HEBREW UNION COLLEGE – JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION
LOS ANGELES SCHOOL

JOB'S CHILDREN

A Thesis submitted in partial
fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS

IN

JEWISH STUDIES

By

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Abstract

The specific issue I would like to address in this paper is the fate of Job's children as told in the biblical text, the book of Job. I will argue that the text (mainly chapters 1-2, 42:7-17) does not explicitly convey that Job's children died as part of the calamities inflicted upon him.

The principal emphasis of my research will be, but not restricted to, the prologue/epilogue sections, which narrate the story line (though I will also include relevant sections from the poetic dialogues). The story line seems plain and straightforward, simply told, especially in comparison to the highly sophisticated poetic language of the core of the book (chapters 3-42:6). However, under scrutiny, the prosaic narration is ambiguous and ambivalent enough to leave some doubt whether the catastrophes suffered by Job (and his wife), included the loss of his children.

In this study I will employ philological and linguistic examination of the relevant texts. I will review and compare various English translations of the relevant texts. I will make a contextual comparison to a similar biblical account, the Akedah story, which involves a divine trial of a protagonist and his son.

In my thesis I will challenge the almost universally accepted narrative assumption that Job's children died as part of a heavenly wager. If I can demonstrate a reasonable doubt that Job's miseries include bereavement, then it may have an impact on issues, such as theology and theodicy.

I will claim that Job's misfortunes amount to only wealth and a non-fatal disease. [i]The book of Job therefore, needs to be reevaluated in terms of the phenomenon of *Job*, the righteous sufferer who maintains unconditional faith in God.

I can then argue that the well-ingrained perception that Job as the archetype of the righteous sufferer includes bereavement, is only implied in the Biblical text. This view, though reinforced and strengthened by numerous translations, commentaries and interpretations, will not seem conclusively and explicitly supported by the text itself.

I can then show that the author of Job intentionally avoids a straight forward telling of the worst affliction, the death of Job's children. In fact, the text would not seem to establish that a reliable test of Job's faithfulness requires his stoic acceptance of the death of his innocent children. The reader or hearer of the story ought not conclude that bereavement is part of a divine test, at least not from the Book of Job.

Finally, I will consider the relevance of my conclusion that Job's children did not die, on the content and message of the Book of Job.

Introduction

The subject of this study centers on Job's children, marginal characters whose fate seemed to be sealed by tradition and contemporary readings alike. It is well established among critics of *Job* that the children of Job died as part of the series of tragedies that befell him almost simultaneously, and were restored to Job, "rewarded," at the end of the story.

My goal in this study is to challenge this assumption and to argue that the children of Job did not die. The biblical text does not explicitly state their deaths nor does the book convey a sense of bereavement.

In order to substantiate my argument I will examine the relevant text with an emphasis on the philological and linguistic aspects. Chapter One will focus mainly on the pshat[1] reading of the text both in the frame prosaic narrative (1-2) and the poetic section (42:7-17). To illuminate Job's saga, I will compare it to the Akedah story, which explores a similar theme.

In Chapter Two I will go on to issues that dominate the main poetic section of the book, and how they bear on my thesis. In particular I note Job's reaction to his reversal of fortune. I will review Job's complaints and pay closer attention to what makes him suffer the most. The purpose thereof is to see how the children's fate affects his sufferings. A brief examination of God and His response to Job will follow. The question in mind is whether there are any references, direct or implied in God's response to the

[1] There are four methods to expound the Torah, known by their acronym PaRDeS. Pshat is the straightforward; direct meaning of the text, Remez- allusions, Drash-homileties and Sod-mysticism. Theologians refer to Pshat as "narrative theology," the use of stories and tales to teach moral messages.

particular predicaments of Job as delineated in the background narration. Job's reaction and God's response would either sustain or disprove my initial claim. I will discuss how God fares in the story, and pose the question whether the God of Job would allow the death of innocent children to be part of a divine testing.

In Chapter Three I will review some traditional and contemporary understanding of the message of *Job*, and consider the impact of my thesis on the interpretation of the story. The emphasis would be on what has Job, the innocent sufferer, symbolized to generations of readers and how this study may affect his traditional role. In addition, the issue of theology that may surface following the argument of this thesis would be explored.

Chapter 1: Philological and linguistic examination of the relevant texts

The reading of Job has been obfuscated by layers of interpretations and Midrashim. Common to most interpretations is the assumption that Job was stripped of his livestock along with his children. My goal is to return to the pshat, namely the simplest reading of the text and expose the story as it is written in the canonized text.[2]

In this chapter I will analyze the relevant verses that allude directly or indirectly to Job's children. This literal examination will focus mainly on the philological and linguistic structure of these verses.

The existence of the children at the beginning and at the end of the story

The story begins by delineating the protagonist, Job, and his scrupulous character: "blameless and upright, and one who feared God and turned away from evil." (1:1). The second verse introduces the children: ויולדו־לו שבעה בנים ושלוש בנות. The Literal translation renders: "And there were born to him seven sons and three daughters."[3] The story explicitly says that seven sons and three daughters *were born* to Job. The children are his own flesh and blood.

There are only four more occurrences in which the biblical author chooses the verb "to be born" in this conjugation (nipha'al plural) to introduce birth of children.[4] A more

[2] See note 1.

[3] The verb "born" was maintained in New American Standard Bible (NASB), King James Version (KJV), New King James Version (NKJV), and Young's Literal Translation (YLT), <http://www.biblegateway.com>. Revised Standard Bible (RSV), <http://www.hti.umich.edu/r/rsv/>. This is not an all- inclusive list.

[4] 2 Sam 14:27: "To Absalom were born three sons and one daughter, named Tamar, who was a beautiful woman." 2 Sam 3:2: "Sons were born to David in Hebron: his firstborn was Amnon, to Ahinoam of

common usage indicating possession in general which may include children is: "he/she had" (ויהי).[5] In the present example (1:2), the narrator distinguishes the existence of Job's children from his other possessions by using the verb ויהי (and he had) in the following verse (1:3) to describe Job's livestock and household possessions.

However, some translations ignore the difference in meaning between the verb "to be born" (ויולדו) in verse 2 and "to have" (ויהי) in verse 3, rendering: "He *had* seven sons and three daughters."[6] This alteration overlooks the linguistic nuance chosen by the author to differentiate between "ownership" of children and property.

The verb ויהי is a common biblical verb, which among other things signifies a statement of existence, a fact or possession. It does not specify the way a fact came to be. It is a customary formula with which a biblical narrative begins: "and it came to pass that," or "and there was."

"To be born", on the other hand, is used when the biblical author conveys some importance in the familial connection between the particular protagonist and his offspring. The prologue of *Job* contains this formula ויהי five times (1:2, 5, 6, 13; 2:1) and twice in the epilogue (42:12, 13) yet, the chosen verb to introduce Job's sons and daughters is not ויהי but ויולדו.

The third verse of *Job* describes Job's wealth: "His possessions (ויהי) were seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she-asses, and a very great household; so that this man was (ויהי) the greatest of

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Jezreel." 2 Sam 5:13: "David took additional concubines and wives from Jerusalem after his coming from Hebron, and more sons and daughters were born to David." Gen. 10:1: "These are the descendants of the sons of Noah: Shem, Ham, and Japhet, and sons were born to them after the Flood."
However, the verb ילד, to beget, to bear is common in the active conjugation, especially in the genealogies.

[5] For example, Judges 12:14; 10:4; 12:9. 2 Sam 1:2. Ex. 2:10. Ch. 7:15.

[6] For example New International Version (NIV), New Living Translation (NLT). <http://www.biblegateway.com>.

all the children of the east." The deviation from the general formula of possession ויהי to the specific verb ויולדו emphasizes that the children are not merely regarded as Job's possession but carry a future role in the biblical story much as Amnon and Tamar, Shem, Ham and Japhet, and the children of David. In each of these instances the verb ויולדו signifies future life.

In the case of Noah, the children carry on the future of the people borne after the flood. In the stories of King David, children pave the way for King David's heir, the one who would carry on David's dynasty. The significance of the difference between these two verbs becomes even clearer when compared to the epilogue in Job (42:13).

The epilogue of the story sets forth the restoration of Job's losses. Chapter 42 verse 13 says: "ויהי־לו שבעה בנים ושלוש בנות." The literal translation renders: "And he *had* seven sons and three daughters." It is interesting to note that English translations do not change the verb "to have", some even add the word "also" to read: "He had also seven sons and three daughters."[7]

The verb ויהי, "to have" is used to describe both the restoration of his livestock (42:12), and his children (42:13). There is no repetition of the birth of children, as one may expect after the death of the first set of children. Actually, if the usage of the verbs would be reversed, namely, in the beginning Job would have had (ויהי) seven sons and three daughters, and at the end seven sons and three daughters would have been borne to him (ויולדו), then the claim for the deaths of the children could be justified. But this not being the case indicates that only one birth of children occurred (1:2) and their existence

[7] See KJV, NKJV, RSV, American Standard Version (ASV), NIV. <http://www.biblegateway.com>.

is recorded again at the end (42:13). While the restoration of the livestock doubled in size, the number of children remained the same.

An unusual form of the word for "seven", שבענה is used only here (42:13) leading some scholars to interpret it as a dual form, indicating that Job's second family included fourteen sons. Thus Gordis translates the Hebrew word שבענה in v. 42:13 as fourteen. Gordis suggests, in light of the doubling of all Job's possessions, that the word שבענה is a duplication of seven. So says the Targum. Gordis hypothesizes that since the daughters were "a source of perpetual worry and concern," their number remain the same but they are endowed with physical attractiveness and real estate.[8] However, the prevailing opinion concludes that the number of the sons did not change and the word שבענה is an irregular form of the numerical seven.[9] The sameness of the number of the sons and daughters especially in comparison to the doubling of the livestock strengthens my hypothesis that the story speaks of the same seven sons and three daughters of the prologue.

In sum, the use of the verb "to have" at the end of the story: "He had seven sons and three daughters" (42:13) in contrast to the announcement of their birth at the beginning of the story (1:2) is the first evidence suggesting that the children were born before the tragic events, survived it, and are back with their father at the end. The assertion that a new set of children was born to reward Job for the evil done to him would require a reversal of descriptions.

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[8] Gordis, R., *The Book of Job: Commentary, New Translation, and Special Studies*. The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, New York, 1978. 497-98.

[9] Habel, N. C., *The Book of Job: A Commentary*, OTL; Westminster Press: Philadelphia, 1985. p. 577. So is Sarna, M. N., "Epic Substratum in the Prose of Job," *JBL* 76, 1957. p.18 as mentioned in Habel, N.C., ibid.

The sequences of events concerning the children (1:13-19)

The story begins with the following narrative (1:1-3):

1. Job's character
2. The birth of seven sons and three daughters
3. A list of his livestock possessions:

   Seven thousand sheep

   Three thousand camels

   Five hundred pairs of cattle

   Five hundred she-asses

   Great multiple of servants.

The epilogue narrates the restoration in the following order (42:12-14):

1. A list of livestock possessions:

   Fourteen thousand sheep

   Six thousand camels

   One thousand pairs of cattle

   One thousand she-asses

2. Seven sons and three daughters.

The epilogue reverses the order of the prologue. The children are mentioned *after* the restoration of the livestock. The livestock are listed in the exact same order as in the beginning and their number is doubled. The servants are excluded from the restoration list all together.

The order of the restoration in the epilogue parallels the original property listed in the epilogue. The epilogue mentions the duplication of the initial livestock. The number of children remains the same. It may follow that Job was given twice what he has lost which does not include the children. It is possible that the "original" children reappear to remove any doubts as to their deaths and to enable the continuance of the family line (42:16). The servants who reportedly died at each of the four catastrophes may not have been replaced and do not reappear at the end of the story. Job's wife is absent as well. The reason for her absence could only be speculation. Maybe she has always been by his side. After all someone had to feed and care for him and his friends, thus the author did not find it necessary to mention her obvious presence.[10]

In sum, the comparison of the two different narrations in the prologue and in the epilogue adds to the argument under discussion. The children are born once, disappear from the scene as does their mother (except for a short appearance), while Job remains alone with his friends and God. The family gathers again in the epilogue. Had the author wanted to indicate that new children were born to Job, he could have repeated the verb "to be born" to distinguish them from the livestock. But he chooses to use the verb ויהי for both the livestock and the children. In addition, in the end Job first gains twice as much of his livestock. Then his grown up seven sons and three beautiful daughters who are old enough to inherit among their brothers, are back. The order of the restoration which details the doubling of his livestock first and then the children may suggest that the author does not assign particular importance to the revival of the children because he simply did not report on their deaths.

[10] Besides, women in general do not play a significant role in many biblical stories. We are not told, for example, what was Sarah's role in the binding of her son.

The calamities (1:13-19)

In seven verses four disasters have fallen upon Job. The report of each disaster shares a common structure. The messenger arrives, briefly announces what had happened and declares that he is the only survivor to convey the message. The first describes the Sabeans's attack that took the cattle and the she-asses, and struck the 'nearim' by sword (1:13-15). A fire of God causes the second one. It falls from heaven, burns the sheep and consumes the 'nearim' (1:16). The third catastrophe involves the Chaldeans who capture the camels and strike the 'nearim' by sword (1:17). The fourth one happens while Job's sons and daughters are feasting at the home of the eldest son, and a great wind comes from over the wilderness, touches the house, which falls on the 'nearim', who then die. (1:18-19).

The disasters are reported in the following order:

1. The cattle of which Job had five hundred (1:3), and the she-asses, of which he also had five hundred, and the servants.
2. The sheep, of which Job had seven thousand and the servants.
3. The camels, of which he had three thousand, and the servants.
4. The house of the eldest son and the servants.

The losses of Job are outlined in the following order:

List of flocks	Sequence of misfortunes
Sheep	cattle and she-asses, nearim
Camels	sheep, nearim
Pairs of cattle	Camels, nearim
She-asses	house of elder son, nearim

The above outline shows that the sequence of the misfortunes does not parallel the list of flocks mentioned at the opening of the story (sheep, camels, pairs of cattle, she-asses). The calamities seem to have happened arbitrarily and not in a particular pattern. The common denominator in the four events is the death of the servants (nearim). The arbitrary order of disasters, especially in contrast to the parallel between the list of livestock (1:3) and their restoration (42:12), may indicate that the children bear no significant importance in the sum of all the calamities. The conjecture therefore is that they are not part of the misfortunes that fall upon Job.

Nearim

The word 'nearim' appears in the four accounts of the tragic events (1:15, 16, 17, 19). According to BDB[11] the word means boys, young lads, or servants. Since the same word has been used in the four sequential scenes it is reasonable to apply a consistent meaning for all of them. Yet, many of the translations distinguish between the 'nearim' in the first three accounts and the 'nearim' in the fourth and last account. Many translations render

[11] Brown, F., Driver, S., Briggs C .*The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon: With an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic.* (Hendrickson Publishers: Massachusetts, 1999), 654-55.

the first three 'nearim' as servants and the last one as 'young men' or 'young people.'[12] To apply a different translation to the same word (nearim) in a consistent formula of conveyance of bad tidings is to insert an interpretation to the written words. Such interpretation becomes part of the English canon and a fact that may be inaccurate is forever rooted in the story. The scholars are aware that the word 'nearim' is used for the four events. However, the common convention is that Job's children were killed, thus 'nearim' ought to include the sons and daughters.

In addition there is a conspicuous omission of a direct announcement of the death of the children, or in more appropriate words, the sons and the daughters, especially since the sons and the daughters of Job are identified several times in the short passage that precedes their death (1:2, 4, 5, 13, 18). To simply include the sons and daughters with the 'nearim' when the worst evil happens to them must raise some doubts as to the actual content of the message. After all, the fourth messenger fails to announce the death of Job's sons and daughters.

The recounting of the four misfortunes is constructed in a similar formula: the messenger boy arrives, the disaster is related briefly, and the messenger declares he is the sole survivor.[13] The formulaic structure is precise and brief. Yet, surprisingly, the last

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[12] See ArtScroll, the Stone Edition, Darby, ASV, NASB and KJV. Young Literal Translation (YLT) however, translates consistently the word 'nearim' as 'young men' in all four scenes. Gordis, R., (*The Book of Job*, 4-6), translates the נערים in v. 1:15 as slave boys; the נערים in vs. 1: 16, 17 as slaves, and the last one, in v. 19 as young people. Habel, N.C., (*The Book of Job*, 76-78) consistently translates 'nearim' as 'boys' in the complete account of the bad tidings in order to preserve, as he notes, the literary effect though, he adds, the sense is probably "servants" in the first three catastrophes. Andersen, F.I., *Job: An Introduction and Commentary*. TOTC; Inter-Varsity Press: London, 1976, p. 87, explains the use of the same term 'nearim' in the four reports of calamities cautiously: "perhaps here it includes Job's children, but more likely their death is implied by the circumstances that only the messenger survived."

[13] According to Tur Sinai, N.H., (*The Book of Job*, 16) the phrase "-and I only am escaped alone to tell thee" is a literary devise, for without it there will be no one to tell Job and the reader of what happened.

report, which is almost universally taken as the proof for the children's death, is not actually stated. There is a deviation from the content of the formula.

In sum, the deviation from the formula, the omission of the tragic death of the children, the reference to them as the 'nearim,' undistinguishable from the 'nearim' in the previous three reports in contrast to the consistent reference to them as the sons and daughters of Job, cast doubt on their actual deaths.

Some scholars and commentators struggle to offer reasonable explanations for the ambiguity in the fourth message. Habel explains the omission of the report of the death of Job's sons and daughters as a literary tool, which heightens the sense of the tragic: "they are lost even in the messenger's report," he says.[14]

Following this line of thought, one may notice that they are lost throughout the book, since little reference is made to them in the poetic section. To put so much emphasis on the sons and daughters in the short prologue and epilogue, to tell of their feasts, of their father's concern for them, of the daughters' striking beauty and of their share in their brother's inheritance and then simply "lose" them as a literary tool in order to enhance the tragic element may seem inconsistent with the spirit and language of the book, especially with its prosaic part. What could have been more tragic than a brief announcement to their caring father that his sons and daughters are buried under the house?

Clines comments that the use of the term 'nearim' consistently throughout the four bad tidings was done for the sake of Job's children. He asserts that "in this scene [the fourth and last one] it is the children of Job who are meant; on looking back over the

[14] Habel, N.C., (*The Book of Job*. 93). Habel however, like most scholars does not doubt the children's death.

passage, we realize that it is for the sake of this announcement that the term nearim has been used throughout. These are the nearim that really matter, though no doubt their attendant servants also have died."[15] This begs the question. The children of Job, in looking back over the text, are referred to as Job's sons and daughters. Why then would the narrator refer to them in this scene as nearim?

Tur Sinai justifies the use of the same term nearim in order to preclude the separate mention of the children for reasons of brevity.[16] Yet, the fourth scene is the longest one and an addition of one word: "it collapsed upon [them] and the servants" would not have lengthened the message enough to justify the exclusion of the children.

Andersen explains the use of the same term nearim for the children cautiously: "perhaps it includes Job's children, but more likely their death is implied by the circumstances that only the messenger survived."[17] Andersen correctly raises doubts as to the certainty of the children's death but concludes based on circumstances that they have indeed died. In other words, their death is death by implication. It seems that this death by implication became an integral and undisputed fact in the history of the hermeneutics on *Job*.

Yet how could such a serious matter only be implied or conjectured? The most one could read into *Job* is an implied death, and an implied death of innocent children by the hands of God ought to have been such an important issue that recounting it only implicitly seems unlikely. Therefore, it is questionable whether Job's children died.

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[15] Clines, J.A.D., *Job 1-20.* Word Biblical Commentary, VOL. 17. Word Books: Dallas, 1989. p 33.
[16] Tur Sinai, N.H., *The Book of Job*, 19.

[17] Andersen, F. I. *Job.* 87.

Job's children are important characters in the frame story. They are introduced as his sons and daughters in the second verse, immediately after the introduction of Job. Their importance in Job's life is evident early on when the author tells us how deeply concerned Job is on their behalf. He rises early in the morning after their festivities to offer sacrifices for them. To omit their familial relations to Job when informing him of their death and include them in the generic term 'nearim' seems to me inconsistent and incongruous with the context and the literary structure of the story.

Where are the daughters?

The term 'nearim' has been used in the bible interchangeably between servants, young men, and children. Thus, if we adopt a different meaning for 'nearim' in the four messages, or if we render 'nearim' consistently as 'young men,' we still have to ask if the daughters are included in the masculine plural of the term 'nearim?' Since the children of Job are identified by gender, one may wonder why the writer would deviate from the gender classification and include the daughters with the sons when their death is announced.

Rashi, who reads 'nearim' in the fourth account as "the youths" meaning the sons, says that it is unnecessary to mention the daughters. He does not provide an explanation, but one can surmise his comment reflects a conventional patriarchal attitude. Mezudath David adds that since women are weaker than men, it is obvious that they also died.[18] Thus the same patronizing attitude can be detected in Mezudath David.

[18] Rosenberg A. J., *Miqraot Gedolot. Job: A New Translation*, The Judaica Press: New York, 1995, p. 8.

We find a clear distinction between 'nearim' and 'nearot' in the book of Ruth (2:21-23). We could not, therefore, assume prima faci that the 'nearim' of Job 1:19 includes the daughters, especially in light of the repetitious use of the term "sons and daughters." At the very least, we may deduce that the author of Job deliberately chooses to announce the death of the children in a very ambiguous style, enough to cast some doubt on their actual death.

The epilogue continues where the prologue ends. The story of the same characters resumes. The gender identification continues. In the epilogue we learn that Job gave his three daughters inheritance with their brothers (42:15). In the prologue it is told that the brothers own houses and the sisters are invited to their houses (1:4). The connection between the prologue and the epilogue regarding the daughters who presumably do not own homes at the beginning but end up as owners of property at the end seems to indicate that the story is relaying facts concerning the same daughters. The concern this father exhibits for his daughters is contrary to the prevailing custom of his time.[19] It seems that in his eyes sons and daughters are equal, and now that he gained them back he shows a non-discriminatory attitude toward his children.

We cannot ignore the importance of the daughters and simply say that their fate is linguistically included with the sons. After all, the finale of such an enormous literary masterpiece ends with a highly specific narration of the three daughters, their names, their exceptional beauty and their inheritance. It is an enigma why the author chose to conclude *Job* on such note, but it must point to the fact that the daughters are important characters in their own right. The daughters are as important as the sons in *Job* and to

[19] In Israel, a daughter would only inherit the property of her father if there was no male heir (Num. 27:1-8).

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simply include them with the sons, or more so with 'nearim' seems incongruous to the spirit and language of the book.

Job's mourning (1:20)

Five activities expressed in five verbs (1:20) describe what Job did immediately after hearing the bad tidings. He got up (ויקם), rent his coat (ויקרע), shaved his head (ויגז), fell on the ground (ויפול ארצה) and prostrated himself (וישתחו). Job's immediate reaction was the customary gesture of expressing grief, not reserved exclusively for personal bereavement. Ritual acts of mourning performed as a reaction to general grief rather than to the death of a beloved one are dispersed throughout the Bible:

Joshua tore his garments and fell on his face to the ground before God's Ark upon hearing that Israelite force was defeated at the Ai. Along with the elders, he placed dirt upon his head (Joshua 7:4-6). Joshua performed a rite of mourning following a military defeat.

Mordechai laments the Persian edict to kill his people by tearing his cloths and donning sackcloth and ashes (Esther 4:1). Mordechai performs a ritual of mourning following a political decree.

Ezra, upon his return from exile, hears from the Jewish officials that the people of Israel have not kept themselves apart from the other people of the land. They have adopted their customs, marrying their women and intermingling with them. In response, he tore his garment and his cloak, tore his hair and beard and sat down in silence (Ezra 9: 3). Ezra's mourning ritual does not follow a death of a beloved. It is a public ritual act of grief over a socio-politico-religio situation.

Hence, the account of Job's mourning actions following the hearing of bad news does not serve as a definite indication of the death of his children. The author is consistent with the ambiguous narration of events. The omission of the verb "to mourn" (להתאבל)[20] or "lament" (להספיד)[21] adds to the uncertainty of personal mourning over loved ones. Job's mourning actions are reduced to very few. There is no donning sackcloth, no scattering dust, no lamentation, no weeping, and no fasting. Job's words are devoid of lament: "Naked did I emerge from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there. God has given and God has taken away, blessed be the name of God" (1:21).

So obvious though was the assumption that Job became a bereaved father that Jewish mourning customs were derived from the book of Job. The conduct of the friends, sitting on ground for seven days in silence (2:13), became ritualized in the laws of mourning in rabbinic Judaism.[22] Those mourning rituals only sustain the well rooted, but not necessarily correct, assumption that Job's children died.

Job's wife (2:9)

Job's wife appears only once in the whole book (2:9). She is silent after the series of catastrophes. Only when her husband himself is afflicted with an illness, does she react. One may wonder why the wife remains silent after the sudden death of her children, yet reacts when Job becomes ill. We are not always privileged to hear the female voice in Biblical narratives, but here the author chooses to tell us how Job's wife reacts. Since she is inserted in the narration, it would have made, perhaps, more literary sense to introduce

[20] See for example Gen. 37:34 when Jacob mourns over the presumed death of his beloved son Joseph.
[21] See for example 2 Sam 1:11 when King David laments the death of Saul and Jonathan.

[22] B.T. Moed Katan 28b, Shabbath 32a.

Job's wife after the occurrence of the worst calamity i.e., the death of her children. Persumbly, when suffering has reached its peak, the wife would suggest cursing God and die. Wouldn't the death of her children pose a greater tragedy than the non-lethal, bodily illness of her husband? However, if the children have not died, then the narration follows a logical line of action: Job lost his flocks and herds, the house of the eldest son was destroyed, and Job became ill. Now it is the time for the wife to interfere. Until she speaks, only material disasters occurred. Once her husband is afflicted personally, she offers her advice. It may be reasonable to assume that if she appears only once in the whole book to offer such a drastic action, the timing of her appearance is significant. When the suffering becomes intolerable she prefers death. Her one time appearance and its timing strengthens my hypothesis that the gravest pain Job suffered is his own physical health, not the death of his children.

The Septuagint, sensitive to the feeling of the wife and mother, expands considerably on her reaction in which she testifies to the death of her children.

> When a long time has passed, his wife says to him: How long will you endure, saying, Behold I will wait yet for a little time, looking for the hope of my salvation? For, behold, the memory of you has been blotted out from the earth, the sons and daughters, my travail and pain of my womb, whom with toil I reared for nothing. And yet you yourself sit in the decay of worms, passing the nights under the open sky, while I am a wanderer and a servant, from place to place and from house to house, waiting until the sun goes down, so that I may rest upon my toil and from the pains that now grip me. Now say some word against the Lord and die.[23]

[23] As quoted in Clines, J.A.D., (*Job 1-20, 53*), who notes that the Septuagint inserted this long speech probably not because it was in its Hebrew original but as a midrashic tendency to expand on minor characters and to elaborate on short speeches.

Such extension is repeated with some alteration in the pseudepigraphical *Testament of Job.*[24] Job's wife's speech refers clearly to the death of the children, an occurrence not explicitly present in the Hebrew masoretic text.

Job's harsh response to his wife raises some questions. The perfect and righteous man shows no compassion to his wife's suffering. If their children had died, the wife must be suffering as much as her husband, yet Job shows no compassion to her pain and grief. His response to her is insensitive and strong: You talk as one of the "foolish women" (נבלות), he rebukes her. He casts her as a wicked, foolish woman. In the only exchange between husband and wife in this story, Job does not emerge the wholesome righteous person he attests to be. Job, who seeks compassion and consolation from his friends and rebukes them for failing to do so, does not follow suit with his own wife.

The commentators tend to draw the nameless wife as the earthly equivalent of Satan and ignore, or even praise, the insensitive response of Job to his wife. This seemingly uncharacteristic response of Job suggests that the wife is not a bereaved parent, but a woman who lost her wealth and status, sees her husband struck with illness and thus suggests cursing God.[25]

Her suggestion did indeed trigger harsh comments on her character. Many early and modern commentators cast her in the role of "devil's assistant." Calvin called her "Satan's tool," and Thomas Aquinas thought that the Satan spared her on purpose so she

[24] The testament of Job exists in two Greek versions, both rediscovered in the nineteenth century. There is no scholarly agreement on the book's date or the author. However it is clear that its author was familiar with the Septuagint, and rabbinic Midrashim.

[25] The word ברך occurs several times in the prologue (1:5, 10, 11, 2:22, 6, 9), sometimes clearly with its usual meaning, "to bless", sometimes almost certainly with the opposite meaning, as a euphemism, "to curse." In light of this double meaning we can look at Mrs. Job's words not in the conventional way, namely "curse God and die," but as a suggestion to remain faithful "bless God, anyhow you are going to die." Or, as a mocking; "even at your condition you continue to bless God." In the latter two cases her words are not as harsh and blasphemous as the traditional renderings claim.

could be used against Job.[26] The rabbis compare Job's wife to Eve, the temptress woman, but praise Job who unlike Adam did not accept his wife's advice.[27] Even modern feminist critics ignore the tenor of Job's participation in the short dialogue between husband and wife. Rather, they examine *her* words to suggest that she encourages Job to grow spiritually and protest to God, something, they point out, Job is indeed doing.[28]

It is common to depict Job as the morally superior character who corrects his wife's understanding. Job's strong reaction may have set the tone for her negative evaluation by interpreters. Yet her side is totally ignored, not only by the author and the commentators, but also by Job himself. Rather than judge her, maybe we should judge Job. If indeed the afflictions enumerated in 1:14-17 as traditionally interpreted happened, shouldn't she bear as much pain as her husband? Shouldn't Job the righteous be more compassionate? Shouldn't he bestow the same compassion upon her he expects from his friends? The commentators however, choose to condemn her and praise Job.

Job by his own account is a person who takes pride in alleviating the distress of the poor and the weak: "For I would rescue a pauper from [his] wailing and an orphan who had no one to help him. The blessings of the forlorn would be upon me; and I would bring joyous song to a widow's heart. I was eyes to the blind and feet to the lame. I was a father to the destitute; if I was ignorant of their grievance I would investigate" (29:12-16). Where is this person when his own wife needs him? Where is he when she is in great distress?

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[26] See Clines, J.A.D., (*Job 1-20,* 51).
[27] Midrash Gen. Rab. 19:12.
[28] See for example, Newsome, C.A., "Job" in C.A. Newsome and S. H. Ringe (eds.), *The Women's Bible Commentary.* Westminster/John Knox Press: Louisville, KY, 1992, pp. 131-32 and Pardes, I. *Countertraditions in the Bible: A Feminist Approach.* Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA, 1992, pp. 145-151.

Job's humiliating treatment of his wife could not be simply brushed off as a typical biblical patriarchal superiority toward women since we know that when his well being was reestablished Job named his daughters and gave them their inheritance among their brothers (42:16). Such an act is probably exceptional in his time. That their names and inheritance are recorded, and almost close the cycle of the story, can only indicate how important the daughters are and how dear and special they are to their father. Such action undermines patriarchal conventions.[29]

In sum, the purpose of the above analysis of the prosaic text is to show that the almost unanimous notion that Job's sons and daughters have died is not explicitly supported by the written text. On the contrary, the text leans toward the conclusion that Job did not lose his children permanently. In the following sections I will examine the verses in the poetic text that may lend further support for my claim.

Bildad's speech (8:4-6)

Throughout the poetic core of *Job* little reference is made to Job's children. It can be found only in Bildad's first response to Job (8:4), Job's response to Bildad (19:17), and in Job's soliloquy (29:5).

Bildad, who endorses the doctrine of retribution, constructs his arguments in a conditional form (8:4-6): "If your sons sinned against Him, then He delivered them into the hand of their transgression." (8:4). The conditional structure of Bildad's speech throws into question the actuality of the events he recounts. If your sons sinned, he tells Job, then they deserve to be cast away, i.e., death according to most commentators. But

[29] Pardes, I., (*Countertraditions in the Bible,* 153) notes that only in *Job* a father names his daughters, an act that accentuate their importance.

Bildad could not have known if the children have sinned or even if they were dead. And as Coogan mentions in his article on Job's children, the readers know from the prologue that the children's deaths are not a result of their sins and have nothing to do with their guilt. In fact, adds Coogan, Job had offered sacrifice to purify his sons and daughters from any sin they might have commited.[30]

Similarly, Bildad doubts Job's righteousness: "If you are pure and upright, then He will watch over you, and your righteous abode will be in peace" (8:6). In other words, if Job is innocent, says Bildad, he should not suffer. But the readers know that Job *is* innocent and does suffer, thus Bildad's conjuncture is wrong. He may be wrong in his conjuncture the children sinned and died. Bildad does not know the background of Job's misfortunes. He can only speculate based on his preconceived belief in reward and punishment: If sin was committed, death will follow. If good deeds will be done, a reward will be given. Bildad does not state outright: "your children have died,"[31] rather: "he sends them away (וישלחם) in the hands of their own transgression." Bildad talks about sending them away, לשלח. That may explain their absence from the story until the end. They have not died, they were sent away to be far from their father and to aggravate his profound feelings of alienation and estrangement, as he so bitterly expresses in his speeches.

The grammatical structure of these conditional clauses is altered or deleted by some translators.[32] Gordis argues that the particle אם should not be rendered in all three verses

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[30] Coogan, M. D., "Job's Children" *Lingering over Words: Studies in Ancient Near Eastern Literature in Honor of William L. Moran*. Ed. by Abusch, T., [et al]. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990. p. 140.

[31] Contrary to Clines J.A.D., (*Job 1-20*, 202) who maintains that "in v 4, there is no question but that Job's sons and daughters are dead, so the 'if' introduces a reason rather than a hypothesis."

[32] See for example Clines, J.A.D., (*Job 1-20*, 197); Gordis, R. (*The Book of Job*, 86). New International Version and the ArtScroll Stone Edition convert the 'if' to 'when'; New Living Translation affirmatively says: "Your children obviously sinned against him, so their punishment was well deserved."

(8:4-6) as 'if' since this results in overlooking the purpose of word repetition which endows the passage with power and greater interest.[33] Gordis further explains why he did not translate the word אם as 'if': "for there is nothing hypothetical about the destruction of Job's sons, and therefore, in Bildad's view, no doubt whatsoever about their sinfulness."[34] Gordis claims that the אם in v. 8:4 renders "indeed": "Indeed your sons have sinned and He has sent them away for their sins." But, if the reader initially does not interpret the fourth calamity as the death of the children, Bildad's intention may seem to state a hypothesis and not to proclaim actual facts. Moreover, sending the children away rather then killing them follow Job's declared sense of desertion and better explain their eventual return to their father's house.

A Similar conditional structure can be found in Job's protestations (31:7-34), a depiction of imaginary or hypothetical situations.[35] In vs. 31:7-8 Job says: "If my steps veered from the way and my heart went after my eyes...then may I sow אזרעה and another will eat, and צאצאי be uprooted." Job sets here an imaginary bad behavior, of which he insistently claims innocence, in order to invoke the most severe punishment i.e., the uprooting of his offspring, or simply, the death of his children. The conditional structure of Job's utterance attests to the fact that the speaker assumes for a moment as possible, that which he really rejects as inconceivable, in order to invoke the most severe punishment on himself, if it should prove to be the case.[36]

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[33] Gordis, R. (*The Book of Job*, 88). Habel, N.C., concurs with Gordis, R. that the initial 'im' is to have taken as emphatic, rather than a hypothetical particle. (Habel, N.C. *Book of Job*, 169).
[34] Gordis, R., (*The Book of Job*, 88).
[35] See BDB p. 49.
[36] This is how Kautzsch explains conditional sentences, which are introduced with the particle אם. (Kautzsch, E., *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*. 2nd English Edition, ed. By A. E. Cowley. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910. p. 495).

These verses (31:7-8) may be interpreted literally: זרע as an agriculture seed and צאצא as an earthly produce,[37] or metaphorically: זרע as human seed and צאצא as offspring.[38] The double meaning of this phrase adds to the ambiguity of the final fate of the children. The grammatical structure of these verses coupled with their double meaning provides additional support for my claim.

On a side note, Bildad refers to the sons, not the daughters. As mentioned above the omission of the daughters or their implied inclusion with "sons" is not consistent with the gender identification underlined at the beginning and the end of the story.[39]

Job's response to Bildad (19:17)

In Job's response to Bildad we find reference to his immediate family. Job laments his acute alienation (19:13-19):

יג אַחַי מֵעָלַי הִרְחִיק וְיֹדְעַי אַךְ־זָרוּ מִמֶּנִּי׃
יד חָדְלוּ קְרוֹבָי וּמְיַדָּעַי שְׁכֵחוּנִי׃
טו גָּרֵי בֵיתִי וְאַמְהוֹתַי לְזָר תְּחְשְׁבֵנִי נָכְרִי הָיִיתִי בְעֵינֵיהֶם׃
טז לְעַבְדִּי קָרָאתִי וְלֹא יַעֲנֶה בְּפִי אֶתְחַנַּן־לוֹ׃
יז רוּחִי זָרָה לְאִשְׁתִּי וְחַנֹּתִי לִבְנֵי בִטְנִי׃
יח גַּם־עֲוִילִים מָאֲסוּ בִי אָקוּמָה וַיְדַבְּרוּ־בִי׃
יט תִּעֲבוּנִי כָּל־מְתֵי סוֹדִי וְזֶה־אָהַבְתִּי וַיַּהְפְּכוּ־בִי׃

13. He has put my brethren far from me, and my acquaintances are wholly estranged from me.
14. My kinsfolk have failed, and my familiar friends have forgotten me.
15. They who dwell in my house, and my women servants, count me as a stranger: I am an alien in their sight.
16. I call my servant, and he gives me no answer; though I entreat him with my mouth.
17. My breath is repulsive to my wife,[40] and my cries[41] to my own children.

[37] For example ArtScroll, the Stone Edition. "Crops" in NIV, YLT, NASB
[38] See KJV, DARBY.
[39] Here, however, we have a complete different literary style and comparison between prose and poetry may not be appropriate.
[40] Common translation however the literal translation should be " my spirit is alien to my wife" (so is Habel, N.C., *The Book of Job*, 290) meaning, even my wife cannot understand me. This cry could be understood in light of the advice Job's wife gives him to which he strongly objects (2:9-19).

18. Yea, young children despise me; I arise, and they speak against me.
19. All my trusted friends abhor me: and they whom I love are turned against me.[42]

Job enumerates all the people that caused his ostracism. Among them he counts his wife and children. How are we to understand his plea to his own children in light of their death? Many interpretations have been offered. Some try to solve this tension by interpreting (and translating) the term בני בטני as 'brothers.'[43] Others imply reference to brothers.[44] The Ramban comments that Job refers to his own grandchildren.[45] Rashi says that בני בטני are those whom Job raised in his household like sons.[46] Mezudath David adds his own interpretation to explain that Job's breath is strange to his wife when he wishes to cohabit with her, although he appeals to her that he wishes to beget children.[47] It is hard to imagine that Job in his present physical and mental condition will have an inclination to cohabit with his wife. It appears that the contradiction between the prologue and this verse confused critics and lead to many imaginative interpretations. An attempt to harmonize between the conflicting facts created various rendering of the term בני בטני. The simple explanation that the children did *not* die has been completely avoided.

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[41] The verb חנותי comes from the root ח נ ן to show favor (BDB, 335). In the Piel conjugation it means to supplicate (see also Psa. 67:10).
[42] Koren Bible, 1989.
[43] For example NIV, Clines, J.A.D., (*Job 1-20,*. 428). BDB (106) gives the literal translation: "sons of my body" but adds that perhaps it should be "sons of my (mother's) womb." .
[44] For example, American Standard Version (ASV): "...the children of my own mother". Similarly, DARBY, YLT, Amplified (AMP). <http://www.biblegateway.com>
[45] Even though the story implies that the children were unmarried and there is no mentioning grandchildren at the beginning of the story. So is Clines, J.A.D., (*Job*, 449).
[46] מקראות גדולות
[47] מקראות גדולות

Clines, who is aware of this contradiction, mentions the scholars' various opinions: Duhm, Pope and Habel, says Clines, treat this strophic as poetic hyperbole.[48] Yet, Clines rejects their opinion saying, that nowhere in Job's words can one find a lapse between the prologue and the poetic allusion. Clines then adopts the solution "that the 'sons of my womb' are the sons born from the same womb as Job, i.e., his uterine brothers..."[49]

Gordis, faithful to his assumption that Job's children indeed died, translates the verse literally: "I am repulsive to my wife and loathsome to my own children"[50] but qualifies his translation by explaining that "the death of Job's children in the prologue is no objection to this interpretation, since the poet does not trouble to harmonize every detail of the prose tale with the poetry...This lack of concern with apparent 'contradiction' is a characteristic of Semitic literary composition important for an understanding of Job..."[51]

None of the interpretations to 'bnai bitni' seems satisfactory since no one takes this verse simply to admit that the children are alive. For lack of a better solution, Coogan says, "that we must still admit that there is a narrative flaw here."[52] "If the phrase 'sons of my belly' refers to Job's own children'" adds Coogan, "then here there is a visible seam, evidence of a less than satisfactory join of the originally independent framework and dialogues."[53]

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[48] Pope, M. H., agrees with Duhm, B., (*Das Buch Hiob*, 1897) that the poet is deliberately not consistent with the prose and adds that such utterance of being alienated from wife and children is some sort of cliché in a lament of this sort. (*Job: Introduction, Translation and Notes.* AB, 15; Doubleday: Garden City, New York: 1965. p. 132). Habel, N.C,. (*The Book of Job*,. 302) sees nothing unusual in the inclusion of one's children in a standard catalogue of all close friends and family.
[49] Clines, J.A.D.,(*Job 1-20*,. 448-449).
[50] Gordis, R., (*The Book of Job*, 196).
[51] Gordis, R., (202). Contrary to Clines.
[52] Coogan. M.D., "Job's Children" p. 142
[53] Coogan, 142.

On top of Job's list of those who alienate him are his brothers (19:13).[54] If we adopt the interpretation of בני בטני as 'brothers' why would he repeat it a few verses later? The content and structure of this poem rejects such repetition. There are parallels in the two cola of each verse. Brothers corresponds with his relatives; acquaintances with kinfolks. The dwellers of his house (presumably non-relative) are in line with the male and female servants. Job's wife corresponds with his offspring. The structure and content of this stanza rejects the interpretation of בני בטני as brothers. The words of Job indicate that his wife and children are alive, yet they ostracize him or cause him, along with the rest of the people, who crowded Job's past life, to feel profoundly alone.

The catalogue of people who distanced themselves from Job lacks any apparent hierarchy of special importance. The wife and children are listed after the servants and before a general clause of all those whom he loved. The presumed death of his children does not play a more considerable role in Job's feeling of isolation. When Job regains his stature, the ones who join him are all his brothers and sisters and all his former acquaintances (42:11), which are mentioned first as the ones who had ostracized him (19:13).[55] There is no corresponding return of the other people mentioned in Job's anguished speech of his alienation (19:14-19). The story does not record the return of the children and the wife to the house. We could speculate that either they were always there, or anticipated to be at the house as part of the family household. The servants are not mentioned since they all perished at the beginning of the story.

[54] Clines, J.A.D., (*Job 1-20*, 446) notes that the brothers in v 13 are not his blood brothers who, according to Clines, appear in v 17 as the "sons of my mother," but members of his "clan."

Job's soliloquy (29:5)

In this chapter Job longingly reminiscences about his former good days before being struck with misfortunes. The genre of this speech is that of a parable, mashal: "And Job continued declaring his parable, and said: If only I could be..."(29:1-2)

In verse 5 he mentions the 'nearim': בְּעוֹד שַׁדַּי עִמָּדִי סְבִיבוֹתַי נְעָרָי.

"When Shaddai was still with me, [when] my servants (נְעָרָי) surrounded me"

Does Job allude to his dead children?[56] The term Job uses is נְעָרָי, which may mean 'my young boys', 'my children'[57] or 'my servants'.[58] The same term נערים is repeated three verses later (8) and is contrasted with ישישים, old people.[59] Presumably, Job, who is unabashed and quite blatant in recounting his miseries would not have been satisfied with only alluding to the death of his children, but would rather cry out loud: *my sons and my daughters!* But here he employs the language of an impersonal parable. The 'neari,' נערי, my servants or young men, is a generic term and does not refer to his sons and daughters. Such generic rendering is consistent with נערים in verse 8, and with נערים in verses 1:15-19, thus renders 'young lads' and not a reference to his children.[60] The death of his servants, or נערים in the prologue (1:15-19) is not being disputed and here (29:5) Job misses their attendance around him. If he misses the servants so feverishly wouldn't he

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[55] The sisters though are not mentioned in 19:13.

[56] As Clines J.A.D., notes. (*Job 1-20,* 449). So is Tur Sinai, N.H., (*Job,* 410) who translates: "When my children were about me."

[57] So are Koren, KJV, Rashi (מקראות גדולות), Tur Sinai, N.H., (*The Book of Job,* 410) and Gordis, R., (*The Book of Job,* 314).

[58] So is The New English Bible, Oxford Study Edition. Oxford and Cambridge Universities Presses, (1970).

[59] רָאוּנִי נְעָרִים וְנֶחְבָּאוּ וְיִשִּׁישִׁים קָמוּ עָמָדוּ

[60] Habel, N.C., (*The Book of Job*, 409) indicates that this reference to "boys' is probably a biting reminder of the four groups of "boys" who died with each successive disaster in Job's first set of affliction (1:15, 16, 17, 19).

have cried out for the presence of his own children had they been dead? But, since, as I contend, the servants are the ones who perished and not the children, Job recalls the happy times when the servants, now dead, were around him. He is not refering in this parable to his children.

Job's restoration (42:10)

The idea that Job's children did not die but rather went to captivity and came back may be further ascertained from the narrator's description: "Now the Lord returned Job's captivity when he prayed for his friends, and the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before" (42:10).[61] The Hebrew verse renders: "ויהוה שב את שבית איוב". The ketiv version[62] uses the word 'shvit', שבית, derived from the root שבי, captivity. The qere version uses the word שבות, (shvut) derived from the root שוב , to return.

Hence, there are two possibilities of understanding this word: one as a return, the other as captivity. According to the ketiv version the children, along with the livestock and servants were returned from captivity, somewhere far away. Chacam notes two aggadic Midrashim who rely on the ketiv version of this verse.[63] One Midrash says that the people of Shvah and Casdim who took Job's property (1:15; 17), returned everything back to Job, and replaced the 'nearim,' servants whom they killed by other servants. Another Midrash goes further, saying that the same 'nearim' returned and they really were not killed. Also, continues this Midrash, nothing was stolen – the Satan mixed the world (ערבב את העולם), so people were just imagining these things had happened, when actually

[61] Miqraot Gedolot.
[62] Ketiv and Qere are a variance in the Masoretic text between "what is written" (Heb Ketiv) in the consonantal text and "what is read" (Heb Qere) according to the tradition of vocalization. (The Anchor Bible Dictionary, Vol 4, 1992. p. 24).

the 'nearim,' including Job's children along with the animals were wandering in a very far place, and now returned.[64] Yet most translations support the rendering of the qere version[65] and some critics render the idiom שוב שבות as a pun.[66] The qere version allows commentators to attest to the children's death. The idea that the children may have been captured did not win general support.

It should be noted that this idiom שוב שבות, occurs in the bible in regard to nations or groups of people in captivity.[67] Here is the only time that it refers to an individual. Perhaps its unique application to an individual case may support the rendering of the ketiv version to explain what had happened to the children and how come they returned safely rather than being replaced or resurrected.

In sum, the literal examination of the textual passages is not conclusive regarding the death of the children. It is quite clear that if they died, their deaths are reported ambiguously. Job talks as if his children are alive. His friends do not allude directly to the death of the children. Job's primary concern, weaved through his speeches, is his own fate rather than that of his children, yet he is depicted in the prologue as a dedicated and worried father. Could it be that the absence of lamentation, longing and angst with regard to his children is not Job's concern because he has not lost them? The number of references to his children in the main and long poetic section is remarkably small in

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[63] 1984 ,ירושלים, הוצאת הרב קוק, עמוס חכם, מפורש ע"י ,ספר איוב, p. 331 n. 108.

[64] Midrash Aggadah as mentioned by Amos Chacam in his interpretation to the book of Job. [Heb], 331 n. 108.

[65] For example RSV: "And the Lord restored the fortunes of Job, when he had prayed for his friends; and the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before."

[66] So Gordis, R., (*The Book of Job,* 495) who maintains that the idiom שוב שבות is no longer associated by scholars with the theme "bring back from captivity," but it is interpreted as using the same root for the verb and the noun; hence "lit. turn a turning, restore to the previous state."

[67] Am. 9:14; Hos. 6:11, Deut. 30:3; and more in different variations.

general and in particular when compared to the large number of references to his sons and daughters in the short prosaic section of the book.

In the following section I will examine the text in biblical context. There is one more story in the bible of a test (נסיון) initiated by God, which risks the life of a progeny.[68] That is the story of the Akedah (Gen. 22). In the next section I will compare the two accounts. By analogy, I will argue that the near-sacrifice of Isaac is not unlike the near-death of Job's children. In both cases the children's lives were at risk but in the final tale, they lived to beget future generations. Although the genre of the stories is completely different, the recounting of the offspring's fate is ambiguous in both stories.

Job and Abraham - Text in Context

The sages already noticed the affinity between Abraham and Job. They provided numerous comparisons.[69] It is interesting to note that in the succinct narrative of the binding of Isaac, the fate of Isaac remains ambivalent. Had the story stood on its own without the ensuing context, the reader could have raise questions as to the fate of Isaac. At the end of the Akedah Abraham descends all alone: "Abraham returned to his servants (nearim), and they stood up and went together to Beer-Sheba, and Abraham stayed at Beer-Sheba" (Gen. 22:19). The solitary return of Abraham from the Akedah stands in contrast to the ascent, as Abraham and his son Isaac walked together to the place of the

[68] The account of Jephtah and his daughter in Judges 11 is different since the sacrifice of the daughter was not initiated by God but by Jephtah.

[69] For rabbinic comparison of Abraham and Job see Baskin's *Pharaoh's Counsellors: Job, Jethro, and Balaam in Rabbinic and Patristic Tradition.* Brown Judaic Studies 47. Chico, California: Scholars Press, 1983, pp. 7-43. *Midrash Hayashar, Wa-Yera* 43b, narrates the story of Abraham's test like Job's, imposing the meeting of the divine council onto Gen. 22. See Ginzberg, "Satan Accuses Abraham", in *Legends*, I, pp. 271-74 and V, p. 248 n. 227. Cited in "Hoffer, V. "Illusion, Allusion, and Literary Artifice in the Frame Narrative of Job", *The Whirlwind: Essays on Job, Hermeneutics and Theology in Memory of Jane Morse.*

Akedah: "and the two of them went together" (וילכו שניהם יחדו) (Gen. 22: 7, 9). Only Abraham returned after successfully passing God's test. Isaac does not accompany him. What happened to him? Why was he left alone after such a traumatic event? Was he sacrificed? Was Isaac left bound on the altar? The story does not disclose any details about the fate of Isaac. An independent reading of the story, without connecting it to the larger context, may lead to the conclusion that Isaac was sacrificed and that Abraham passed the test with flying colors.[70] Immediately following the Akeda story we hear of Sarah's death (Gen. 23). Is it just a coincidence that Sarah died soon after the binding, or sacrificing of her son? It is only later in the story that we hear of Isaac again. Abraham, now old and well on in years (Gen. 24:1) plans to find him a wife so the blessing of future seed can be fulfilled (Gen. 24).

Following the story of the Akeda comes a list of births: "It came to pass that after these things, that Abraham was told, saying: Behold, Milcha too has borne children to Nahor, your brother: *Uz,* his firstborn; *Buz* his brother..." (Gen. 22: 20-22). The genealogy may link Abraham to Job, who will also be tested by God. Job was a man in the land of Uz, Elihu, the fourth friend of Job, is called the Buzite. These are two indications that may relate Job to Abraham and their similar horrific experience.

Other connections between Abraham and Job can be established by similar language. The idiom עפר ואפר, dust and ashes, which concludes Job's words (42:6) occurs between Abraham and God in their argument on the fate of Sodom's people whereby Abraham

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Eds. Cook, S.; Patton, C. L. and Watts, J., JSOTSup, 336: Sheffield Academic Press: Sheffield, 2001. p. 86 n. 5.

[70] See Gen. 22:16 where the angel of God calls Abraham for the second time saying: "-That because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only one, that I shall bless you..."(ArtScroll). What 'thing' (דבר) is he referring to?

uses the same idiom: " Behold, now, I desired to speak to my Lord although I am but dust and ashes." (Gen. 18: 27). The idiom עפר ואפר occurs only three times in the Bible: Once in the verse just mentioned and twice in Job (42:6; 30:19).

Abraham and Job are busy with the same activities but for opposite purposes. Abraham rises early in the morning to take his son to be sacrificed (Gen. 22:12). Job also rises early in the morning to offer a burnt offering so his children will be well protected (Job 1: 5). In both narrations God uses the same warning to the potential killers (Abraham and Satan): "do not sent forth your hand" (Job 1:12; Gen. 22:12). Or simply, do not kill! The description of Abraham after the trial of the Akeda as ירא אלוהים, (Gen. 22:12), a fearer of God is the same as that of Job (Job 1:1). This idiom is used exclusively for Abraham and Job.[71]

In addition to the literary similarities, the theological message of the two stories may be analogous. God tests the faithfulness of his already proven faithful servants. The reader is informed beforehand that it is only a test. The protagonists however, do not know this. God, awesome and cruel as he might appear, is nonetheless not a God who would allow Abraham or Job to sacrifice the lives of innocent children in order to test their faithfulness. In the Akedah God sends an angel to tell Abraham: "Do not send forth out your hand against the boy nor do anything to him (תשלח ידך אל הנער ואל תעש לו מאומה אל (Gen. 22: 12). In similar language God warns Satan "not to send forth your hand against his [person] [Job]" רק אליו אל תשלח ידך (Job. 1:12). Although in the former account the object is Isaac, and in the latter, it is Job, the idea may be that God is not interested in

[71] The idea of fearing God occurs in other places (Prov. 14:2, 24:21; Psa. 37:14) but not as a trait of a particular person. On the midwives (Exod. 1:21), who disobeyed the Egyptian king's decree to kill the first born Hebrew male, it was said that they "feared God." Note that the three times an attribute of "fearer of God" occurs in the bible it is linked to the fate of children, in particular, to the well being of children.

actual killing. The subliminal theological message in both stories could also be that God, remote and incomprehensible to man, opposes the sacrifice of children. Hence, we may infer from Isaac's fate that of Job's children. The children of the tested protagonists do not die, but instead they marry and beget future generations.

The main difference between the two stories lies in the different manifestation of faithfulness. In the story of the Akedah Abraham is silent, devoid of questions and arguments. Abraham obeys God's unreasonable and cruel command blindly and silently, in striking difference to his lengthy argument with God when the fate of Sodom is at stake (Gen. 18:23-33). Job, on the other hand manifests his relations to God through incessant questions and arguments. Job, unlike Abraham, demands a justification and explanation from God.

Tradition treats both Abraham and Job as archetypes of faithful servants of God. Even though each reacts totally different to the test, of which both are ignorant, the tradition puts them on equal footings. The two became a symbol of faith in God.

The two prominent test stories involve the children of the protagonists. In both stories the narrator is careful to conceal the fate of the children. God sends an angel to save Isaac at the last minute from the sword, and the messenger of the bad tidings in *Job* is careful to omit from his message the death of Job's children. In both accounts, we may say, death did not occur.

In sum, the comparison of the two test stories reveals literary similarities as well as theological affinity. From Isaac we may infer to the fate of Job's children, i.e., neither one died. The book of Job transforms the succinct narrative of the Akeda into a lengthy epic.

Chapter 2: Job's reaction, God reaction

Job's reaction

Job's reaction and the contents of his speeches might further challenge the certainty of the children's death. In reviewing the poetic dialogue section of the book, the silence of Job regarding the death of his sons and daughters is very loud. The silence of Job the father is even more striking when compared to Job in the prologue. Job is introduced in the first verses of the book (1:1-5) as a caring and protective father. When his sons and daughters finish their feast, he customarily would offer burnt offering in case his children sinned in *their heart* (1:5). Furthermore, prior to the burnt offerings, Job summoned his children ויקדשם, and sanctified them (1:5). It is not clear what sanctification means,[72] or if 'them' apply to the days of the feast or to the children. Assuming though that it applies to the children, it is then an exceptional deed as nowhere else in the bible does a man sanctify his children. Job takes extra caution for the sake of his children. The sons and daughters are important characters in the initial episode of the story. Of the first five verses of the introduction to Job, his children are mentioned in three of them (1:2, 4, 5). Yet, little reference is made to them in the main section of the book.

The absence of Job's grieving for his children throughout his long and painful monologues remains quite conspicuous. Children have died in biblical stories. Parents mourn and lament their deaths. But nowhere do we find Job crying or lamenting over his children. Job's lack of grief over his children's death is contrasted with the expressed grief of parents over the death of their adult children. Compare, for example, Jacob's

[72] Rashi interprets ויקדשם as preparation for the ritual as in Num. 11:18: "Prepare yourself (התקדשו) for tomorrow (Miqraot Gedolot).

deep grief over the *apparent* death of his son, Joseph: "Then Jacob rent his garments and placed sackcloth on his loins; he mourned for his son many days. All his sons and all his daughters arose to comfort him, but he refused to comfort himself, and said: 'For I will go down to the grave mourning for my son'" (Gen. 37:34-35). The bible tells of King David's mourning over his son Amnon (2 Sam 13:37). Though the biblical author narrates the evil and sinful side of Amnon's character (2 Sam 13:1-23) nonetheless, his father's mourning for him is profound and sincere. King David also cries in agony over the death of Absalom who died as a result of rebelling against his father: "My son Absalom! My son Absalom, my son Absalom! If only I could have died in your place! Absalom, my son, my son" (2 Sam 19:1-2).

These stories recount deep sorrow and grief over apparent death (Joseph), the death of a sinful son (Amnon) and the death of a rebellious son (Absalom). Hence, the silence of Job over his own children- neither sinful, nor rebellious is strikingly loud. Is it an intended literary omission, or does it suggest that no death occurred in Job's family?

Though Job is ignorant as to why he fell from grace, he is not ignorant as to who caused his afflictions: "God has given and God has taken away" (1:21) is his first reaction. Later on, he assiduously addresses his words directly to God. Yet, he never questions God regarding his innocent children. He does not even acknowledge their death. His deafening silence regarding his sons and daughters should be compared with his loud, vociferous demands and complaints to God regarding his own miserable state. Such a contrast suggests that his children are alive.

A great portion of Job's diatribes center on his feeling of alienation, including alienation from his wife and children (19:17). That may support the argument that the

children may have abandoned their father at his time of distress. Such behavior may not be unexpected of them. We read at the beginning that the sons would make a feast and invite their sisters to dine and drink with them; nothing is mentioned about inviting their parents. So, if the children excluded their father in good times, all the more so in bad times.[73] Job did not complain of being left out of their parties, rather rushed to ensure that their piety remained intact by conducting the expiation ritual. Likewise, he does not complain much when they deserted him in bad times.

But Job does complain. He complains against God, the cause of all the evil he experiences. He complains against his friends who came from far away to comfort and console him and ended up engaging in lengthy disputations over the source of all his misery. Unlike his silence regarding his children, Job voices his complaints at length and in poetic language. He speaks his mind and pours his heart out without any restraint: "I will speak in the anguish of my spirit, I will complain in the bitterness of my soul" (7:11).[74]

Job embraces the human condition in universal and personal terms in his speeches (7). Yet, when he refers to his personal contemptible condition, he calls attention to his physical pain and degraded status, avoiding any expressions of bereavement.

Job complains that human life is short, miserable and futile. Bitterly, he asks God, the watcher of man, to let loose his watch. Let me alone, begs Job of God. Let me die! The

[73] Most commentators see this scene as a happy and harmonious one. Habel, N.C., (*The Book of Job,* 87). interprets Job's absence from his children's feasts as an indication for harmonic family. "Job's absence," he claims, "may reflect his affirmation of their independence." So is Clines, J.A.D., (*Job 1-20,* 15) who reads this verse (1:4) as a depiction of domestic harmony. Pope, M.H., *(Job,* 8) connects Job's absence from his children's parties to his patriarchal dignity, which did not permit him to visit his sons' houses. Tur Sinai, N.H., (*The Book of Job,* 7) claims that "the whole story of the feast for which the sons and daughters foregathered in the same house is merely designed to provide an explanation of how they all came to have assembled in one place, where the disaster subsequently related overtook them."

[74] NRSV

motif of mortality and death is extensively expressed in the book of Job. Zuckerman observes, "verse- for- verse, no book in the bible is more death oriented than Job."[75] Job's desire to die is expressed with his first words: "Why did I not die at birth, come forth from the womb and expire?" (3:10),[76] to his last statement: "I have heard of you and now I have seen you, therefore I despise (אמאס) and find comfort (נחמתי) in dust and ashes" (42:6).[77] Yet, with all this death talk, no mention is made of the deaths of the children.

Notwithstanding his wish for death Job complains of the decayed condition of his body (7:5) and the futility of his own life (9:6). The reference to his decayed body is the only direct link to the prologue. Job interweaves the general complaint about the misery of human life with the particulars of his own pain. He specifies: "my flesh is clothed with worms, covered with dust my skin. A moment –and it will decay."(7:5) [78]

Similar to the motif of death as total annihilation, is the motif of non-existence, which is expressed in the word אינני, "I am not," a particle of negation, a formula of absence, an expression of nonexistence.[79] The word אינני, "I am not" is a negation and antonym of הנני, "here I am," and a homophone. Twice Job evokes this expression (7:8, 21).[80] It stands in contrast to the opposite expression, הנני in the comparative "test" story of the Akeda. In the Akedah, Abraham submits himself to God's call entirely: "Here I am", הנני (Gen. 22:1). He expresses the same submission to his son on the way to the Akeda (Gen.22:7). Just as he is about to strike his son, he expresses again his full submission to

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[75] Zuckerman, B., *Job the Silent: A study in Historical Counterpoint* New York: Oxford University Press, 1991. p. 118.
[76] RSV.
[77] A brief discussion on this verse is discussed in the next section.
[78] Tur Sinai, N.H., (*The Book of Job,* 136).
[79] According to Habel, N.C., (*The Book of Job,* 161) the expression אינני is not a statement of nonexistence but a formula of absence.
[80] The word 've'enenu' in the third person conjugation occurs in Job four times: 3:21; 23:8; 24:24; 27:19. Here however, it is conjugated in the first person: it is I [Job] who am not.

the angel that prevents the killing at the last moment. In both stories the הנני and אינני are key words.[81] The motif of existence in the Akedah stands in sharp contrast to the motif of non-existence in *Job*. The expressions הנני and אינני are by definition very personal. They apply to the person's innermost sense of being or non-being. By the nature of their individualistic definitions they exclude other persons, i.e., the children. In the two contrasted "test" stories, the experience could not have been more personal. The children ought to be excluded since it is not their existence on the line.

Job describes God as his violent enemy (16:6-17; 13:24).[82] In a highly poetic and metaphoric style Job depicts God's violent attack on him, which left him gaunt and shriveled. His emaciated form serves as a testimony to his wrongdoing, causing the community to desert him (16: 6-7). Again, Job refers to the desertion of the community because of his besmirched physical appearance (16:8). He blames God for removing his glory and crown from his head (16:9). Job does not try to veil the divine attack with niceties: "with his snout He ripped me and chased me, He slashed me with his fangs; I was at ease, and he shattered me; He grabbed my gullet, and smashed me" (16:8, 12).[83] The poetic diatribe centers on Job himself and his physical debilitation. His household members are not considered targets of the divine attacks.

Job does not spare his friends from his bitter denunciations. Though they came all the way from their place of residence once they heard the bad news about Job to console and comfort him (2:11), we learn that they have failed in their proclaimed mission. As representatives of the conventional notion of divine retribution, they doubt Job's

[81] Gen. 22:1, 2, 7, 11, 12. Job 7:8, 21

[82] The pun between Yiov (איוב) and enemy (אויב) has been noted by scholars. See for instance Habel, N.C. (*The Book of Job*, 86).

[83] Translation by Andersen, F.I., (*Job*,181).

integrity. Rather than show empathy with their ailing friend they defend God. Job does not appreciate their views and regards them as void of wisdom. He derides his friends as "plasterers of lies", (טופלי שקר) and "physicians of worthlessness" (רופאי אליל) (13:4). Job wishes they would remain silent since they have no words of wisdom to share (6:5) and instead listen to him (6:6, 13, 17). However, Job does not ask them to leave him alone. In Job's eyes his friends fail to function as friends, but they are present, conversing with him and seem not to be revolted by his physical appearance.

The friends who come to console Job do not refer to the death of Job's children. One cannot gloss over their omission of the children's deaths as a sign of being over sensitive to Job's pain.

In summing up Job's complaints we do not find utterances regarding his children's death. Furthermore, in the few places he refers to them (19:17; 29:5), they seem to be alive. Such is the case in the list of sufferings, which Job enumerates.

The severest affliction that stands out in Job's speeches is his profound alienation, estrangement and aloneness from all human company, starting with the lowest ranked up to his blood relatives. The sense of alienation applies to God as well: "Why do you hide your face from me?" asks Job (13:24). Job feels as if he stands alone, the company of his alleged friends notwithstanding, in this world, without a human soul to comfort and console him and as the subject of God's wrath.

Job, once a respected figure in his community, a man of stature among his people, who played an active role in his community and aided the poor and the needy is now regarded as one of the most socially contemptible (29:21-30:15). Not only society banned him from its midst but also those who were close to him: brothers, friends, wife, children,

and servants. All those people who surrounded him in the past and were part of his milieu hold him now as a stranger. The word זר, stranger, occurs three times in the following catalogue:

> He alienated my brothers from me; those who knew me estranged (זרו) themselves from me.
> My close ones stay away; my friends have forgotten me.
> Those who live in my house, and my maidservants, regard me as a stranger (זר);
> I have become an alien in their eyes.
> I call out to my servant but he does not answer, though I beg with him with my own mouth.
> My breath is repulsive (זרה) to my wife; I must ingratiate myself to my offspring.
> Even the youth despised me; when I rise, they talk about me.
> All my confidants detest me, those I loved have turned against me. (19:13-19)[84]

Job's close social and familial world is turned completely upside down. His servants do not obey him. The respect accorded Job turned into disregard, even from the young people. He is alienated, deserted, looked down at, and abandoned to his miseries. His wife and children are not by his side in his most dire moments. Job draws a picture of his house, once vibrant with people, now desolate and empty. If there is a demonstration of a deeper pain for loosing children to death, it is not manifested in this monologue. The pain reflected here is of rejection from those close to him, including his wife and children.

Job also suffers tremendously from his debilitating countenance. His repulsive appearance is greatly on his mind:

> My skin has become blackened upon me, and my bones have dried out from heat. (30:30)
> My bone cling to my skin and flesh; I have escaped with the skin of my teeth. (19:20).[85]

[84] ArtScroll, Stone Edition.
[85] ArtScroll, Stone Edition.

It is not only the physical pain, but also what it symbolizes. His physical appearance bears witness to his reversed status and fall from grace. His prior attire has been stripped away from him: "He has stripped from me my glory, and taken the crown from my head."[86] People usually judge the person from his clothes. Clothes represent honor. Job's honor (כבוד), which can be a metaphor of his righteousness,[87] has been stripped and replaced by sackcloth. His forlorn spectacle marks him out as an evildoer for the entire world to see.[88] It is also reasonable to assume that the disease he carries on his skin is somewhat similar to leprosy, a revolting sight, which undoubtedly chases company away.

Job cannot find a peaceful moment. He complains of an inability to sleep, of miserable nights probably as a result of his physical condition coupled with his depressed state of mind:

> When I lie down, I say, When will I arise, and the night depart?' and I had my fill of tossing and turning until dawn.
> My flesh is clothed with maggots and clumps of dirt; my skin is cracked and dissolved. (7:4-5)
> By night my bones are pecked from upon me and my sinews have no rest. (30:17)[89]

Not only his body is smashed but his spirit is broken as well (17:1). Right from the very beginning to the bitter (or happy) end Job wishes for death. His first soliloquy begins with him cursing his birth day and the night of his conception (3:1-10). He wishes he had died at birth (3:11-19). The misery of the meaninglessness and futility of life is a repetitive theme in Job's speeches. Job hopes that God will kill him and free him from his relentless pain (6:8-10). Job sees death not as a punishment but as a freedom from his

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[86] RSV.
[87] So Clines, J.A.D., (*Job 1-20*, 443).
[88] Clines,(444).
[89] ArtScroll, Stone Edition.

terrors. He despises (מאסתי) his meaningless life (הבל ימי) and prefers death to life (7:15-16).

Job lives in a continuous fear of his suffering:

> Remove Your hand from upon me, and let not fear of You terrify me (13:21).
> I fear all my sorrows, I know that You wilt not acquit me (9:28).[90]

For a man who supposedly lost all he had ever possessed, including his children, what more fear may be left? Surely not his own death since he has been asking and hoping for it time and again (3:1-12; 6:8-9; 7:15-16). But if we contend that not all is lost, his family intact, than fear may be justified.

Glossing over Job's proclaimed suffering we find lack of grieving over his children's death. The reader might expect from the vociferous man and a dedicated father to address the most horrific and futile tragedy that happened to him. At the least, one might expect an admission that their unnecessary deaths add to his of sufferings. Yet, Job's own account of sufferings seem to apply to him alone, to his own physical state, his mental depression and above all his feeling of alienation. The acute feeling of estrangement is not necessarily for lacking company, after all he is sitting with his friends and conduct a dialogue with them, but for the lack of their compassion and understanding.

Tur Sinai, who follows the mainstream convention that the children of Job are dead notes "that it is strange that Job who enumerates all his other troubles, should not have mentioned the greatest of all, by saying, e.g.: "my children he has taken from me." It would have been apt for such a sentence to have been included by the side of [19: 6-7],

[90] ArtScroll, Stone Edition.

where he enumerates what God has done to all those near him."[91] But in light of my argument, it is not strange at all that Job did not enumerate something that did not happen.

Job's last words (42:5-6)

It is appropriate now, before we leave Job and his words and turn to God, to examine the much controversial last statement of Job. Job's concluding words have greatly puzzled the critics: "I have heard of you and now I have seen you, therefore I despise (אמאס) and find comfort (נחמתי) in dust and ashes" (42: 5-6).[92] The numerous translations of this verse illustrate the diverse readings and understanding of Job's last utterance. Some translations lead the way to interpret Job's words as an indication of his submission before God. KJV, for example, renders: "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor *myself*,[93] and repent in dust and ashes." Similarly, RSV reads: "I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees thee. Therefore I despise *myself,* and repent in dust and ashes."[94] The emphasis in these translations is on Job's realization of his unworthiness in the face of a mighty and cosmic God and hence his repentance. But what is it that Job need to repent for? God Himself approved of Job's speeches (42:7). JPS emphasizes Job's realization of the smallness of

[91] Tur Sinai, N.H., (*The Book of Job,* 146). The note though is in relation to Bildad's speech 8:4.
[92] My translation. The Heb. Verse: לשמע אוזן שמעתיך, ועתה עיני ראתך, על כן אמאס ונחמתי על עפר ואפר
[93] My emphasis. Also in the RSV version below.
[94] Good, E., (*In Turns of Tempest: A Reading of Job with a Translation*. Stanford, Ca: Stanford University Press, 1990. p. 26) criticizes RSV's translation as betraying the verse's true meaning. He claims that "the reflexive sense "despise myself" is impossible for 'em'as, which is an indicative, "I despise," needing an accusative. RSV did not find an accusative, but the presumption is even greater that the committee members, all but one being Christian, were affected by the long Christian tradition of contrition, which calls for the sinner's awareness of sinfulness."

man versus the mightiness of God: "Therefore, I recant and relent, being but dust and ashes."[95] But Job never doubted his weakness as a human (30:19).

Some scholars build the theological message of the book on this verse. Rowley and Theol rely on this verse to establish the religious message of the Book of Job to be that innocent suffering is not desertion by God or isolation from Him but God's confidence that man can endure innocent suffering. Job, learning this, repents of the charges he has brought against God, and of the doubts he has entertained.[96]

Habel summarized the many divergent understanding of Job's final speech into four discrete positions:[97]

a. "Job's speech represents a complete surrender of his will to the will of God."[98] Job repents of his previous arrogant attitude in light of God's revelation, and recognizes his humble mortality. Under this interpretation, Job capitulates before God.

b. Job reconciles himself to the power of God. He recognizes that God and not humans control the cosmos. "With this new understanding Job reaffirms his faith with appropriate humility."[99]

c. Job's confession is an ironic expression to a blind force that is threatened by Job's insights. Job confesses to his guilt even though he knows he is innocent. "Job's answer is thus an ironic closure."[100]

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[95] Good, E., (*In Turn of Tempest*, 26) criticizes this translation as well saying that "'recant' is a weak stand-in for 'em'as" and, he adds, "turning 'upon dust and ashes' into 'being but dust and ashes' is a dubious logical move."
[96] Rowley, H. H. and Theol, D. *The Book of Job and its Meaning*. The John Rylands Library, Manchester, 1958. p. 202.
[97] Habel, N.C., (*The Book of Job*. 577-78).
[98] Habel, (577-78).
[99] Habel, (577-78).
[100] Habel, (577-78).

d. "Job's closing speech is Job's final act of defiance." "Job rejects a God who answers cries of human despair with arrogant boasting from the tempest. Job 'sees' God for what he really is, unjust, unfeeling, and cruel. Job therefore leaves God and casts his lot with mortals...Job's final words are the ultimate defiant deed of the hero."[101] Job rejects such a God.

This summation shows the wide range of ways of depicting Job vis-à-vis God, from complete submission to total defiance and rejection of Him.

Admittedly, this verse (42:6) is very difficult to decipher in the original language.[102] Do we see a transformed Job emerging after the journey he was forced to take, or is he the same person we met at the beginning of the story? The words with which Job chooses to ends his protests occur in the book often. Job does not offer a new insight. He summarizes what he has been saying all along. The verb מאס, to despise, disgust, reject or loath, occurs eleven times in *Job*,[103] the verb לנחם, to comfort, regret, or console occurs seven times.[104] The idiom עפר ואפר occurs only three times in the bible, two of which are in *Job* (30:19; 42:6).[105] The repetitions of these words could not be ignored. Job is saying that he is despising אמאס, but in the absent of an object, it is not known exactly what is it that he is despising. Is it himself, as many translations add (KJV, RSV), or maybe his words (JPS)? Is it mortal human life in general, or is it his own life? This is not the first time Job declares that he is 'despising' (מאסתי) something. In chapter 7 he pronounces his desire to die: "I am disgusted (מאסתי); I shall not live for ever. Leave me

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[101] Habel, (577-78).
[102] Not unlike most of the poetic part of *Job*. However, being that these are Job's last words, the conclusion of his fulfilled desire to confront the divine, the way one reads these words has an enormous impact on the understanding the message of *Job*.
[103] 5:17; 7:5, 16; 8:20; 10:3; 19:18; 30:1; 31:13; 34:33; 42:6
[104] 2:11; 7:13; 16:2; 21:34; 29:25; 42:6, 11.
[105] The other sole occurrence is in Gen.18:27. See section on Job and Abraham above.

alone, for my days are as nothing." (7:16).[106] This verse also lacks an object. But In chapter 9 Job is more explicit: "I am disgusted (אמאס) with my life" (9:21).[107] An analogy then to verse 42:6 may support the rendering of the missing object in 42:6 as "life." In other words, perhaps Job despises his own life! Now, after proclaiming his attitude to his life Job finds comfort (וְנִחַמְתִּי) in dust and ashes. Or, to put it differently, he is comforted by his immanent and imminent death.

Looking at the verse this way places it out of the four positions that Habel summarized. Job is not necessarily a capitulated hero, reconciled human, ironic, or defiant. He is a man who simply comes to terms with what he knew before, that the human has his place and God has His. The two operate in a different realm. While God can affect a human's life, human deeds do not affect the deity. Job remains unhappy but consoled by his mortality. I concur with Tsevat who claims that the book does not address the question of justice. God operates in a world in which social justice plays no role.[108] Furthermore, God operates in a world in which human rules or conventions bear no consequences.

Clearly, Job's last words pose an enormous anticlimax.[109] After all the unjustified sufferings out of which Job persevered, is that all he had to say? Job succeeded in evoking a divine revelation and yet the only emotions he now displays are of contempt and consolation in dust and ashes. He calls on God and God shows up, and that is his reaction? One cannot escape feeling disappointed. But, if the background story is not so

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[106] ArtScroll, the Stone Edition.
[107] ArtScroll, the Stone Edition.
[108] Tsevat, M., "The Meaning of the Book of Job," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 37 (1966), 104.

[109] Zuckerman, B,. (Zuckerman. B., *Job the Silent,* 20). notes that the Akedah (Gen. 22) is an anticlimactic story. It all leads to a father killing his son, and then at the last minute it is reversed for theological reasons. The authorized version would not support sacrifice of children.

horrific as commonly assumed, and its purpose, among others, is to provide a setting for an exchange of ideas then Job remains faithful to his character and to his ideology. In the absence of a satisfying response from God, he expresses his disappointment in the same words he has used all along. Besides, with all that he suffered it is not a matter of life or death.

In sum, Job's last utterance is consistent with the Job we know from the rest of the book. He heard God, found out that there is nothing new under the sun and repeated his preference for death over life. There is no exposition of repentance in Job's final words but rather confirmation of his rejection and detestation of his life.[110] The last statement sheds no further light on the children's fate. It is a kind of a summary of what Job has said all along. Since his children did not occupy his mind during the ordeal, they do not surface in his last words.

God's reaction

It is not my intention in this paper to study the nature of God and His relationship to Job but since He is the cause for Job's experience I shall examine some aspects that may be relevant to the point of discussion. God is the initiator of the ensuing saga of Job. Like a proud father he brags about Job the faithful servant (1:8). This boasting unleashes the adversary's desire to prove to God that piety only exists for selfish reasons. God takes on Satan's challenge but draws the line, do not kill him: "preserve his soul" (2:6). God as first appears in *Job* is attentive, watchful, and caring yet ready to let one of his servants undergo a terrible test in order to win a celestial wager.

[110] The theme of dust as a place of a grave occurs frequently in Job as well (7:5, 10:9, 17:16, 19:25, 20:11, 21:26, 22:24, 30:6, 34:15, 38:38, 39:14, 41:25, 42:6, 4:19, 16:15, 40:13, 14:8, 40:19, 7:21, 5:6).

The next time God appears, He is revealed to Job in all His divine majesty, responding to Job's summoning. God's speeches confuse most readers. Does he really address Job's issues? Does He provide any answers to Job's probing questions and accusations?

God of the whirlwind is the transcendent God, the creator of nature and its wild creatures. Could there be a subtle connection between human and nature? In his speeches God ignores Job and his particular predicament. God appears as the elusive voice from the storm, the omnipotent, and the creator, above human power, understanding or knowledge. However, the divine speeches contain numerous references to the young of various animals (raven [38:41], goats and deer [39:1-4], ostrich [39-14], and eagle [39:30]). The motif of providence over wild animals and their young may have its implied counterpart in God's concern for human life and their young. In as much as He cares for the young of the animals, he cares for the young of human. This [implied] concern may rule out the assumption that Job's children die for no reason of their own (they are not the subject of the divine test).[111] In the divine wager God permits Satan to afflict Job but warns him to keep Job alive. One may surmise that if Job's life is to be spared all the more so his children's who were not part of this capricious wager. God gives and God takes, says Job (1:22) but God of the Bible, we would like to believe, does not take innocent lives based on a wager.

The content of God's speeches so removed from Job's predicament produced numerous interpretations. There are those who are satisfied with the revelation itself.

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[111] Some scholars though contain that Job's children did sin thus their father was diligent in offering burnt offerings on their behalf. However, the text is explicit to mention only the possibility of the children sinning in *their heart,* thus one may conclude that they did not sin de facto.

They claim that the revelation in itself is the answer, a proof of divine providence.[112] But if that is the case, why does God carry on over three chapters (38, 39 40:1-2; 6-26)? Are we to ignore what He says? If the intention of the writer was to provide the reader with a divine revelation as a satisfactory response to Job's protests he could have briefly stated: "I am God the creator of heaven and earth, you heard of me, now you see me."

Other scholars infer from the perfection of creation that God outlines the perfection of the divine treatments of human including Job. Once man discovers the beauty of creation and participates in it, his suffering disappears and nature becomes the key to the truth.[113] However, Job was never oblivious to the beauty of creation and divine reaffirmation of his knowledge could not have been consolation or provide any healing for his feelings of injustice and his suffering. Other commentators hold that divine justice that is manifested in creation is greater than human justice.[114] But, as said above, this is hardly an answer, Job has never questioned God's mightiness or compared divine justice to human justice. Tsevat claims that human moral laws do not bind God. God in Job is neither a just God nor an unjust god but God.[115] That notion was so unconventional for its time, adds Tsevat, that the author inserts it between the lines.[116] But then the author of Job is not afraid to put unconventional ideas in the mouth of the protagonist. Job's writer does not hide behind conventions. Thus, the question still remains open, who is the God of Job and how does He respond to Job the man?

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[112] So is Koyfman, *Toldot Hemunah Haysraelit*, Jerusalem-Tel Aviv 1948 as footnoted in Hoffman, Y. *Blemished Perfection: The Book of Job in its Context*. The Biblical Encyclopedia Library, Jerusalem, 1995. [HEB] p. 219 n.58.

[113] Gordis, R. *The Book of God and Man: A Study of Job*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965. p. 134.

[114] So is Buber. In Hoffman, Y. *Blemish perfection*, 220.

[115] Tsevat, M. "The Meaning of the Book of Job," 105.

[116] Tsevat, (105).

The numerous attempts to understand God of Job as God of the creation, only indicate that an answer is not meant to be available to us, the readers or, that the reader is left intentionally on his own to struggle perpetually with God in relation to him. God the creator is God who embodies negative and positive attributes. Therefore, we face Him at different junctures in our lives differently. However, reading the story without the death of the children, allows viewing God more positively than negatively. Even God, the Almighty and the omniscience is subject to some boundaries. He abides by "do not murder." The test, capricious as it may seem, may be a divine privilege, but when all is said and done, He will stop with murder. It follows then that the children of Job did not pay with their lives to assist God in winning the wager.

Chapter 3: The messages of the book

The traditional meaning of Job

Over the centuries the message and meaning of *Job* have elicited a vast number of interpretations. Job has become the symbol of the pious, faithful and innocent sufferer. His outstanding trait is that of a God-fearer.[117] The book, according to Tsevat, is a supreme expression of religious faith.[118] The book of Job "de-moralizes" the world, which is to say, makes it amoral. Religious faith is not dependant on God being just or unjust, but on Him being God. Therefore, holds Tsevat, the book of Job is a supreme expression of religious faith. However, contra Tsevat, it may be noted that the prologue describes Job as a faithful servant of God (ירא אלוהים), before his faithfulness is put to a test. At the end of his journey such description is omitted. In contrast, Abraham is given the title of ירא אלוהים, God-fearing, *after* the test (Gen. 22:12). Can we then say that the Job's journey decreased, or *changed* his faith?

Tsevat holds that the main issue of the prologue is that of piety.[119] According to him the concise introduction poses the theme of the book. It is a question raised between God and Satan. The omniscient narrator tells us in the first verse that Job is a pious man. God affirms it (1:8). But Satan plants doubt as to the existence of disinterested piety, enough to bring God to prove to him that such piety does exist.

Tsevat built the message of the book on the prologue, which according to him sets the foundation for the new doctrine that social justice is not the concern of the book. A

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[117] So are Maimonides, Tsevat, M. and Leibowitz, Y. See also Mid. Lekah Tov to Gen. 47:12 where Job is regarded as one of the few truly God-fearing men of the Bible.
[118] Tsevat, M., "The Meaning of the Book of Job," p. 104.
[119] Tsevat, (74).

man's lot is not the consequences of his deeds. God is neither just nor unjust god but God. If Tsevat is correct why then does God reward Job at the end? If the message is an anti retribution ideology and not about justice, the reward seems contradictory. The story should not have ended on the note of a happy ending.[120]

Many commentators hold theodicy as a major issue of the book. In the absence of satisfactory answers to the question of the innocent sufferer modern scholars shift the emphasis from theodicy (why the righteous suffer) to human conduct. How should a man behave when he suffers?[121]

The debate on the doctrine of retribution is an apparent theme of *Job*. The friends represent the conventional Deuteronomistic doctrine of reward and punishment. This doctrine operates well in the narrative part of the book. Job is seemingly "punished," and then rewarded. Job represents the doctrine of justice. He proclaims to be innocent, not deserving such fate, or at least he would like to know why God bestowed on him such rage.

The book also gives rise to philosophical questions concerning the nature of God and how man reacts to Him. It is beyond the scope of this study to examine all the main issues of the book. For the purpose of this paper suffice it to say that no single unified solution surfaced from the book, yet it is almost unanimously agreed that Job is the exemplar of the innocent sufferer. His bag of troubles includes the children's deaths.

Since my claim that the children live is based mainly on the frame narrative, a few words in defense of the narrative should now be inserted.

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[120] Andersen, F.I., (*Job*,. 294) defends the happy ending. The gifts at the end, he says, are gestures of grace, not rewards for virtues.
[121] See Clines, J.A.D.,(*Job 1-20).*

That the canonized book of Job includes the prosaic tale of the prologue/epilogue suggests intent. The prologue's exposition provides the reader the basic information to understand the unfolding story. Generally, information given in an exposition is vital and serves to guide an understanding of the ensuing narrative. In a circular story the ending brings the readers back to the reality from which it had begun, yet now it is a different reality. The protagonist has changed, or has he? Job of the prologue is a wholesome and upright man who feared God and shunned evil (1:1), a wealthy man and a father of ten children. Job of the epilogue returns allegedly to the same reality, yet he is a changed man, no more a wholesome and upright man who fears God and shuns evil. The epilogue does not repeat this description. We know that the objective reality is the same or even better with double the livestock, but what about Job? Though his renewed wealth is recorded, the story doesn't elaborate on other improvements such as his physical or mental health. Job may be a different man by now. Similarly, the Akeda story takes Abraham from one place and brings him back to same reality, but this time conspicuously without Isaac (Gen. 22:19). Abraham ought to have changed – how we are not told. Stories, like that of Job and Abraham, have a circular structure. The protagonists return to the same reality yet they are different men. In both stories the threatened, actual or presumed death of the offspring is central yet ambiguous.

Scholars tend to take the death of the children for granted. Even though the biblical narrative in Job is careful not to indicate this explicitly, thus suggesting they may not have occurred, those scholars who do realize that the children were spared do not overtly argue this claim. Stephen Mitchell, for example, distinguishes between the prose fairy tale, and the poem. The epilogue, observes Mitchell, draws a different reality. "Here" he

says "the new children are the old children: even though Job's possessions are doubled, he is given seven sons and three daughters, as before, all of them instantaneously grown up; they have sprung to life as gracefully as the bones of a murdered child in a Grimms' tale."[122] Hence, concludes Mitchell that if the children of the epilogue are the same from the prologue then the story is but a fairy tale. It seems that to excuse the death of the children by saying that the prologue/epilogue represent an old folk tale and was written by a different hand is to underestimate the deliberate decision of the redactor of Job to incorporate an old folk tale with the poetic and rich dialogues of the main portion of the work. I believe that the message (certainly not a singular one) of the book begins with the first verse and ends with the last.[123]

What difference does it make?

It is interesting and yet very disturbing that the death of Job's children has been so widely assumed. The author or redactor creates a masterful story of a man who was chosen by God, paradoxically because of his excellent qualities, to experience evil. The prologue, which sets the background of the whole book, does not explicitly recount the deaths of Job's children. Yet, the overall consensus includes the children with the rest of Job's possessions lost and then found. The question is whether it makes any difference if the children died or not? Does such a detail have any impact on understanding *Job*? And if it does, what is that impact?

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[122] Mitchell, S., *The Book of Job*. Harper Collins: New York, 1992. xxviii-xxix.

[123] The coherence of the book as a whole has been the subject of considerable scholarly attention. Among them are Habel, N.C., (*the book of Job)*; Gordis, R. (*the Book of Job)*. According to Davis, F.E. ("Job and Jacob: The Integrity of Faith" in *The Whirlwind: Essays on Job, Hermeneutics and Theology in Memory of Jane Morse,* Eds. Cook, S.; Patton, C. L. and Watts, J., JSOTSup, 336: Sheffield Academic Press: Sheffield, 2001 p. 101) the prevailing arguments today support the integrity of the book.

Job earned his place in history as the paradigm of the innocent sufferer. If his children did not perish, it follows that this unequivocally arctypical status should be modified. He did not experience what is universally and unanimously regarded as the worse tragedy that befalls a human, that is, loosing his children, thus his future, his name, his existence. That is not to doubt the integrity of Job's suffering,[124] only to suggest that Job's bag of miseries did not include bereavement. By no means, am I trying to belittle suffering devoid of bereavement or to rank suffering on a rigid scale, bereavement being on top. Yet, Job the archetype and symbol of the righteous sufferer loses, in my opinion, some of the mythical power of the sufferer he is traditionally endowed with. Some scholars abandon the physical pain altogether to claim that Job's greatest suffering was metaphysical such as his ignorance regarding creation,[125] or the mystery of his afflictions.[126]

In the traditional reading of the story Job loses his children which are later either replaced or resurrected, depending on how one identifies the children of the epilogue; the original ones or a new set of children? If one sees the children of the epilogue as a new set of children, one ought to wonder how could human life be replaced and serve as a substitute for another human life? If, on the other hand, the children are the original ten, then it requires imagining a resurrection.[127] In both cases such a conclusion for a literary masterpiece is very unsatisfying, disappointing and peculiar. Furthermore, the notions of substitute children or resurrection do not follow biblical ideologies and conventions.

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[124] One may even suggest that worse than loosing children when they die is loosing them when they live, not unlike Job who complains that his children abandoned and mocked him.
[125] Leibowitz, Y., *Judaism, Human Values and the Jewish State,* Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Ma, 1992 pp. 48-53.
[126] Gerber, I. *The Psychology of the Suffering mind,* The Jonathan David Co., New York, 1951. p. 43.
[127] Baskin J.R., (*Pharaoh's Counsellors, 16*). notes that resurrection was common rabbinic belief. Thus some sages regarded Job as a heretic in denying the rabbinic tenet of resurrection of the dead.

Under the scenario outlined in this thesis, the children did not die but either went into captivity or somewhere else, disengaged themselves from their father (willingly or forcefully) and retuned home at the end of the trial.

The theology of the book rejects resurrection or replacement of human life. Job himself proclaims that human life cannot be replaced or resurrected (14:10-12). With the final divine approval of Job's words (42:7), we may surmise that God concurs with Job. This motif of anti-resurrection and anti-replacement agrees with the literal interpretation that the children who reappear at the epilogue are the same ones who once crowded Job's home.[128] It is interesting to note that the Septuagint rectifies this message by adding to the last verse of the book an affirmation to what is clearly rejected in the original text: "And Job died, an old man and full of days, and it is written that he will rise again with those whom the Lord raises up." This addendum reverses in one stroke the doctrine of anti-resurrection.[129] Under the Septuagint version the death of the children is conceivable.

Moreover, the theology that emerges from reading the story without the death of the children is a theology that opposes the practice of human sacrifice.[130] There is a prophetic message against human sacrifice throughout the bible. It is known that such custom was practiced in Israel and the prophets cried against it.[131] Some critics even maintain that the subliminal message of the Akedah is an opposition to human sacrifice. It is hard to

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[128] Zuckerman, B., (*Job the Silent*,.211, n.57) who claims that Job is a reconstructed version of earlier pagan story(ies) in which the children were murdered and then resurrected from the dead, notes that the biblical version "go to some pains to eliminate all direct mention of any aspect of human resurrection." "Moreover," he adds, "there is no other story in the old Testament corpus where an overt account of human resurrection may be found.

[129] See Baskin, J.R., (*Pharaoh's Counsellors*, 28-29).

[130] Lecture by Amit, Y. at University of Tel Aviv, Israel. (Winter, 2003).

[131] The sacrifice of a son is specifically recorded in the cases of Mesha, King of Moab (2 King 3:27), of Ahaz, King of Judah (2 Kings 16:3) and of Manasseh, King of Judah (2 King 21:6). The prophets cry against such devouring disgrace (Jer.19:4-5; Ezek. 20: 30-31; Micah 6:7). Even in Psalms we read that sons and daughters were sacrificed to demons (Psa. 106:36-37).

maintain that God Himself would allow sacrificing children for the sake of proving their father's piety.

The fate of the children plays no major role in the sum of the tragedies. Furthermore, neither of the participants refers directly to the death of the children. The dialogues between Job and God seem to represent a perpetual dialogue between God and man. God is a paradox, and his nature would remain an enigma to human regardless of how we read the prologue. Transcendent as He may be, He still takes side in the human dialogue. "Job spoke properly, unlike you," He rebukes the friends (42:7-8). If we are to understand God's wrath against the friends as a rejection of the doctrine of retribution they displayed, then how come God follows up with a reward for Job, an action, which is retributive by nature? But since God is God, He is not bound by any human conventions and such action may be deemed as gestures of grace.[132] What may be at the core of *Job* is the essence of a dialogue. Dialogues between men and dialogues between God and man are essential. The afflictions prompt the dialogues.

The absence of the death of children sheds a brighter light on God. God, mighty and capricious as He may appear, does not allow for innocent life to perish in order to prove any point, even to a celestial adversary. A divine test may include the threat on the child's life as one may say happened in the Akedah story,[133] but not the execution of such a threat. Thus, accepting the story as though the children did not die allows examining the nature of the biblical God in a less capricious way. The biblical God shows great concern for the fate of the children of certain protagonists, thus the story of the Akedah. The God of Abraham who spared the life of Isaac is the God of Job who spared the lives of his

[132] So Andersen, F.I. (*Job*, 294).
[133] So is the opinion of Zuckerman, B.

children. Sacrificing innocent children is not how God operates. To claim that Job's children have died is to depict a capricious and cruel God no different than the pagan gods. The author of Job, assuming he relies on ancient pagan stories where the divine requests innocent human lives, deliberately counters such a view. Thus he avoids explicitly telling of the children death.

The theology that surfaces from the book is a theology of questions. All the protagonists are engaged in rhetorical questions. Questions, without answers flow from Job to God and from God to Job. God answers Job with rhetorical questions. The friends engage in asking questions,[134] which represent important Deuteronomistic convention and provide a foil for other doctrines to be displayed. In the only exchange between husband and wife, Job responds to his wife with a rhetorical question. Question will not cease to be asked, struggles will proceed for eternity. Perhaps the whole idea of *Job* is to keep asking questions. The readers are encouraged to follow suit. Do not fall into rigid dogmas and doctrines, may be the sublime message of the book, keep asking, arguing, wondering, criticizing.

Another message of *Job* is that alienation may be one of the worse human miseries. As a result of the affliction Job's home, once full with life is now empty. He is sitting on a dunghill, outside his house, without family, friends, or acquaintances and with a sense of divine animosity. The feeling of alienation is both objective and subjective. Even though Job complains of desertion, the friends are present with him during all the period of his misery. God does respond to his appeals. Neither the content of the friends'

[134] Freiden, K., ("Job's Encounter with the Adversary." *The Book of Job.* Ed. By Bloom, H. Chelsa House Publishers: New York, New Haven, Philadelphia. 1988. pp. 91-102), defines the friends' questions as "leading questions". According to Frieden Job is mainly a book of good and evil presented in questions and assertions form, which lead to a theology of questioning.

speeches or that of God may be in accord with Job's beliefs or wishes, but nonetheless they are present. Objectively he is not all alone. When he is restored, and all that was captured returned to him, all his brothers and sisters, and all his former acquaintances came to console him for all his misfortunes (42:11).[135] Amidst his family and friends Job resumes the life he lived before. The objective factors of isolation disappeared. His house is full as in the old good days. The message then may be simpler than we try to deduce. A man's lot is to dwell among his kin, appreciate the earthy life allotted to him without trying to interfere with God's ways. The best reward is "to see the children and the children's children, to the fourth generation" (42:17).

Conclusion

This study challenges the almost universally accepted narrative assumption that Job's children died as part of a heavenly wager. My demonstration shows that a reasonable doubt exists that the children died. Such reading may allow for a different understanding of Job and of God. It may lessen the theological, philosophical and psychological issues of the book. Reverence for Job the righteous sufferer and God the capricious may be dimmed in light of this study.

Job's pain and suffering have over the centuries been hyperbolically presented and were inadequately understood as the embodiment and paradigm of human suffering. The book of Job deliberately omits directly narrating the death of Job's children. We can only speculate about the motives of the writer in concealing such an important detail, but it

[135] Where were they when he needed them most?

appears that the writer (or redactor) is consistent throughout the book in evading an explicit statement that the children died.

Perhaps, then, God cares for the young, and requires no sacrifice of human youth to prove faithfulness. God recognizes the agony of man even if He brought it upon him on a whim. The book encourages dialogues, quests for understanding, challenging the divine, even if there are no ready answers available. Answers undermine faith in a supreme power.

I personally find that in the absence of God killing the children of Job, the message of the book, whatever it may be, is more humane and more divine. We need not understand God, or His deeds and we need not apply man's rules to a divine world. There ought to be a finite demarcation in the universe represented by the two contrasted concepts of good and evil, life and death, in which we, as humans, can operate and feel secure. Once the irreversible line is crossed, i.e., at those times in which we encounter death, the order of the world in which we live is undermined. Or, in Job's words: "When a man dies will he live?" (14:14). In that respect *Job* takes us back to the very beginning, to the creation story. It all began with "good" until humans were created and the "bad" entered into the created world. Life as man knows it is full with unexplained suffering. Death is nonexistence, nothingness – so states the book of Job. Nature endures, human's life does not. So says Job (14) and so confirms God. The world of Job has been shaken, but if we don't accept the needless death of his children, the world still remains within the finite boundaries of good and evil, or life and death. The evil, which has happened to Job, is reversible and within these boundaries.

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