resurrection and a hope in future vindication.[62] The only objective evidence he cites for this position, however, is a much earlier article on the subject, which itself simply asserts the position without any evidence.[63] The original *Vorlage* of the Old Testament (seen most clearly in Masoretic Text) is itself quite stable, so the meaning of Job 19:26 is ascertainable if contextual exegesis is performed.[64]

Verse 26 is also fronted with a prepositional phrase, with the subject at the back end, in order to emphasize what comes next, namely, Job's death. The temporal marker indicates the time in which Job will see God (וְאַחַר, *wĕʾaḥar*), "and after."[65] Job is thus speaking of a certain point in time, a time that will come after "this flesh of mine is cut off" (עֹורִי נָקְפוּ־זֹאת, *ʿōwrî niqqĕpû-zōʾt*), which can only be a reference to Job's own death.[66] The *min* prefix on וּמִבְּשָׂרִי, (*ûmibbĕśārî*) probably indicates that after Job's flesh has been cut off, he will see God in his flesh again.[67]

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[61] Vicchio, *The Image of the Biblical Job*, 82. Vicchio proves this himself by comparing the ben Naphtali and ben Asher texts, and concluding that most of the differences are minor and have to do with spelling (Ibid., 63).

[62] Aron Pinker, "A New Interpretation of Job 19:26," *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 15, no. 2 (2015).

[63] T. K. Cheyne, "On Some Suspected Passages in the Poetical Books of the Old Testament," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 10, no. 1 (1897): 15–66.

[64] Pope affirms that the MT text appears to fit the context, even though there are problems with it (he does not say what problems those are). Pope, *Job*, 147. For a list of the variant reading and versions of this verse, see Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job*, 284. There is evidence that the term "Septuagint" did not start to be used in reference to the Old Greek until after the 1st century A.D. See Karen H. Jobes and Moisés Silva, *Invitation to the Septuagint*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 17.

Albert Pietersma argues that there was a single proto-Masoretic *Vorlage* underlying both the LXX and the MT by contending that in the beginning, the LXX was an interlinear and subservient translation to the Hebrew original. See Albert Pietersma, *A New English Translation of the Septuagint, and Other Greek Translations Traditionally Included under That Title: The Psalms* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), ix. Many Old Testament LXX books will therefore give the rigid equivalence of the Hebrew, like an interlinear. In light of this, when faced with a difficult translation decision, it is usually better to go in the direction that the Hebrew leads (Ibid, xiii).

Siegfriend Kreuzer has pointed out that early recensions of the Old Greek brought the text more in line with the proto-Masoretic text family. See Siegfried Kreuzer, "From 'Old Greek' to the Recensions: Who and What Causes the Change of the Hebrew Reference Text of the Septuagint?," in *Septuagint Research: Issues and Challenges in the Study of the Greek Jewish Scriptures*, ed. Wolfgang Kraus and R. Glenn Wooden, Septuagint and Cognate Studies Series (Brill Academic Publishers) 53 (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 226. There are also Septuagint texts from Qumran that show a revision toward a proto-Masoretic text, called the *kaige* revison (Ibid., 229). Not all scholars agree about the nature and importance of the *kaige* revision though. See Peter John Gentry, "An Analysis of the Revisor's Text of the Greek Job" (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 1994), 488.

Kreuzer also notes that the proto-Masoretic text was the dominant text base in the 1st century (Ibid., 227–28). There were only minor changes between the proto-Masoretic text in the 2nd century B.C., and the Masoretic Text of the 10th century A.D (Ibid., 229). This brings a much greater certainty to the reliability of the MT text.

[65] Temporal framing is its primary usage (cf. Deut 8:16; Job 42:12). See Willem VanGemeren, ed., "אַחֲרִית," *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 361–62. Seow notes that the wordplay between וְאַחֲרֹון and וְאַחַר makes וְאַחַר temporal (Seow, *Job 1–21*, 805.

[66] The demonstrative pronoun זֹאת emphasizes Job's flesh. Dhorme sees נָקְפוּ (niqqĕpû) as "surrounding", even though he gives no argument to support this. See Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job*, 284. From here he translates verse 26 as, "And that behind my skin, I shall stand up". He gives no evidence for this either, and "I shall stand up" is not in the text (Ibid.). The only other place נָקְפוּ (niqqĕpû) occurs is in Is. 10:34 and here, it clearly means cutting down. Job though is talking about his flesh being cut away from him. Gordis thinks this word means, "mark off" because of its Hifil form, but this word in Job 19:26 is in the Piel. Gordis, *The Book of Job*, 2:206. Habel recognizes that Dhorme, Pope, and Gordis all have different opinions of this word, so he follows the context by translating this phrase as Job's skin being peeled off "in death". See Habel, *The Book of Job*, 293.

[67] There is a key interpretive problem here. Should the *min* prefix on וּמִבְּשָׂרִי (ûmibbĕśārî) be interpreted as a privative *min* (without my flesh) instead of as a *min* of location (from my flesh)? Arguments for a privative use include: 1) Job knows how to use the privative *min* (cf. 21:9). 2)The *vav* is probably adversative (but, yet). Even though Job will die, he will see God. 3) There is nothing at the clausal level that contradicts this position.

It is preferable to see the *min* here as a *min* of location though. Several reasons support this conclusion: 1) Its only other parallel construction (Gen 2:23) is also a *min* of location. 2) Nothing in the context rules out bodily resurrection. 3) Death in Job's worldview means leaving the body and going to the place of the death (Sheol; cf. Job 14:10, 12–14). Seeing God again would imply a restoration of body and soul together. 4) The words for seeing God in verses 26–27 are never used of dead people, but people alive with bodies (See Ludwig Köhler et al., "חזה," *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* [Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994–2000], 301). 5) Job's emphasis on seeing and beholding God with his eyes in verse 27 implies being in a heavenly courtroom with Him, not in Sheol.

When the exegetical data is connected and combined with the eschatological context of this passage, it becomes likely that Job is wishing for a bodily resurrection. Job knows he will not be vindicated by anyone in this life—so he looks ahead to the future, to the last day when his Redeemer will vindicate him in his resurrected body.[68]

The most serious objection to the physical resurrection view seems to come from Job himself. In Job 14:12, Job clearly states once a man dies, that is the end of his life.[69] Vicchio categorically states that it is impossible for Job to be thinking about resurrection in 19:26 based on 14:12.[70] Yet, there is not necessarily a contradiction between these two passages. It is true that Job sees death as the end his life (3:17–19; 7:21; 10:21–22; 14:7–12; 16:22; 17:14–15). Nevertheless, in 19:25–26 there is clear evidence that Job is at least wishing for bodily resurrection, envisaging a life after death.[71]

Thus, while it is true that Job believes death is permanent, in 19:26 Job's belief in the ultimate rightness of God results in the hope that somehow, his redeemer would defeat death and enable Job to be raised from the dead.[72] The Redeemer's function thus involves enabling Job to see God in a future life, in a system that is outside the bounds of the DRP. Job seems to be saying that although death is the end of his current life, he is hoping for a resurrection enabled by his Redeemer.[73]

All of this exegetical effort on Job 19:25–26, especially, is paramount in order to connect Job's eschatological hope to contemporary issues of social justice. What emerges is that Job connects his own situation to the way the world works in general. If a God-fearing man like him suffers, what is the hope of any man in being right with God? Does God even care about judging the wicked and protecting the innocent? When the text is allowed to speak for itself, Job's solution to the problems facing both himself and, by extension, society, becomes clear: real problems can only ultimately be solved by a divine third party—one who can enable man to be made clean and justified before God.

Conclusion: Job's Hope and Its Implications for Social Justice

There are important implications for social justice when Job's hope is rightly understood, and the book is affirmed as the theological prequel to the rest of the Bible. First, the root of social ills is not race, class, economic status, or any other standard measurement of societies—it is the sinful nature mankind possesses. It is the "wicked" who oppress the poor and rob from others (e.g., Job 9:24; 24:1–4; 9–14).

Second, Job's suffering makes him realize, along with his friends, that under the DRP (Divine Retribution Principle) man can never be right with God. This points to the ultimate problem facing anyone trying to bring social

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[68] While Seow does not believe bodily resurrection is in view here, he favorably notes that Christians and Jews throughout Church history have held to a bodily resurrection view. Seow, *Job 1-21*, 809. Naturally, such clear resurrection language by Job is played down by many non-evangelical scholars. Pope offers no reason for his translation, "Without my flesh I shall see God" (Pope, *Job*, 147). Gordis rightly points out that Job cannot be referring to seeing God after his body decays (Gordis, *The Book of Job*, 206). Instead of taking this logic to imply bodily resurrection though, Gordis opts for a mystical viewing of God in this life. This does not square with the context though—"deep in my skin" is simply not a good translation.

Wilson admits that the min is probably one of source, and that Job quite possibly has physical resurrection in view (Wilson, *Job*, 108). In addition, Habel recognizes that Israelite tradition agrees with וּמִבְּשָׂרִי (ûmibbĕśārî) as being a min of source, because no tradition speaks of people seeing God in a disembodied form. See Habel, *The Book of Job*, 293. He notes the broader context of Job wanting to see God face to face (13:15, 20, 24) (Ibid., 294) and Job wishing to see God with his eyes (Ibid.). Dahood's reconstruction of וּמִבְּשָׂרִי (ûmibbĕśārî) as a pual participle is arbitrary (cf. Pope, *Job*, 147). Although Wilson opts against seeing the min as one of source, he gives no exegetical reason for it, instead choosing neutrality: "However a better view is that the limits of language have been reaching here, and the details should not be pressed too far." (Wilson, *Job*, 108).

[69] Pope, *Job*, 147. He mentions that Chrysostom refutes bodily resurrection in Job based off Job 14:12 as well.

[70] Vicchio, *The Image of the Biblical Job*, 82.

[71] Seow, *Job 1–21*, 808.

[72] My thanks to Dr. Chou for pointing this out to me.

[73] This idea of Resurrection is not foreign to the Ancient Near East. M.L. Barré, who is not an evangelical, has noted that the verbs חָיַי (*ḥāy*) and יְקוּם (*yāqûm*) in Job 19:25 have verbal parallels in Akkadian literature. He argues that anytime the two words for "live" and "rise" occur in the same context, healing and resurrection are in view. See M. L. Barré, "A Note on Job XIX 25," *Vetus Testamentum* 29, no. 1 (1979): 107–110. Barré admits that this means Job could be thinking of resurrection in 19:25. However, he ultimately comes to the conclusion that Job is just wishing for physical restoration of health (Ibid., 109). As has been noted though, this goes against the future-oriented context of the passage. Job already believes that he will not get vindication (or healing) in this life. That is the entire reason why he is wishing for an eschatological Redeemer, and why he wants his words to be written down. Seow affirms Barré's line of thinking (Seow, *Job 1-21*, 824–25).

justice to bear, because the most pressing concern for the Christian is not how social ills can be made right, but how sinful people can be made right before a holy God before they are judged eternally.[74]

Third, and related to the previous implication, is that Job's hope is set on God, the only one who can enact perfect social justice. He is the only Being wise and strong enough to one day ensure that all of His people will live in a just society.[75]

Fourth, Job's hope of a Redeemer is fulfilled in Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Tim 2:5–6).[76] This means that Christians know by experience and from the entire canon of revelation that God is just, that He does care, and that He will make all things right one day (cf. Rom 3:23–26; 8:28; 1 Pet 5:10; 2 Pet 3:7;). The wicked might prosper in this life, but they will be judged in the end (2 Pet 2:9–17; Rev 20:11–15).

When thinking about the issues of social justice, the following questions require a biblical response: Does God care about the evil in society? Is He going to do something about it? As exemplified in the case of Job, social justice is not purely a horizontal problem caused by man, needing to be solved by man. Its root cause is sin, and the only solution for sin is for God to make man right with him. Job looked ahead and, believing that God was just, expressed hope that a Redeemer would make him right and, by implication, mankind in general. Man, through the Redeemer, is not just forgiven, but actually cleansed and made new. This new humanity, in the *eschaton*, will form a society where there is perfect social justice.

This does not mean that pastors should be indifferent to evils in today's society, nor does it mean that Christians should not show mercy and do justice as the Lord leads. What Job's hope in future redemption offers the Church is the proper perspective on the ultimate root cause of social injustice, and its corresponding ultimate solution. Job's hope gives pastors a heavenly perspective when they are preaching about social evils and when they are counseling those who suffer because of them—our hope is no handcuff, obligating God to fix everything now, but is a settled, liberating trust in His promise to make a perfectly just society of people in the end.

This hope is not just eschatological—Job's hope began to be realized in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. His life, death, and resurrection showed that man can be made right before God (Rom 3:23–24; 5:1–2, 9; 1 Cor 15:20–22). And every Christian, despite his or her imperfections, stands as a present witness to the goodness of God and the ability of God to make people right spiritually in the present, and holistically in the end. The Church must answer the issues of social justice this way: by living out Christ's commands now, and by proclaiming the Gospel, the only hope that an evil society has of being transformed in the end.

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[74] As noted by Leeman in Jonathan Leeman, "Response to John R. Franke," in *Four Views on the Church's Mission*, ed. Jason S. Sexton, Counterpoints: Bible & Theology (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2017).

[75] McCracken notes 5 challenges to implementing social justice: 1) Fairly distributing resources that are moderately scare. 2) Disagreement over what kind of life a just society should aspire to live. 3) How to ensure cultural, racial, and ethnic diversity is treated fairly in relationship to other diversities. 4) Conflicting norms, i.e., different standards of what is most important in social justice (welfare, liberty, virtue). 5) How Christians engage each other from different viewpoints and traditions. See McCracken, "Social Justice: An Introduction to an Important Concept," 8–12.

[76] Peter Leithart makes a true statement on this topic: "A sacramental missiology will insist that the just society can exist only through Jesus, who is the embodiment of God's justice, and that the cross and resurrection of Jesus are the source of all genuine social justice." See Peter Leithart, "Sacramental Mission: Ecumenical and Political Missiology," in *Four Views on the Church's Mission*, ed. Jason S. Sexton, Counterpoints: Bible & Theology (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 171.