

EXEGETICAL PAPER ON JOB 19:23–27

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Before turning our attention to the five verses before us, let us see them in the larger context of the Book of Job and of the Old Testament. Speaking of the two Testaments that comprise our Bible, St. Augustine is said to have stated: *Novum Testamentum in Vetere latet; Vetus Testamentum in Novo patet*. In an attempt to preserve a bit of the poetry, we might translate his words as follows: “The New Testament in the Old is concealed; The Old Testament in the New is revealed.” That is surely true. The Old Testament is a veritable treasure house in which are vast stores of Gospel promises that may appear largely concealed. That is surely true of the Messianic prophecies. If, however, we dig with the tools that are at our disposal, if we let the clear light of the New Testament shine on the Old, if we study prophecy in the light of fulfillment, we shall not only find that we shall know and appreciate the Old Testament better, but also that we shall have a richer and deeper understanding and appreciation of the New Testament. For it is surely true that “The New Testament in the Old is concealed; The Old Testament in the New is revealed.”

The Bible has also been compared to the ocean. In some places the ocean’s waters are so shallow that a little child can sit and play in it without any danger of drowning; but in other places the waters are so deep that the largest vessel can be submerged. As we all know, there are passages in the Bible that are so simple and clear in their meaning that a little child can understand precisely what God is telling us.

Other passages, on the other hand, are difficult for us to comprehend. They require careful study of the occasion, situation, context, and the text itself, including the vocabulary and syntax. And when one reads the results of other highly competent scholars, in which sharp differences are apparent, one is perhaps more puzzled than when he began. Such was the reaction of this writer more than once during the study of this text, particularly with reference to one or two of the verses. In many respects, therefore, we could compare our passage to the deep waters in the midst of the ocean, to return to the imagery of the previous paragraph.

In order to study the verses before us with any profit, we must turn our attention to the Book of Job itself. In our English Bible, as you know, it occupies first place among the second chief group of books: the poetical books, so called, and is found about mid-way through the Old Testament. In the Hebrew Bible, it is near the end, in the third major portion, the *KETHUBHIM*, also called the *HAGIOGRAPHA*, “Sacred Writings.” In the Hebrew, Job is one of the most difficult books of the Old Testament. Unusual words are frequently found. The sentences are often very brief. The syntax is at times difficult, and often characterized by the omission of prepositions. One can appreciate Martin Luther’s remarks to the effect that it was hard to make Job talk German, and that Job was probably becoming as impatient with their efforts at translating his words as with his friends’ poor efforts at comforting him.

And yet, as one reads the Book of Job, whether in Hebrew or in a good translation, he becomes more and more convinced that the book is a great masterpiece. It is sublime poetry, gripping drama, tremendous literature. In structure it forms an A-B-A pattern, with a short prose section at the beginning and at the end, and the main part of the book in majestic poetry. The structure is dramatic, with each speaker taking his turn. Partly on account of its A-B-A structural pattern, the Book of Job has been attacked in regard to its integrity. Higher critics allege that the prose sections could not have been written by the same person as the poetry. This they say in spite of the fact that it was not at all unusual in ancient times in the Near East for one author to alternate prose with poetry in a single literary work. Nor was that practice confined to any single nation or culture.

The Book of Job forms a perfect whole; one can feel its unity while he reads it. And yet, its integrity has been attacked. Some would exclude chapters 32 through 37, in which Elihu speaks. Now, it is true that Elihu is suddenly introduced and again suddenly dismissed. And yet, that section serves an important purpose, for it reminds the other four speakers, and also us, that God’s chastisements are evidence of His grace, and so something important would be missing if those chapters were excluded. Likewise, the four next chapters, 38 through 41, in which God manifests Himself as the omniscient, omnipotent, yet all-loving God, using language perhaps unequalled anywhere else in all literature. In its totality, then, the Book of Job sets forth the problem of

suffering. And while the answers may not in every case satisfy us, the book does offer God’s own solution to the problem, and it does give God’s own answers to the questions that arise in the book. Since Job’s problems can well be ours, though in an exaggerated degree, the Book of Job ought to be a practical one for us, both as individuals and as pastors.

Our verses are near the center of the Book of Job, in the 19th chapter. If you look at the chapter heading, you will find that Job is the speaker throughout the chapter. In the previous chapters, each of the three friends addressed him in a chapter or two, and Job would answer each in turn, beginning with Eliphaz, then Bildad, then Zophar. By now Bildad had given his second of three speeches, and in our chapter Job answered him. You may recall that at first the three so-called friends sat with him for a week without speaking—a most trying ordeal for poor Job.

And when they did open their mouths to speak, they accused him of being an especially bad person, since he was now suffering so intensely. Nor was Bildad’s second speech any relief for poor Job. The fact that his barbed attacks were put into the third person rather than the second did not help. Job knew that they were aimed at him. At the time that Job spoke the words of our text, words which have been cherished by believers from ancient times until now as expressing a believer’s sure hope of the resurrection of the body, Job appears to have been in the very depths of his suffering and grief. Just think of what the man had gone through: 1. He had lost his children and property. 2. His body was plagued with loathsome disease and racked with intense pain. 3. His wife, friends and acquaintances had become aloof and had discouraged him. 4. His three special friends had nothing of comfort to say to him. 5. He had been tempted to think that even God had forsaken him. If you would look for a place where he had hit an “all-time low,” you might well find it in the verses immediately preceding our verses. In the last two verses he wails: “Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends; for the hand of God hath touched me. Why do ye persecute me. Why do ye persecute me as God, and are not satisfied with my flesh?” (Job 19:21, 22). And then follow the words of our text.

Verse 23. מִי־יִתֵּן אִפֹּו וַיִּכְתְּבוּן מִלִּי מִי־יִתֵּן בְּסֵפֶד וַיִּחַקֵּוּ:

WOULD THAT MY WORDS, THEN, WERE WRITTEN! WOULD THAT THEY WERE INSCRIBED IN THE BOOK!

The first two words, מִי־יִתֵּן, form an idiomatic phrase. Literally they mean “Who will give” or “Who would give,” depending on whether we would take the verb as imperfect or jussive. It could be either. This expression corresponds to the Akkadian expression *mannu inaddin*, literally, “Who will give?” but meaning “Would that!” or “Oh that!” The *maqquph* unites the words into one expression.

In one of the instances in the Old Testament, the expression appears to have a literal meaning. That is in Job 14:4, where we read: מִי־יִתֵּן טָהוֹר מִטְמֵא

“Who will give (can bring) a clean thing out of an unclean?”

Otherwise, it apparently is an idiom. Let four examples suffice.

Deuteronomy 28:67: מִי־יִתֵּן עֶרֶב מִי־יִתֵּן בֶּקֶר

“Would God it were even! Would God it were morning!”

Psalms 55:7(6): מִי־יִתֵּן־לִי אֶבֶר כַּיּוֹנָה

“Oh that I had wings (pinions) like a dove!”

Jeremiah 8:23 (9:1): מִי־יִתֵּן רֹאשִׁי מַיִם

“Oh that my head were waters!”

Job 31:31: מִי־יִתֵּן מִבְּשָׂרוֹ

“Oh that we had of his flesh!”

The word אִפֹּו, sometimes written with a silent א at the end, is a combination of the word פֹּה, meaning “here,” and a prefixed *aleph*. It is an enclitic particle generally used in interrogative sentences or in sentences

expressing a command or wish, and has a force similar to the Greek ἄρα and ποτέ, and the Latin *tandem*. It is inferential, and can be rendered “then” or “now.”

The *waw* prefixed to the verb **וַיִּכְתְּבוּן** is the *waw*-conjunctive, as we immediately know from the pointing. The verb itself is from **כָּתַב** “write,” and is the *niphal*, 3 person masculine plural.

It could be either imperfect or jussive. On the strength of the *waw*-conjunctive, which is the only *waw* that can be used with the jussive, and which rarely is used with the imperfect, we would construe this verb as a jussive. Literally, then, the first half of this verse would read: “Who would give, then, and my words be written?” St. Jerome felt the force of the jussive by rendering it: *ut scribantur*, with the present subjunctive. The *niphal*, as you may recall, can express any of three notions: reflexive, reciprocal, and passive. Here it must be passive. The *nun* at the end of the verb represents an older spelling. The trend in Semitic languages was to drop the final *mem* or *nun* of a word. In Hebrew the final *nun* of verbs was often dropped. Such forms as this one, which appear frequently in the books of Job and Ruth and occasionally elsewhere, particularly in poetic sections, are therefore interesting remnants of the archaic spelling. And wouldn’t the language speak in favor of an early date for Job himself, and possibly also the writing of the book?

מְלִי, the last word in the first half of this verse, is not a very common word. Derived from the verb **לָמַל**, which means “speak,” “utter,” “say,” it is found only 38 times in the Old Testament: 34 times in Job, each time in poetry, so it is a poetic word. We might ask: Of which words is Job here speaking? The words which he had spoken in self-defense to his accusing friends? Or the words which he was just now going to utter, expressing his confident hope in his Redeemer? Or all of the words that are contained in his Book? We would be inclined to say the latter, thereby including all. In any event, his wish was fulfilled, as we shall see.

The last half of the verse begins with the same phrase as the first. Almost every version translates the phrase identically in the two places, except St. Jerome, who was a great stylist and had a feel for variety, often using it even where it was not used in the original. So here. The first he renders *Quis tribuat*, and the second *Quis det*, both literally expressing the thought of **וַיִּתֵּן**. The Septuagint translates it only the first time: *τίς γὰρ ἄν δαΐη*.

The word **סֵפֶר** means “book,” or, perhaps more precisely for ancient times, “scroll.” Note the article: “in *the* book.” Strangely enough, none of the versions translated it as definite. It would seem, from the pointing of the Masoretic Text, that it should be translated “in *the* book.” The book of which Job is speaking must have been made of parchment or possibly animal skins. We do not know, for nothing is indicated in this verse regarding the material of this **סֵפֶר**. We believe that in the next verse a different type of material is referred to. We shall take that in turn.

The verb **וַיִּחַקֵּן** also has a *waw*-conjunctive prefixed. Like the previous verb, we prefer to take it as a jussive rather than an imperfect. Again, this is the 3rd person masculine plural, but this is the *hophal*, which serves as the passive for the *hiphil*, which is usually causative in meaning. Since the verb is at the end of the sentence, it appears in pause form, with the vowel under the **ח** lengthened to *qames*, and the accent drawn back to the penult. The *dagesh forte* also dropped from the **ק**. The verb is **חַקֵּן**, meaning “cut in,” “inscribe,” and then also to “decree.” The nouns **חֻק** and **חֻקֵּי**, usually translated “statute,” are derived from it. Unfortunately the King James Version renders the word “printed.” “Inscribed” would be much better, since the former has a specialized meaning today.

Whatever the material of the book might be, Job is here expressing a strong desire to have his case stated, to have his words penned down for posterity to read. He desired that what he would say might be preserved, “that future ages might be able to judge between him and his accusers, and to know the justice of his cause” (Barnes).

Verse 24. **בְּעֵט-בְּרִזָּל וְעִפְרָת לְעַד בְּצוּר יִחַצְבוּן:**

(THAT) WITH A PEN OF IRON, AND LEAD, THEY WERE FOR EVER HEWN INTO THE ROCK!

This sentence clearly is dependent upon, and continues, the thought of the foregoing sentence.

The first word, עט, occurs only four times in the Old Testament: here, in Psalm 45:2, in Jeremiah 8:8 and in Jeremiah 17:1.

The word means “stylus” or “pen.” In each case it clearly refers to an instrument of writing. “It was an engraving tool: a small, sharp-pointed piece of iron or steel that was employed to mark on lead or stone—somewhat in the form of small graving tools now” (Barnes).

This pen was made of iron. The word בַּרְזֶלֶת is an ancient Near Eastern loan word, and the same root is found in many diverse languages. The economy of nations can also be reflected in their language. The word unquestionably means “iron.”

The word עֶפְרָת is related to the Akkadian *abaru*, and means “lead.” In spite of the identity of the first three letters with the word עָפָר, which means “dust,” it bears no relationship to that word at all, as can be seen from the fact that the word עָפָר, “dust,” is a cognate of the Akkadian *epiru* or *aparu*, with the *p*, and not *abaru*, with the *b*. Somehow it came into Hebrew as עֶפְרָת, *not* עֶבְרָת. There is clear evidence that the same letter in Hebrew can represent two different consonants, as we know especially from ע, פ, and שׁ.

This word, עֶפְרָת, here in pause form for עֶפְרָת, appears nine times in the Old Testament. In every case it is translated “lead.” The main question here is: How is the lead used here? Is it the instrument for writing, the material *on* which the writing is done, or the material which is poured in a molten state into the grooves made by the pen? Kretzmann proposes the third possibility when he makes the comment: “Chiseled in the rock and the letters then filled with lead, as a witness to future generations.”

לְעַד is a combination of ל, “to,” “for,” and עַד, “later,” “future,” “lasting future,” “continuous existence,” “perpetuity.” The main thought is the continuous passing of time, repetition, duration. Hence, as a preposition, עַד means “up to,” “until,” “as far as.” לְעַד means “always,” “eternally.” Thus nearly all the versions. The Septuagint renders it εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα. A few, however, have slightly amended the text by changing the vowel point under ע to read עַד, “for a witness.” But the Masoretic Text has עַד, and that should cause no problem.

Again, we have the definite article, in the word בַּצֹּרֶן. In contrast to בַּסֶּפֶר in the previous verse, however, here the translators recognize the definite article in most cases: “in the rock.” This word refers to a natural rock or cliff. Often it suggests strength. It is therefore a fitting appellation for God. To ensure immortal fame for themselves, ancient rulers would have their likenesses and an account of their exploits carved into the rocks, so that people could be reminded of their great achievements many centuries after they had left this world, as witness the huge statues of Rameses II at Abu Simbel, just recently re-located, and the famous Behistun Rock proclaiming the greatness of Darius I. Ordinary writing is perishable; such engraving is well-nigh imperishable, for it is to be *engraved in stone*.

The verb expresses the idea of permanence very well. הִקְצַבּוּן is derived from the verb הִקְצַב. The same root in Ugaritic means “slay,” “kill,” evidently by striking or hacking to pieces. In Akkadian it means “cut off.” The Hebrew verb means to “dig,” “cut,” “hew,” “hew out.” Here it is in the *niphal*, and has the passive meaning: “be hewn,” “be graven.” Again, it is in the 3rd person masculine plural, and again we have the older ending, יָ, instead of וּ, which occurred in the previous verb.

In these two verses we have Job’s wish and request: “WOULD THAT MY WORDS, THEN, WERE WRITTEN! WOULD THAT THEY WERE INSCRIBED IN THE BOOK! (THAT) WITH A PEN OF IRON, AND LEAD, THEY WERE FOR EVER HEWN INTO THE ROCK!”

Was his request granted? Well, yes and no. No, in the sense that surely no one sat there at that time and took down every word at the moment; at least, few scholars are of the opinion that either Job or his three friends wrote the book that bears his name, nor do many hold that Elihu did, although he might have; neither has any massive inscription in rock been found attesting to Job’s integrity and righteousness.

And yet, his request has most surely been granted. Right before us now, as we are giving attention to this portion of the Word of God, we have in a record far more permanent than any Behistun Rock or Abu Strobel

Temple, the eternal, unchanging Word of God, which here testifies of Job, and which in the next few verses will set forth in rare beauty and striking clarity Job's confession of faith in his Redeemer and his sure hope of his own resurrection from the dead. This is, as you know, a highly controversial passage, and one which has a wide variety of interpretations, a number of which we must take up and come to grips with. Particularly the next two verses, 25 and 26, are replete with exegetical problems. Some of these are lexicographical, others syntactical, still others primarily theological, and some a combination of these. We shall, of course, attempt to arrive at a decision on the precise meaning of these words, which we are convinced were uttered by the historical personage Job under the direct influence of God the Holy Spirit. Is Job inspired? Or can we say this only of the book which by inspiration correctly reports his history? We shall also form a number of conclusions regarding the doctrinal content of the passage, and the extent to which it speaks of the doctrine of the resurrection. But first let us carefully study the meaning of the text, taking each word in turn as it comes. Needless to say, there will be some repetition in this method. However, we feel it necessary to analyze each element in these three extremely important verses.

Verse 25. וְאֲנִי יָדַעְתִּי נֹשֵׂאֵי חַי וְאַחֲרָיוֹן עַל-עֲפָר יָקוּם:

AND I, I KNOW MY REDEEMER IS LIVING, AND AS THE LAST ONE HE SHALL STAND UPON THE DUST.

As we proceed word by word, we shall attempt to defend our choice of Words.

The *waw* prefixed to the first person singular personal pronoun is translated in most versions by the word "for," which is surely appropriate, or by the word "but," which suggests a contrast from the preceding. That would be somewhat harder to defend, in view of the fact that he is expressing the hope that he might be vindicated by having his words recorded permanently for posterity. It would appear that the emphasis is here on the pronoun, and not on the conjunction, and therefore the simple conjunction "and" would be as suitable as any.

It is clear that the subject is here emphasized, since it appears independently before the verb. The subject is contained in the verb form יָדַעְתִּי, and would therefore not need to be expressed, except for emphasis. That is clearly the case here. Therefore it ought to be emphasized in the translation in some way: "And I, I know," or, "And as for me, I know." Normally in Hebrew, the pronoun subject is contained in the verb; but when it occurs, it generally precedes the verb. A noun subject, on the other hand, regularly follows the verb; however, there too it precedes the verb when it is emphasized. Cf. Genesis 1:2: וַיִּשְׂרַץ הַיְהוָה.

The verb יָדַעְתִּי is the 1st singular perfect *qal* form of the verb יָדַע. Invariably the perfect of this verb is translated in the present tense in English: "I know," and not in the past tense "I knew" or the perfect "I have known." That is acknowledged by all Hebrew scholars, and on that point there is also unanimity among the translators. It is understandable that what one has learned or come to understand he "knows" now. From your Greek you may recall that the perfect tense, οἶδα, is translated in the same way: "I know," in the present. You may also recall that it is etymologically related to the aorist form εἶδον, used in that tense for the verb ὀπάω, to *see*. One might then ask: Is there an etymological relationship between the Greek εἶδον and οἶδα, and the Hebrew יָדַע? Although I have failed to find such evidence from any lexicons, I would strongly suspect that there is. The Greek words εἶδον and οἶδα have lost the first letter, the digamma, also called *waw*. They were once written *Fεἶδον* and *Fοἶδα*, but the weak digamma dropped before classical Greek times. They are clearly related to the Latin *video*, which retained the first letter. Now the Hebrew יָדַע was originally יָדַע, as we know from the fact that the *waw* recurs as the first root letter whenever a prefixed letter appears, as in the niphal נִדְעָה and the hiphil הוֹדִיעַ. That would appear to be evidence of an etymological relationship between the Latin *video*, the Greek εἶδον and οἶδα, or *Fεἶδον* and *Fοἶδα*, and the Hebrew יָדַע, which became יָדַע. We see, then a clear relationship between "SEEING" and "KNOWING". This "KNOWING" of which Job speaks is really a "SEEING" of the heart and mind, and is expressive of a sure and infallible intuition which is unquestionable. It is a true, certain and blessed knowledge such as St. Paul expressed in his memorable words: "I know whom I

have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day” (II Tim. 1:12).

Significantly, the Septuagint translates יְדַעְתִּי οἶδα in this verse. However, it often renders the word יָדַע by a form of γινώσκω.

From the Hebrew text you will notice the absence of the subordinating conjunction following יְדַעְתִּי. We would expect כִּי, “that.” Nearly every version, including also the Septuagint (with οὗτοι) and the Vulgate (with *quod*) supplies it. One of the exceptions is the Norwegian translation, which renders it: “Men jeg, jeg ved, min Gjenløser lever.” But while the Hebrew usually expresses the כִּי, it may omit it, as we know from Job 30:23: כִּי־יָדַעְתִּי מָוֶת תְּשִׁיבֵנִי, Psalm 9:21: יָדַעוּ גוֹיִם אֲנוּשׁ הַמָּה, and Amos 5:12: יְדַעְתִּי רַבִּים פְּשָׁעֵיכֶם: כִּי. In the last passage, incidentally, the word “many” has to be a predicate adjective, and cannot be attributive, as in the King James Version. It means, then, “For I know that your transgressions are many.” The Revised Standard Version is wrong here in rendering it “For I know *how* many are your transgressions.” The word to be supplied is כִּי, “that,” not מַה or a similar word, “how,” which would hardly be omitted. Since the subordinating conjunction “that” may also be omitted in English without changing the meaning, there is no need here to supply it. We can simply say “I know my Redeemer is living.”

Let us now turn to one of the key words of this passage, which we have translated “my Redeemer”: גֹּאֲלִי. First, what is its syntactical relationship in this sentence? A few translators would make it the direct object of the verb יְדַעְתִּי pure and simple. Thus for example Moffatt: “Still, I know One to champion me at last.” Also Robert Young: “That—I have known my Redeemer, the Living and the Last.” However, to make גֹּאֲלִי the direct object of יְדַעְתִּי is unwarranted. We would then expect the sign of the definite direct object, אֵת, before such a definite object. Rather, as the ancient and most modern versions understand it, we would understand יְדַעְתִּי to introduce indirect (or possibly direct) discourse, and that the verbal noun גֹּאֲלִי is the subject of what follows. גֹּאֲלִי is the participial form of the verb גָּאַל, “redeem,” “deliver,” which occurs fairly frequently in the Old Testament. In this form it has a pronominal suffix to be understood as objective rather than subjective: “My Redeemer,” that is, the One who has redeemed *me*.” Note MY Redeemer: Job confesses Him to be his OWN Redeemer. Every word in his remarkable confession is expressive of a deep personal conviction.

Let us now try to determine the precise meaning of this word גֹּאֲלִי. As a verbal noun or adjective (REDEEMER, REDEEMING ONE) it occurs 44 times in the Old Testament, 13 times in Isaiah, 9 in Ruth, 8 in Numbers, 3 in Joshua, 2 in Leviticus, Deuteronomy and Psalms, and once in H Samuel, I Kings, Jeremiah, Proverbs and Job (in this verse). Of those occurrences, it is translated as follows in the King James Version: Redeemer 18 times, including every occurrence in Isaiah, Psalms, Jeremiah, Proverbs and Job. Twice (in Leviticus) it is rendered by “redeemer” or “one to redeem.” Ten times it is translated “kinsman,” including all 9 occurrences in Ruth, and once by the similar word “kinsfolk.” It is translated “revenger” 7 times and “avenger” 6 times. There are, then, three chief categories: Redeemer, Kinsman, and Avenger or Revenger, and all of them give us an insight into the meaning of the word, and various aspects of what is included in the word can be gained from those expressions. As we study this word and its various connotations, let us keep in mind that in it are reflected some aspects of the social and political life of the Israelites and probably also various other people of ancient Near Eastern times.

In its etymology, the verb גָּאַל, from which the participle גֹּאֲלִי is derived, has the idea of “laying claim to a person or thing,” “claiming back from another’s authority,” “redeeming,” “buying back,” “freeing,” “delivering.” It suggests a definite relationship between the redeemer and the one redeemed. A study of the pertinent Old Testament passages in which the word appears will reveal a number of functions, both privileges and duties, which a גֹּאֲלִי might perform. In his commentary on the Book of Job, J. T. Marshall lists five functions of a גֹּאֲלִי, and supplies the following Old Testament passages as references:

1. To ransom a poor kinsman from slavery. Leviticus 25:41; Isaiah 49:7, 26; Isaiah 54:5, 8. (We should add that the Isaiah references pertain to God, not man, and there the word “Redeemer” must be capitalized.)
2. To pay off mortgages contracted through poverty. Leviticus 25:25.
3. To marry his brother’s widow, if childless. Ruth 4:10. (In Ruth, that aspect of the duties of the **גֹּאֵל** is most prominent; hence the word is consistently translated “kinsman” there in the King James Version.)
4. To avenge him when he is slain. Numbers 35.
5. To defend his cause in a lawsuit. Psalm 119:154; Proverbs 23:11; Jeremiah 50:34.

A number of the versions translate the word “Vindicator.” However, that expresses only one aspect of his functions.

As in a number of Old Testament passages, particularly those from the Book of Isaiah, the word **גֹּאֵל** in this passage definitely refers to God. And, even more specifically, we believe that it refers to the Second Person of the Godhead, who is frequently referred to as the Angel of the LORD, the **מַלְאָכִי הַיְהוָה**, a very definite and specific person who is unquestionably identified with God, and who is the pre-incarnate Son of God, through whom the Father revealed Himself in the Old Testament as well as the New Testament. Among other passages, John 1:18 should convince us of that.

It is this Redeemer, this Son of God, in whom Job confesses his faith here. And how fitting that title is! For as our **גֹּאֵל**, Jesus, is our Kinsman. True God from eternity, He willingly consented to come down to earth, be born of the Virgin Mary, become of the same flesh with us, yet without sin. How that wonderful message of Christmas ought to give us enduring hope and joy! For Jesus is our Kinsman, our Brother, yes, our Immanuel: God with us, God who partook of our flesh and blood, God who Himself endured trials, temptations and sufferings, God who even went to the cross to die for us, and who therefore can feel and understand every trouble or problem that we might have to endure.

But as our **גֹּאֵל**, Jesus is even more. By virtue of His unique person, as God and Man, He is our Redeemer. He has snatched us from the jaws of hell, and made it possible for us through faith in Him to live to all eternity in heaven. Surely, as a believer in Old Testament times, Job also was aware of that aspect of his **גֹּאֵל**. Whatever the time of Job’s life might have been, he probably did not live before Abraham, but rather after him. We do know from the Book of Ezekiel that he was a historical person (Ezek. 14:14, 20). Now Abraham and the other patriarchs had a knowledge of the resurrection, as we know from various New Testament passages. What should prevent Job from having had such knowledge? We know he lived a long time. People in those days could well have passed on a knowledge of the coming Savior and the various doctrines pertaining to salvation.

Many of the ancients firmly believed that Job here spoke of the resurrection. Thus St. Jerome: “What can be clearer than this prophecy? No one living after Christ has spoken more plainly of the resurrection than Job, who lived before Him.” (Quoted from Robert Frew, in his criticism of Barnes’ interpretation of this passage in his *Notes*.) But more on this central message of the passage later. We felt we had to touch on it here, since as Job’s Redeemer and ours our Savior had to atone for our sins, suffer and die, and rise again, that we might on the Last Day also rise from the dead.

Let us mention just one more aspect of His work as **גֹּאֵל**. This is of immediate importance for this passage, and for that reason many have translated it as such: “VINDICATOR.” Job had been unjustly accused by his friends. His very integrity had been attacked. He wanted posterity to know the facts of the case, and for that reason he expressed the strong wish that his words might be inscribed in such a manner that they might be preserved. But more: he felt the need of a spokesman, someone who might take up his cause, defend him, vindicate him, avenge him over against his accusers. Here we surely have a forensic scene. As there were those who unjustly accused Job, so also there are those who unjustly accuse us. Above all, there is the great Adversary, Satan, who is called the Accuser and Slanderer, the Devil. But we have an Advocate, Jesus Christ, the Righteous, our Avenger, our Vindicator, who pleads our cause before our Heavenly Father. Therefore we

can boldly declare with Paul: “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth.... Who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us” (Rom. 8:33, 34).

Before we leave the word **יִשְׁלַח**, let us note the suffix: “My Redeemer,” that is, the one who has redeemed *me*. While we noted this grammatically before, let us repeat that it expresses a deep personal confession, and add that it establishes a strong bond between the Redeemer and the redeemed, as Luther effectively states in the beautiful and familiar words of his explanation to the Second Article.

The next word in the Hebrew text brings to a close the first half of verse 25: **יָחַי**. Notice the *athnach*, which commonly designates a pause in the middle of a sentence. In pause, the *pathah* under the **יָ** has been lengthened to *qames*. This word, **יָחַי**, is in most versions translated as though it were a verb: “liveth” or “lives.” There is nothing wrong with such a translation. However, it is more effectively translated as a noun or an adjective, because it *is* one, and it then gives greater prominence to the attribute or quality: “is living,” “is alive.” If it were the finite verb, the form would probably be **יָחַיִךְ**, the imperfect tense of the verb **יָחַי**. The word **יָחַי** may be classified as either a noun or an adjective, and thus mean “life” or “living,” “alive.” In Hebrew the line is often very thin between the two, just as it may be in various other languages, for example German, with its *viel Gutes* and English, “much good.” We would prefer to regard it as an adjective here, however. When it is used as a noun, it is generally in the plural: **יָחַיִם**, literally “the operations of life.” Here it apparently directly modifies the noun **יִשְׁלַח**, which precedes it. Now the word is definite, with an objective pronominal suffix. On the other hand, **יָחַי** is without the article, and therefore indefinite, used as a predicate adjective, which we connect to the foregoing “my Redeemer” with the copula “is,” which in Hebrew is nearly always implied. And although the predicate adjective most frequently precedes the noun it modifies, here it follows, probably because of the emphasis placed on **יִשְׁלַח**.

Our Redeemer “IS ALIVE,” “IS LIVING.” He neither slumbers nor sleeps, much less is DEAD. As our Redeemer who Himself conquered death, and rose from the dead on the third day, He has ransomed us from the power of death. Cf. Hosea 13:14 and I Corinthians 15:55–57. As YAHWEH, the great I AM THAT I AM, He not only HAS life but He IS life. His eternal existence we give expression to every time we say or sing the doxology. But even more: Not only *is* He Himself LIVING and LIFE itself, but He imparts and communicates life to others. Yes, He makes ALIVE. Just as at the bier of the young man of Nain, in the room of the daughter of Jairus, and at the tomb of Lazarus, so also whenever Jesus encounters death, it is LIFE that gains the victory, not death. And so it will be at the Great Resurrection, to which we believe Job refers in these words and the verses that follow. No wonder that in Handel’s masterpiece, *THE MESSIAH*, one of the most beautiful passages is the one which uses words from this verse and verses from I Corinthians 15. Despite the efforts of the critics and the skeptics, those words are still sung and will be sung as long as people can sing.

The three expressions that remain in this verse have all been variously interpreted, and will require individual attention.

וְיָחַיִךְ. There is virtual unanimity in the translation of the *waw*, which here must be taken as “and.” But with regard to the word itself, **יָחַיִךְ**, there is general difference of opinion. The Septuagint is unintelligible on this word, as you may see. The Vulgate adds the word *die* (meaning “day”), which is unwarranted. This has been perpetuated in the King James Version and a few other translations. According to that interpretation, the word is taken to be an adverb, also in those translations which render it “at last,” or similarly, which at least obviate the need of inserting a word, which is a practice one should shy away from. We would prefer taking it as a substantive—whether you call it a noun or a substantivized adjective is a moot question. But first let us note its precise meaning.

וְיָחַיִךְ is one of a number of words derived from the verb **יָחַי**, which means “to remain behind,” “delay,” “tarry.” Two other common words are the word **אֲחֵרִים**, properly a substantive, but also used as a preposition, conjunction and adverb, as we shall see in the next verse. It basically means “the following part,” and is often translated “after” or “behind.” Another word, **אֲחֵרִים**, is properly an adjective, and means “another,”

“other,” literally, “one coming behind.” Now this word, אַחֲרָיִךְ, refers to someone or something “coming after or behind,” and it can have either a local or a temporal meaning. In a specialized sense, along with יָם, “sea,” referring to the Mediterranean Sea, it means the west. But it may also refer to time. It is used as an adjective with the word דּוֹר, generation, in a number of passages. It is also used as a noun, by itself, in Job 18:20, Ecclesiastes 1:11 and 4:16. We believe it is thus used also here. Therefore we translate it: “AND AS THE LAST ONE HE SHALL STAND UPON THE DUST.” We translate it definitely, “THE LAST ONE,” because the antecedent “My Redeemer” is definite, and this expression refers back to it, and stands in apposition to the subject “He” understood in the verb at the close of this sentence. Among those who translate this word in this manner we can mention the Norwegian Bible of 1892, Stoeckhardt, Fuerbringer, Heerboth, Delitzsch, the Jerusalem Bible, Robert Young, and Pye Smith.

That this is an appropriate epithet for our Redeemer is evident from Old Testament passages such as Isaiah 41:4; 44:6; and 48:12. We are also reminded of I Corinthians 15:45, where Jesus is called “the last Adam,” and Revelation 1:8, 11, 17, where Jesus calls Himself Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the Ending, the First and the Last. His day, Judgment Day, is repeatedly called “the Last Day” in the Old Testament. That this passage speaks of THAT day, and not merely an indefinite date some time in the future when Job will be vindicated, ought to be clear to every honest and devout reader. The eschatological character of this inspired passage is further indicated by the words that follow.

First we have the prepositional phrase עַל-עֲפָר, which is used adverbially here to modify the verb that follows. עַל is one of the most common prepositions in Hebrew. In contrast to a similar preposition אֶל, עַל has the basic meaning of “upon,” “above,” “over.” The most common meaning is “upon.” Although it has many derived meanings, and is variously translated in figurative or metaphorical expressions, there is no reason here to depart from its literal local meaning. Most of the versions translate it “upon.” There is no warrant for the Vulgate’s rendering, which renders it “from” the earth, and in addition translates the verb אֶקְוֶה in the first person: “I shall arise,” an *impossibility* without textual emendation. Nor can Luther’s version be defended, which is similar: “Und er wird mich hernach aus der Erde auferwecken,” making the verb causative—again an impossibility. In spite of three grammatical mistakes in this half of the verse, however, Luther’s translation does turn out to be happy in its meaning, and reveals a true spiritual insight. That is surely to the credit of the great Reformer, who had a grasp of the meaning of Scripture such as few others have had. But more about the verb אֶקְוֶה after we have looked at the next word: פָּר.

The word עֲפָר occurs over 100 times in the Old Testament. The basic meaning is “dry earth,” “dust.” Although in a few cases it might well mean “moist earth,” or a “clod of soil,” as in the passage of the creation of man, the basic notion is “loose, dry earth,” “dust.” It may sometimes mean “rubble,” “rubbish,” “debris,” sometimes “mortar” or “plaster,” sometimes the “realm of the low and worthless,” it may also refer to the “realm of the frail, the transitory, the dead,” “the grave,” which would be the physical location in which people have been placed to undergo the process of disintegration. This condition must be referred to in Genesis 3:19, as well as in several other Old Testament passages, including a number from Job: 4:19; 7:21; 10:9; 14:8; 17:16; 20:11; 22:24; 30:6; 34:15. We prefer to take the word in that sense here, too. In Psalm 30:9 it is used of a person who has died: “Shall the dust praise thee?” הַיּוֹרֵךְ עֲפָר.

Although in the Septuagint the word γῆ is used, and in the Vulgate *terra*, it is difficult to understand עֲפָר here as a direct synonym of אֶרֶץ, “earth,” or even of אֲרָצָה, “ground.” If that were the precise meaning of this text, why would not one of those words be used? Instead, עֲפָר is used. Why is it used? Barnes suggests: “It may be because the word *dust* is emphatic, as being contrasted with heaven, the residence of the Deity.” But is this all? Does it refer only to this earth as such, as is suggested by the King James Version and many others? Or is it more specific, so that it should be rendered “dust,” as in many translations?

Matthew Henry also understood it to mean “dust,” but he interpreted “dust” to refer to God’s *enemies*, a most unwarranted interpretation! Much better, Frew (in Barnes’ *Notes*), differing with Barnes, declares: “That עֲפָר, dust, is sometimes used to denote the earth, as in chap. 41:33 is allowed. But while those who reject the

idea of the resurrection cannot understand why THIS word should be used, rather than the ordinary term for earth, אֶרֶץ, that rejected idea sufficiently explains it. By a beautiful and obvious figure, the dust is put for the dead, as in Psalm 30:9 "...Shall the DUST praise thee?" (p. xiii). Although Fuerbringer renders it "earth," he admits that "the dust of death or the grave can be meant." Stoeckhardt understands it as "the dust of decomposition." Clark interprets it "over the dead." Although on some points we would differ with Delitzsch's interpretation, we agree with his exegesis on this phrase, עַל-עֶפְרָר. He states: "Upon the dust in which he is now soon to be laid, into which he is now soon to be changed, will He, the Rescuer of his honor, arise, and set His divine seal to Job's own testimony thus made permanent in the monumental inscription." Even Driver in the *International Critical Commentary* interprets this phrase as "upon the dust," that is, the "grave." That is also our interpretation. While we do not deny that on the Last Day Jesus Christ will come visibly to *earth*, we feel that it here more specifically refers to the *dust* of the dead, the *grave*, over which He will rise, as we see from the last word in this verse.

אֶרֶץ is from the verb אָרַץ. It occurs very frequently in the Old Testament. In the *qal* alone, in which form it is found here, it occurs over 460 times. The basic meaning of the verb is to "arise," "stand up." Then it also can mean "stand," "appear." From the various versions you will learn that both meanings are well represented. This last half of the verse is well rendered by Theodotion in his ancient Greek version: *καὶ ἔσχατον ἐπὶ χώματος ἀναστήσει*. Note that he takes אָרַץ in apposition to the implied subject in the verb by rendering it *ἔσχατον*: (as) last one; that he translates עֶפְרָר with *χώματος*—though not as good as *χοός*, yet better than *γης*, and the verb אָרַץ with *ἀναστήσει*, which in itself could be transitive or intransitive, but here, because there is no direct object, it must be intransitive: "he will arise." As the word stands in the Masoretic Text, there should be no question about it. Furthermore, there is no variant reading listed in the notes of the Kittel Edition of the Hebrew Bible. And yet, there are those who would read the word differently. By changing the vowel pointing, some would make this out to be a different verb. Instead of אָרַץ they would read אֶרַץ, the imperfect of אָרַץ, with the first root letter, *nun* assimilating, as it does under such conditions. The meaning would then be "he shall avenge," "he shall take vengeance," presumably with reference to one aspect of the functions of the אֱלֹהִים. But that reading has no support from either the text itself nor from the ancient versions, and even Driver, who indulges in his share of textual emendation, comments that reading "would yield no suitable meaning in the context."

We have mentioned Luther's translation of this word: *aufserwecken*. He would take this as the causative "cause to awaken," "wake somebody up," instead of the intransitive. In the first place, his translation of the verb is rather free: "waken," rather than "rise," "stand up." Furthermore, he makes it causative, which is unjustified. The Masoretic Text reads: אָרַץ, the simple *qal*, "arise." To be the causative *hiphil* it would have to read אֶרַץ, with a *yodh* instead of a *waw*. Now while it is true that there are a number of variant readings involving the *waw* and the *yodh*, there is no indication in the critical apparatus that such is the case here. At best, to read the verb אֶרַץ would involve a textual correction. Here there is no evidence that such is warranted, and Luther's rendering is grammatically wrong, although theologically flawless. It also lacks the direct object, which would have to be expressed, since there is no suffix on the verb. As also previously mentioned, the Vulgate also has a different reading for this verb, one that involves a change of consonant, and as such would require a major overhauling of the text. In its translation *surrecturus sum*, the Vulgate misreads the Hebrew verb, substituting the first person singular form אֶרַץ for the third person singular, אָרַץ. Jerome clearly understood this passage as referring to the resurrection; but here he has intruded his viewpoint upon the text. Now, we know that Job, along with other believers, could say: "I shall rise." But DOES he say it in this verb? No. Although this, we believe, speaks of the resurrection, it is the Redeemer who is here described as "rising" NOT at His own resurrection, but at OURS on the Last Day. The verb here, then, says: "He shall rise." As a result of His rising, His standing forth on that day, all the dead shall also rise at the Great Resurrection.

There is another thought in this verb, which, we feel, ought to be mentioned, and the expression of which will not do violence to the text. In keeping with the idea of “Vindicator” which the word **נָסַח** contains, we can declare that the word “rise” or “stand forth” refers to the Judgment. In his comments and criticism of Barnes’ interpretation of this passage, Robert Frew states: “**קָיָם** is clearly a forensic term (see Psalm 74:22; Job 31:13, 14), indicating a rising to the judgment seat; and, although taken by itself it may not determine whether that judgment should be ‘visible or not,’ yet when conjoined with ‘the dust,’ or ‘dead,’ to what other judgment can it refer than that which is connected with the resurrection?” (Barnes, *Notes*, p. xiii). In his comments on this verse, P. E. Kretzmann expresses this thought well: “The time will come when the Redeemer will appear as the Advocate and Vindicator of those who put their trust in Him, as the Savior who leads to the beholding of God. When He, on the Last Day, will step on this earth, the many millions of bodies that have returned to the dust will feel the influence of His almighty power, arise from their graves, and join the Redeemer, to be led by Him into everlasting glory.”

Verse 26. **וְאַחֵר עֹרִי נִקְפְּזוּתָהּ וּמִבְּשָׂרִי אֶחְזָקָה אֱלֹהִים:**

AND AFTERWARD WITH MY SKIN THEY SURROUND THIS (namely, my body), AND OUT OF MY FLESH I SHALL BEHOLD GOD.

The first half of this verse is the most difficult portion of this perplexing passage. Every one of the four words poses a problem, and there is no easy solution for any of them. We have arrived at the interpretation and translation we have given only after careful investigating and considerable weighing of possible interpretations and a certain amount of revision of our own opinion—particularly on the verb, but also on the other words. Again we shall take them in order.

We shall do this, realizing that the close connection between the words will necessitate a certain amount of recapitulation at the end of the verse.

The first expression is **וְאַחֵר**, composed of the conjunction *waw* and the word **אַחֵר**. Here the *waw* is best rendered “and,” since it is neither emphatic nor adversative, but simply progressive. Thus it is translated in most versions. There is no need of inserting the word “though” into the text, as the King James Version does.

The word **אַחֵר** has been variously understood. The etymology we have already touched on in our discussion of **אֶחָרָה** in the previous verse. Let us briefly recapitulate. The basic notion is that of “following,” “coming after,” “coming behind.” Originally it is a substantive, meaning “the following part.” Thus it is used in II Samuel 2:23. However, like some other Hebrew words, such as **בֵּינָם**, “between,” it has virtually lost its significance as a noun, and is used sometimes as a preposition, sometimes as a conjunction, usually when followed by **אַחֵרָה**, and sometimes as an adverb. It may be used either of *place* or of *time*. As a preposition, it may mean “behind” (of place) or “after” (of time). As a conjunction it is usually temporal, and means “after that,” or as we usually say now, simply “after.” As an adverb, it is sometimes used of place, meaning “behind,” in Genesis 22:13 and Psalm 68:26, 25 in our version. It is used a number of times in a temporal sense, meaning “afterwards,” for example in Genesis 10:18; 18:5; 24:55; 30:21; Judges 19:5; Leviticus 14:8, 19; 15:28; 22:7; and Numbers 5:26.

The basic question now is: What part of speech is the word **אַחֵר** in this verse? This is one of the most difficult decisions we have to make. Every one of the three possibilities has its merits as well as its problems.

Unfortunately, we get no help from the Septuagint, which bypasses the word. And the Vulgate is of limited help in its rather free translation *rursum*, which means “again.” It does, however, indicate that Jerome understood the word **אַחֵר** to be an adverb rather than a preposition or a conjunction. And that we would expect, since, in keeping with the Septuagint, he renders the verb that follows, **נִקְפְּזָהּ**, with a word meaning to “envelop” or “cover,” rather than the opposite meaning given in most translations, “tear off,” “destroy,” or similarly. That word will be studied in some detail shortly. Here, however, we must mention that our interpretation of that verb must have a direct bearing on our interpretation of this word, and on our decision as to what part of speech it is.

Is it a preposition? There are a number of factors that might lead one to that conclusion. One is the accentual pointing in the text. Under the last consonant of the first word is the conjunctive accent *munah*, which connects the word with the one that follows, עֹרִי. On the other hand, under the first letter of that word is a disjunctive accent *Tiphha*, which separates that word from the verb that follows. Now while these marks are not inspired and therefore not binding, they merit our careful consideration. The Masoretic pointing therefore would speak in favor of taking this as a preposition, which would be closely connected to the noun that follows. Heerboth's objection to taking אַחֲרַי as a preposition is due to the difficulty of construing it with עֹרִי and getting an intelligible meaning. On the other hand, Fuerbringer takes it as a preposition, and points to the accentuation of the text. But he interprets the verb that follows in the opposite manner that Heerboth, Stoeckhardt and Kretzmann do. To interpret אַחֲרַי as a preposition raises many problems—whether it be taken locally or temporally. It would seem best, if taken as a preposition, to be understood in the sense of “according to.” But we get that notion from the English, not the Hebrew. It is improbable that the Hebrew word ever has that connotation. Therefore, in spite of the accentuation, we would reject the view that this is a preposition, on the basis of the phrase itself and the context.

Is it a conjunction? As a conjunction, it would introduce a clause, in this case a temporal clause, as all the versions which construe it as such translate it. Such translations usually begin: “And after my skin is...,” and then comes the verb. When used as a conjunction, however, אַחֲרַי is usually followed by אַחֲרַי, analogous to the Latin *postquam*, the Norwegian *efterat*, and the Elizabethan English *after that*. But there are times when it is not followed by אַחֲרַי and yet is definitely a conjunction. Cf. Leviticus 14:43; Job 42:7; and Jeremiah 41:16. In each case there, however, the verb directly follows the conjunction. Fuerbringer makes a point of that in objecting to the view that it is a conjunction. While we would hesitate to insist on that position in such a poetic passage as this, in which the word order is rather fluid, we find we cannot accept the interpretation that this is a conjunction on account of problems that are raised by the three words that follow. When we have studied those words, עֹרִי and זָאֵת briefly and נִקְפּוּ at length, we shall also see, at least to some extent, why it is best to take the word אַחֲרַי as an adverb.

That there are problems connected with also this interpretation must be evident to all. There is first the accentuation, which appears to speak against this view. It would surely be easier if the next word were conjoined to the verb that follows rather than this one, which precedes. And yet it is not impossible to construe it as an adverb followed closely by the next word, “my skin,” which we shall soon consider. That אַחֲרַי is used as an adverb is clear, and we have already cited a few references. Fuerbringer objects to this interpretation because the adverb is separated from the verb by another word. We gave serious consideration to his objection, and must admit that such word order is unusual, even in poetry; but is it impossible? We doubt it.

We would hesitate to rule out the adverbial interpretation on grounds of word order, although we would give it serious attention. We realize that not many interpreters have taken it in this sense. In his way, Jerome did, as we have noted. So also did Luther, Stoeckhardt, Heerboth, and Kretzmann: all Lutherans. But in such matters we do not conduct a poll; rather, we try to establish the meaning of the text. In view of the words that follow, it seems best to construe אַחֲרַי as an adverb, and translate it “afterward.” It also seems best in view of the words that precede, which we shall once more translate: “AND I, I KNOW MY REDEEMER IS LIVING, AND AS THE LAST ONE HE SHALL STAND UPON THE DUST.” Then naturally follows, as a result of His standing upon the dust on that Last Day: “AND AFTERWARD WITH MY SKIN THEY SURROUND THIS, AND OUT OF MY FLESH I SHALL BEHOLD GOD.” “AFTERWARD” our verse begins. This “AFTERWARD” is the direct result of the Redeemer's presence and life-bestowing activity. The word “AFTERWARD” need not imply any great length of time; in fact, it can be instantaneous, as we believe it will be. But it does say “AFTERWARD.” This, in light of what both precedes and follows, seems to be the best interpretation of the first word.

Now comes the word עֹרִי, which most translators agree must mean “skin.” An exception is the Jerusalem Bible, a new Roman Catholic version, which renders it “my awaking,” in which the pointing would

have to be עֹרִי, with a *sureq* instead of a *holem*, to make it the infinitive construct *qal* with the first singular suffix. This already is a textual emendation, of which many have been perpetrated on this text. We shall discuss them briefly at the close of this verse.

It is not the meaning, but the syntactical function of the word עֹרִי, that has been disputed. The meaning is clear: “skin,” “hide,” “leather.” Although the German translations use the word *Haut*, and the Norwegian *Hud*, the English cognate “hide” is unsuitable for a human being, and so “skin” is the best word. That this is the meaning of the word cannot be disputed.

But what is its grammatical function? Is it the subject? Thus it is taken by many, including the Norwegian version, the English Revised Version, the American Standard Version, and others, whether they take the verb that follows in one sense or in its directly opposite sense. To construe it as the subject, however, is impossible, because the verb that follows is in the plural. To try to explain the plural of the verb by considering the noun to be collective, as in the case of the word עַם, would be futile here, for עֹרִי is never used that way. Nor would it make any sense to regard the noun as a plural, and change the *hireq* under the *resh* to a *pathah*. To say “my skins” would be senseless. And nothing short of altering the text could make a singular of the verb.

Is עֹרִי, then, the direct object of the verb? Thus the translation from the Peshitta, Robert Young’s translation, Pye Smith’s, and a few others. But this poses several problems that would virtually rule it out. For one thing, as Fuerbringer points out, there is a close connection between the two words that follow, as is also indicated by the *maqeph*. Whether or not the word זָאֵר is the direct object of the verb—we think it is—it would be hard to construe עֹרִי as a direct object. For one thing, there would then be two direct objects, and, most unusual, the one would precede and the other follow. Anyway, the accentuation strongly rules against that. We therefore disavow that possibility.

Is עֹרִי an object of a preposition? Those who hold אֶת־ to be a preposition—and there are many who do—would maintain that. Obviously those who take it to be a conjunction or an adverb do not. Our interpretation that אֶת־ is an adverb automatically eliminates the possibility that עֹרִי is the object of a preposition.

What remains then? It is possible to take עֹרִי in an adverbial sense to express instrument or means. Now the usual manner of doing that is to use the preposition בְּ, which in addition to “in” can mean “with” or “by,” similarly to the Greek preposition ἐν.

That in Hebrew it is possible to express various adverbial relationships without prepositions we know from several examples, both in prose and poetry. For example: Genesis 18:1: שָׁבַת בְּפֶתַח־הַאֹהֶל: “He was sitting (at) the door of the tent.” There are numerous other examples of the omission of the preposition in Hebrew. That is particularly true of poetry, and in a special sense of the Book of Job, where prepositions are used sparingly. Gesenius’ Grammar, edited by Kautzsch and translated by Cowley, has a number of examples of a noun preceding a subject and verb, as in the expression “my voice—I cry unto the Lord,” “my mouth—I cried,” as we have it in many Psalms, including 3:5; 27:7; 142:2; 66:17. He calls this a double subject—the person and the thing. He does, however, admit the possibility of construing the first as expressing instrument: “with my voice I cry,” “with my mouth I cry.” Thus most of the versions have it; that surely seems preferable. We feel we have such an instance here, where, as in other poetry, the preposition is omitted. Therefore we would translate it: “WITH MY SKIN.” The Vulgate takes it that way, rendering it “*pelle*,” the ablative of means, without a preposition: “with my skin.” Thus also Luther, Stoeckhardt, Heerboth, and Kretzmann, and also the Douay Version. Our somewhat detailed study of the next word will shed further light on this word.

The verb נִקְפֵּי unquestionably poses the greatest grammatical and exegetical problem of our text, and is one that must be confronted if we are to probe the meaning of this passage. A few facts about the word are, however, indisputable, assuming that we accept the reading of the Masoretic Text, as do text-oriented scholars, and do not attempt to solve the problem by amending or re-writing the text, as several have proposed to do. There appears to be no question about the tri-literal root of this verb, if we accept the reading as it stands. The

verb must be **נָקַף**. As for the meaning, we shall shortly consider that. Also, it is evident that this is the 3rd person plural form in the perfect tense. But beyond that there is considerable difference of opinion.

First, let us investigate the possible meanings of this verb as suggested in the lexicons. We have looked into two: Brown, Driver and Briggs' expanded edition of Gesenius' Hebrew Lexicon, and Koehler and Baumgartner's Hebrew Lexicon. Both list two different verbs having the identical root consonants **נָקַף**: one meaning to "strike," "smash" "strike down," "strike off," or "skin." The other verb of the same root consonants is given the meaning "surround," "go around," "cling to," "be attached to," "encircle," "enclose," "close in upon," "make round," "complete," "encompass," all in the *hiphil* causative sense, and also one occurrence in the simple *qal*: "go around." Both also list only two occurrences of this word: in Isaiah 10:34, and here in Job 19:26. With the aid of Lisowsky's *Hebrew Concordance* we have prepared a list of every occurrence of the word in the Old Testament, approximately 20 times, and attempted to classify them according to their syntactical usage (See Appendix II). More about that shortly. That the same word, composed of the very same letters, may have different and even opposite meanings in a language ought not surprise us. Compare the English verbs "ring" in the sense of "surround" as well as "toll" surely not synonymous; and the verbs "cleave" in the opposite senses of "cling" and "split." We apparently have two verbs, both **נָקַף**, with virtually opposite meanings. You may consult Appendix II, and also have your English Bible at hand. It would surely be difficult to deny that in Isaiah 10:34 the verb has the meaning of "cut down," as both the King James and the Revised Standard Version, and, in fact, most versions have it. Not only the word **בַּרְזֶל**, "iron," evidently standing for a weapon or instrument of iron, such as an ax, but also the parallel clause in the last part of the sentence, speaking of the fall of Lebanon, strongly suggests this meaning. However, this is the only verse of the Old Testament in which this verbal root clearly has this meaning. And it is one of only two possible *piel* forms of this verb in the Old Testament—the other being the verb in our text: **נָקַף**. But before we turn to that, let us examine the other occurrences of the verb. May we first mention, however, that the *piel* form of the verb often indicates intensity of action, as in Isaiah 10:34, just referred to. That undoubtedly has led many to take it as such in our verse, and to give it the same meaning as in the Isaiah verse: "strike off," instead of the other meaning: "surround," "enclose." Whether such a conclusion is warranted remains to be seen.

Only once in the Old Testament is the root **נָקַף** found in the simple *qal* stem or conjugation: in Isaiah 29:1. See items B in Appendix II. The first part of this verse reads in a literal translation: "Alas, Ariel, Ariel, the city where David encamped!" And then we read: "Add year upon year; let feasts go around." That last half of the verse, in parallel structure, expresses the passing of time in two ways: years are added to years, and feasts, which also express the passing of time, come and go. The verb "add" is the plural imperative; our verb, **נָקַף**, is here in its only instance in the *qal*, and in this context must be in the plural jussive: "Let feasts go around." That here it is the verb "go around" and not "strike off" is so obvious it need not be further pursued.

Such is also the case in every instance in which the verb is found in the *hiphil*: 16 in all, as you will see from the passages. That in every case it has the meaning of "surround," "enclose," is evident from a study of these verses and the context in which they are found. Space will not permit careful scrutiny of each passage. You may make such a study yourself. Let it only be said that, from the point of view of the *meaning* of the word, in every instance it can be rendered as "cause to go around," "surround," or "enclose," as we might expect in the *hiphil* stem, which most frequently expresses a causative relationship. Also, it is interesting to note that in many of these passages the verb **נָקַף**, in parallel statements, is used synonymously with the verb **סָבַב**, which means to "turn about," "go around," "surround," precisely the same, and its cognate **סָבַב**, "around." From the point of view of syntax, we classified them in the six categories given in Appendix II.

But what does that have to do with our text, in which the verb is clearly NOT in the *hiphil*? Quite a bit, we feel. Since this verb is so highly controversial we ought to have before us every instance of its occurrence. It also behooves us to investigate the ancient versions. In those passages, both the Septuagint and the Vulgate bear out the meanings we have referred to. Although a number of different words are used in the various passages, almost without exception they mean something like "surround," "enclose."

But what, does נִקְפָּי mean in our text? First we ought to note that it could be either the *niphal* or the *piel* form of the verb נִקַּף, and, of course, it must mean either “strike off” or “surround,” and either in the passive or the active meaning. The vowels as well as the consonants of this verb are identical in the case of the *niphal* and the *piel*. If it were *niphal*, the first consonant would be the *nun* preformative of the *niphal* in the perfect tense, and the *daghesh forte* would result from the assimilation of the first root consonant, *nun*, into the *qoph*. If it were the *piel*, the first consonant would be the regular first root consonant, and the *daghesh forte* would be the indication of the doubling of the second root consonant in the *piel* conjugation. In both cases the same vowel points would be used.

There are those who make this the *niphal*, which according to the context would make good sense. However, it is difficult if not impossible to account for the subject, which the *niphal*, being passive in this connection, would require. If עוֹרֵי were taken as the subject, it would have to be plural, which it is clearly not here, either by context or by form, since the possessive is that used with a singular noun; or it would have to be collective, of which there is no indication anywhere in Old Testament usage. Or if the demonstrative אֵלֶּה were taken as the subject, it would be the wrong number, singular. The syntax, therefore, rules out the *niphal*, and we must construe it as a *piel*.

In that connection another difficulty arises: the absence of any other instance of a *piel* except the one referred to in Isaiah 10:34, where it must mean “cut down” or something similar. That observation led Fuerbringer to conclude that it must mean that also in our passage, rather than to assume it to be a hapaxlegomenon, that is, the only instance of the verb “surround” in the *piel*. On the analogy of that one verse from Isaiah, as well as the participial form נִקְפָּי appearing in Isaiah 17:6 and 24:13, most translators have rendered the verb נִקְפָּי as “tear off,” “break up,” or “destroy,” even though several have translated it in the passive, apparently understanding it as a *niphal* rather than a *piel*. Of those who interpret the verb in this way, the majority understands it to be the main verb of this half verse, and co-ordinate with the verb אֶרְאֶה in the last half of the verse. However, there are a few who construe it as the verb of a relative clause, in which the relative pronoun אֲשֶׁר is to be supplied. Thus Fuerbringer, who translates it: “And after my skin which they thus destroy and out of my flesh will I see Eloha.” That is in accordance with acceptable Hebrew usage, as we know from Gesenius-Kautzsch-Cowley, 155 b,e,f. Fuerbringer feels this interpretation is preferable to taking it as a verb in a main clause, and that the meaning “destroy” is better than “surround.” That is also the opinion of many other commentators, including Delitzsch, who Categorically declares that it does NOT mean to “surround” but to “strike down,” for example, olives from the tree, Isaiah 17:6, or the trees themselves, so that they lie felled on the ground, Isaiah 10:34. He adds that “according to the usage of the Semitic languages,” this verse “can only be intended of the complete destruction of the skin, which is become cracked and broken by the leprosy” (pp. 358, 9).

Most of our English versions understand the word in that way. Our King James Version, and the other common English versions, have the word “destroy.” The later ones have it in the passive voice: “destroyed,” but the King James Version justifies the use of the active by inserting a word not in the text: “worms.” With all respect to those eminent scholars, we must reject that insertion as the unhappiest one of the seven that are found in these last three verses, all of which we can well dispense with. (There are seven italicized words in Job 19:25–27 in the King James Version.)

Those who translate the verb “destroy” or “tear off” see in this the destructive power of either disease, already taking its toll in this life, or death. They point to Job’s disease, which some have declared to have been leprosy, others elephantiasis, and still others severe boils. Those who disavow the reference to the resurrection interpret the last half of the verse to mean “without my flesh shall I see God,” that is, in a disembodied condition as unresurrected souls who see God spiritually. Thus they find a parallel between the destruction of the skin and such unphysical seeing of God. As for the word מִבְּשָׂרִי, we shall take up the various interpretations when we come to it. Suffice it to say that it is difficult to account for the parallelism in this verse if we interpret the skin to be destroyed, and yet see God physically IN or FROM OUT OF our flesh, as we read

in the King James Version or as Fuerbringer takes it. That involves a change from a condition of corruption to a condition of a glorified resurrection within the same verse. The parallelism would rather require that we be consistent: either say “my skin is destroyed, and without my flesh I shall see God,” or “with my skin I am surrounded, and from out of my flesh I shall see God.” We feel that either the verse speaks of the resurrection in both parts, or that it speaks of it in neither.

How, then, are we to take the word **נִצַּלְתָּ**—as “destroy” or “surround”? In the first case, we have a clear parallel passage in the Same form, *piel*. In the second, we admittedly do not have that, but we DO have 17 clear passages in which it means “surround.” 16 are in the *hiphil*. The question, then, is this: Could this verb mean that in the *piel*? We believe it COULD. One other instance does not make an impressive case for the meaning “destroy,” “cut down.” Is it not possible for the *piel* to be used ONCE in the meaning “surround,” if the *qal* is once found with that meaning, and if the *piel* is once found with the other meaning? There is also another consideration. The *hiphil* is well-attested in the sense “surround.” We might then think: Why would the *piel* be used in that sense, since the *hiphil* is? However, we know of several verbs that have similar meanings in both the *piel* and the *hiphil*, both being used in a causative sense, including **נָצַל**, **נָרַל**, **יָחַל**, **יָשַׁב**, **חָסַר**. Although in some cases there are clear distinctions in meaning, in other cases there is no discernible difference at all. It is therefore possible and even probable that the *piel* of this verb could have about the same shade of meaning as the *hiphil*. It would, then, mean “cause to go around,” “surround.” But what would the subject be? As we have already observed, it cannot be **עוֹרִי** because of the number or **זַרְעִי** because of the number and the gender. There remains then the possibility of finding the subject implied in the verb: “they surround.” Who are the “they”? The worms? The destructive forces? No. We would take it as the impersonal subject, as we may do in English: “They say,” or in German: *Man sagt*. In Hebrew too this is an accepted idiom to express the passive, as we know from Gesenius-Kautzsch-Cowley, 144 g, in which we find many Old Testament passages containing the impersonal third person plural to express the passive notion. Whether he took it as a *niphal* or a *piel*, Kretzmann translated it in the passive. So also did Stoeckhardt, and Heerboth. The latter, however, in his study of this passage in *LEHRE UND WEHRE*, appears to say too much when on the basis of the plural he refers it directly to the Triune God. Of course we believe that God is the one who will clothe us in our new skin and glorified bodies at the resurrection; but we feel it is pressing it too far to make this word refer both to the plural of the passive notion and the plural of the Trinity.

Although we are in the minority in our interpretation of this verb, and very few modern-day interpreters hold our position, we have good ancient evidence on our side. The Septuagint has **ἀνατλῶν**, “drawing up,” surely much closer to the idea of “Surround” than that of “destroy.” The Vulgate has *circumdabor*, wrong in the person and number, but surely clear in its meaning: “surrounded,” “enveloped.” Luther, of course, has *umgeben*, and Stoeckhardt *umgibt man*, the German impersonal. Besides Heerboth and Kretzmann, a number of others, including several Catholic versions, understand it to mean “surround,” not “destroy.” This surely, is a far clearer and stronger expression of the resurrection of the body. Furthermore, the perfect tense of the verb emphasizes the certainty of the resurrection, which is here long in advance viewed as an accomplished fact.

There remains, then, the last word in the first half of verse 26: the demonstrative **זֶּה**. This is the feminine singular of the demonstrative pronoun or adjective meaning “this.” Here it is evidently used alone, with no other word to modify. As such we would take it to be a pronoun. Some, however, take it adverbially: “thus,” instead of “this.” So Fuerbringer, who makes it modify the verb, and also the University of Chicago translation, which renders it “like this!” However, this is a somewhat unusual construction, and we would rather take it as a pronoun, “this.”

Now if we do, what place would it have in the sentence? As a subject it has been ruled out, for it does not agree with the verb. We would therefore take it to be the object of the verb which immediately precedes it and is connected to it with a *maqeph*. Therefore we have rendered it: “THEY SURROUND THIS.” “THIS” WHAT? The King James Version has supplied “BODY,” which must be what it refers to. In comparison to the Greek New Testament, the Hebrew Old Testament has no word like **σῶμα** that regularly refers to the body. Of the words that may be used, **בֶּטֶן** “womb,” “belly,” may be used, and it is feminine, to agree with **זֶּה**. Another

possibility would be עֲצָם, “bone.” But it would not be necessary to think of any particular word. Job could well have thought of his body, racked by disease and tortured by pain, as a thing hardly worthy of any other descriptive term than “this.” A number of commentators have mentioned this. And so we have rendered the first half of this verse as: “AND AFTERWARD WITH MY SKIN THEY SURROUND THIS.” We hope now that, in the light of our study of the last two words, our interpretation of the first two is a bit clearer: namely, taking אָחַר as an adverb, and עִוְרִי as an expression of means or instrument, minus the ך. We consider this interpretation to be grammatically possible and theologically preferable to alternate interpretations.

On account of the great difficulties of this half of the verse, many have resorted to textual emendation, by which they would try to solve the problems by changing the text. The textual apparatus in the Kittel Edition of the Hebrew Bible reveals that. For אָחַר, אָחַר, “I shall see,” has been suggested. Some would change עִוְרִי to עִוְרִי, “my witness,” which would involve, not only a change of the *resh* to a *daleth*, similar letters, to be sure, but also the omission of the *waw* in the consonantal text—a serious matter. The critical notes also list other attempts at solving the problem. All of them involve tampering with the text: יִנְקֶה אֹתִי, “he will lift himself up beside (literally, with) me”; יִנְקֶם אֹתִי, “he will raise me up”; יִנְקֶה אֹתוֹ, “he will lift up his sign,” an emendation resorted to by several, and יִנְקֶה בְּזֹאת, which is done to solve the problem of the plural form of the verb by making it singular, and hence in the *niphal*, and also to give the demonstrative the prepositional prefix meaning: “like,” “as.” The meaning would then be, according to Driver: “Within my skin thus struck away.” However, Driver does not accept that emendation. We reject it because it does violence to the text. The *waw* at the end of the verb would hardly be confused with a *kaph* at the beginning of the next word at any stage of Hebrew orthography. We shall mention only four other emendations of the words יִנְקֶה בְּזֹאת and their meanings: יִשְׁקֶפֶתִי, “lean over and look out”; יִנְקֶפֶתִי, “spring out”; יִנְקֶפֶה זֹאת “this is struck off,” making it the *qal* instead of the *piel* or *niphal*, and changing the ending of the verb to a *he* to make it agree with זֹאת; and יִנְקֶמֶת זֹאת, “vengeance of or for this.” Obviously we would reject any and all of these attempts at solving the problem because they involve doing violence to the sacred Word of God, which, as we confess, is God-given and inspired, and cannot be broken; and basically, such attempts reveal an irreverence for those Scriptures, which a true Christian ought to treasure, uphold, defend, and diligently search with the prayer that God will give him the faith to believe that Word and further light to understand it, even though in this life such understanding will never be perfect. We therefore abide by the text as given in our Hebrew Bible, convinced that here too the true meaning is ONE, and striving also here to find that meaning.

Let us, then, turn to the last half of this verse, in which the most highly disputed exegetical point centers around the second letter, the prefixed *mem* following the conjunction *waw*. But first let us read and translate that portion.

The Hebrew text for the last part of verse 26 reads:

וּמִבְּשָׂרִי אֶחְזֶה אֱלֹהִים:

Our translation is: AND OUT OF MY FLESH I SHALL BEHOLD GOD.

Let us begin with the conjunction *waw*. That has been rendered in various ways. The Septuagint, in its unique and puzzling translation of this passage, renders the word ψάρ, “for.” The King James Version and the English Revised Version, apparently seeing a contrast here to the first half of the verse, translate it “yet.” A number of versions understand it to be temporal: “then.” A few do not even translate the *waw*. We prefer to translate it “and,” as do many translators and commentators. That would be in keeping with the parallel structure of the verse, the two members of which we maintain are not antithetical but synonymous in meaning: “AND AFTERWARD WITH MY SKIN THEY SURROUND THIS, AND OUT OF MY FLESH I SHALL BEHOLD GOD.”

As mentioned before, the chief exegetical problem of this half of the verse concerns the *mem* of this word וּמִבְּשָׂרִי. The question is not concerning the word itself; all are agreed that it must be the preposition מִן, the last letter of which is assimilated into the first letter of the word בְּשָׂרִי, which here has the first person

singular possessive suffix. But there are wide differences of opinion regarding the specific meaning of the preposition מִן in this passage. Before we take that up, however, let us look at the word בְּשָׂר , since an understanding of that word is essential to an understanding of the significance of the prefixed preposition.

The word בְּשָׂר here occurs with two prefixed elements and one suffix. The *daghesh forte* results from the assimilation of the nun into the *beth*. The *shewa* under the *beth* is the result of the reduction of that syllable, since the suffix carries the accent. The word בְּשָׂר occurs 266 times in the Old Testament. Several other Semitic languages have cognate words. In Ugaritic, the word means “flesh,” as in Hebrew; also in Aramaic. In Akkadian, it refers to “blood-relation.” A related Arabic word means “skin.” In Hebrew, the most common meaning is “flesh.” It can refer to the flesh of animals as well as that of men. Occasionally it is used by metonymy for man-kind, or even for all living beings, particularly in the chapters of Genesis dealing with the Flood and its aftermath. At times it refers to kindred or blood-relations, but even there the physical aspect is most prominent, as in the well-known passages “bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh,” and “they shall become one flesh.” Finally, in a few passages it is euphemistically used for the male genital organ. A study of the word, therefore, convinces a person that it is invariably used of the physical flesh contained in a person’s physical body, and cannot possibly refer to a disembodied spirit. The parallelism with the word for *skin*, עוֹר , which is without exception physical, also decides that question. What our passage is speaking about, then, is NOT merely the immortality of the soul, which philosophers from ancient times until now have professed and taught, but the resurrection of the body, which is a unique doctrine of the Christian religion.

But does our passage teach that? If you compare the various translations in Appendix I, you will find no unanimity. And it all hinges on that one letter *mem*, the preposition prefixed to the word בְּשָׂר . If you were to take a count, you would find the two opposing camps fairly even: some taking it in its original local sense, “OUT OF,” and others in its derived exclusive sense, “WITHOUT.” And, of course, there are those who take it neither way. The King James Version renders it “IN,” which is hardly admissible from the grammatical viewpoint, but which is its meaning is compatible with “out of.” Similarly the Douay Version and Knox’s translation, both by Catholics.

The word מִן , as we might expect, occurs very frequently in the Old Testament, and it is used to express a variety of notions. Curiously enough it is found neither in Akkadian nor Ugaritic, both of which use common prepositions to express those relationship ideas. The original meaning appears to be “part of,” “out of,” “from.” Thus we can understand its frequent usage to express the partitive idea, “some of these, some of those”; also the local idea, “out of,” “from”; and, since the notion “out of” can readily merge into that of “without,” “not having” can be understood. All of those meanings are well attested, as are a number of others, including a temporal meaning, “from” this time to that; its use in correlative combinations, “from ... to,” as for example in the expression “from old to young,” meaning “both old and young”; a common use to express comparison, as in the statement “He is old from me,” meaning “He is older than I”; and also its use to express casual relationships. These are the chief meanings of the preposition מִן . It would, of course, be impossible to examine every instance in which it would be found without reading the whole Old Testament in Hebrew with that specific point in mind.

In this passage, however, the choice is narrowed down to two possible interpretations: 1. The exclusive or privative meaning, “without,” “being absent from,” “free from.” Delitzsch holds and defends that interpretation. So also does Driver, who refers to Job 11:15 as evidence for that use of מִן . Davidson quotes, among other passages, Numbers 15:24 in the phrase “without the knowledge of the congregation,” literally, “away from the eyes of the congregation.” There is no doubt that there is this use of the preposition מִן , and we can understand that several, including also Pope in the ANCHOR BIBLE, have rendered it thus. Many of those who do obviously feel that this passage has nothing to say about the resurrection of the dead. In fact, most critics hold that Old Testament believers were not aware of that teaching until much later. That Daniel (whom critics place several centuries later than we do) taught the doctrine, many of them will concede; but hardly

David or anyone before his time, including Job, who was several centuries earlier. This they maintain in spite of substantial New Testament evidence that Abraham and others believed the doctrine of the resurrection.

However, an equally strong case, and possibly even stronger case, can be made for the other meaning of **מִן** even on grammatical grounds, apart from the theology. As in the case of most if not all prepositions, the basic meaning of **מִן** is *local*. The central concept, then, is “from out of,” a local one; the meaning “away from,” “deprived of,” “absent from,” is a derived one, though admittedly often employed. It is the result of a movement away from, so that one is “without” something. Now in the situation of our text, in which Job uses vivid and concrete language to describe what he is sure is going to happen, it would surely seem preferable to use the word **מִן** in its original sense, “from,” “out of.” We are confident that the unprejudiced reader who would read these lines would be more inclined to interpret it “from out of,” than “without.” Moreover, if we consider and study the context, we are convinced that this is the only tenable interpretation. Look at what precedes: “AND AFTERWARD WITH MY SKIN THEY SURROUND THIS,” (that is: “AND AFTERWARD WITH MY SKIN THIS—namely, my body—IS SURROUNDED,”) a truly physical description which, according to our interpretation, already speaks of the resurrection; and then the closing verse, which we shall soon consider, and which we would translate thus: “WHOM I SHALL BEHOLD FOR MYSELF, AND MY EYES SHALL SEE, AND NOT ANOTHER (that is: I, and not another); MY KIDNEYS ARE CONSUMED WITHIN MY BOSOM.” He there declares that he himself shall see the Redeemer, and, to rule out any possibility of a disembodied spiritual vision, he specifically states that his EYES shall see his Redeemer. In saying this, did Job anticipate such skepticism as has been characteristic of many who have studied and translated his words? Did the Lord see fit to record these words specifically to preserve people from denying the very thing he is here saying? It could well have been. We must either accept his words, or suffer the fate of such as wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction (II Pet. 3:16). We feel therefore that the entire context here compels us to translate: “AND OUT OF MY FLESH I SHALL BEHOLD GOD:” yes, this will be not only a SPIRITUAL, but also a PHYSICAL VISION of God, from out of the believer’s flesh, having then also this body as a tabernacle, but in a glorified state with a body that can to all eternity live in the glorious mansions of heaven.

There are left only two words in this verse: the verb **רָאָה** proper and the noun object **אֱלֹהִים**. First, the verb. It is the first person singular imperfect *qal* of **רָאָה**, a verb which is used a little over 50 times in the Old Testament; and its noun cognate **רֵאיוֹן**, “vision,” occurs 35 times. Both are found in Isaiah 1:1. While it means to “see” or “behold,” its basic meaning is to “see in an ecstatic state” or to “see in a supernatural state” or in a vision. Significantly the noun **רֵאיוֹן**, which means vision, occurs chiefly in the poetical books. This verb, **רָאָה** is also used mostly in poetical books. But while it is a seeing in a vision or in a supernatural condition, it is nevertheless a physical seeing that is meant. In fact, it is a very vivid looking at, and can well be translated “gaze at,” “behold.” And the fact that the usual verb translated “see,” **רָאָה**, appears alongside this verb indicates that what is meant here is an actual SEEING, BEHOLDING of God, yes, with his very eyes. The imperfect tense of the verb emphasizes a continuous, uninterrupted beholding.

The final word in this verse is **אֱלֹהִים**, “God.” This word for God is not the most common one. That is **אֱלֹהִים**, which is undoubtedly related to it, most likely the plural form of the same word. In the form **אֱלֹהִים**, it occurs only between 50 and 100 times, whereas in the plural form it appears well over 2,500 times. **אֱלֹהִים** is used mostly in the poetical books, particularly in Job. He will “behold God,” as will all believers after the Great Resurrection. We are reminded of the words of John, in his First Epistle, 3rd chapter, 2nd verse: “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.” And this thought is carried further in the last verse.

Verse 27. **אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי אֶחְזֶה־לִּי וְעֵינַי רְאוּ וְלֹא־זָר כָּלֹו כְּלֵי־יָדַי בְּחֻקֵּי:**

WHOM I SHALL BEHOLD FOR MYSELF, AND MY EYES SHALL SEE, AND NOT ANOTHER;
MY KIDNEYS ARE CONSUMED WITHIN MY BOSOM.

The first word, **וַיִּשְׂרָא**, is the familiar relative particle. As such, it must refer to an antecedent, which in this case would naturally be the word that precedes, **אֱלֹהִים**, “God.” It is therefore the direct object of the verb that follows the intervening pronoun, **אֲנִי**, which is placed there for emphasis. “*WHOM I SHALL BEHOLD,*” he says. Yes, it is GOD he is to behold, and here he states it for the second time. It will again be stated a third time. How more emphatic can one be?

The **אֲנִי**, as we said, is stated for emphasis; otherwise it would be omitted. As in verse 25, it would be clear without the pronoun “I,” for it is given in the form of the verb reserved for the first person singular. But the matter is so important that Job feels constrained again to use the pronoun for emphasis before the verb. We could, as in verse 25, repeat the pronoun and say: “*WHOM I, I SHALL BEHOLD.*”

The same verb is used in this verse as in the preceding: **וַיִּשְׂרָא**, and again it is used in the imperfect, to indicate that this act of beholding God will continue on and on, yes, into all eternity. Nor must we overlook the preposition with the first singular suffix that immediately follows. Not only is it attached to the verb by a *maqeph*, which indicates such a close syntactical relationship that there is only one accented syllable for the two words, the last, but there is also in the **ל** a *daghesh forte*, as occurs in two words pronounced in close connection when the first word ends in a vowel or silent consonant and the second begins with a letter that can take the *daghesh forte*. We would, then, pronounce those two words thus: **לִישְׂרָא** with only one accent, and with the *lamedh* doubled. This all indicates the close relationship between the two words. The **ל**, of course, is the Hebrew preposition that generally expresses the dative notion, often the indirect object. Here it has the closely related notion of dative of interest or advantage: “*WHOM I SHALL BEHOLD FOR MYSELF.*” Heerboth renders it: *Denselben werde ich mir (zugute) schauen*: “The same one I shall behold for my good, for my benefit.” While that unquestionably is the meaning, it is hardly necessary to insert the expression *zugute*. It is obvious from the context. It surely IS for himself, for his own benefit, that Job will continually gaze upon his Redeemer to all eternity. To be in the presence of God is the essence of heaven, just as to be eternally deprived of His presence is the essence of hell.

As though anticipating the future attempts of people to water down this expression of his faith in the resurrection, yes, to undermine this teaching completely, Job expands upon it with the words: “*AND MY EYES SHALL SEE, AND NOT ANOTHER,*” that is: *NOT ANOTHER SHALL SEE*. More about that shortly. First he speaks of his “EYES.” The word **עֵינַי**, which is listed by Harper among the 39 most frequently occurring nouns in the Old Testament, has two chief meanings: a spring of water or fountain, and an eye. The latter is the more common meaning. Here it is in the dual number, as the suffix (which is the same for dual and plural nouns) indicates. “*MY EYES*” is, therefore, the only possible meaning here both grammatically and contextually. Again Job is speaking in the most vivid physical terms possible. The very organs of sight which he used while here on earth, and later in his old age may have suffered from infirmities, will now, free from all weakness and defects, look upon the Lord his Redeemer.

Here we have another verb for “seeing”: **רָאָה**, the 3rd person plural of **רָאָה**, by far the most common verb meaning “to see,” occurring over 1,300 times. But not only is it a different verb: it is in a different tense, the perfect. It is important to note the basic difference between the perfect and the imperfect. It does not consist in the time element, such as past, present or future. Rather it expresses a certain concept with regard to time: whether it is viewed as completed or uncompleted. Therefore the old terminology of preterite and future is unfortunate; perfect and imperfect are much better, although *they* may be subject to misunderstanding too. But why does Job use the perfect here, after he had twice used the imperfect? And why don’t we translate it “*AND MY EYES HAVE SEEN,*” instead of “*AND MY EYES SHALL SEE*”? Again, let us remember not to equate the Hebrew tenses with the English. There is a certain flexibility in the Hebrew language that we must learn to understand and feel. Its unique system of using tenses involving the *waw*-consecutive, also called the *waw*-conversive, is evidence of that: beginning with the perfect, and then continuing with the imperfect, and vice versa. A book which perhaps better than any other book on the subject explains the Hebrew tenses and moods is J. Wash Watts’ *A SURVEY OF SYNTAX IN THE HEBREW OLD TESTAMENT*. Also, there are times when,

contrary to the usual practice, we must translate the imperfect in the past and the perfect in the future. Or at times, especially in poetry, we may begin with the one and then follow with the other even without a *waw*-consecutive. Here we have a good instance of that. There were two imperfects, emphasizing the continuous, uninterrupted nature of Job's gazing upon his Redeemer. Now we have the perfect. In Gesenius-Kautzsch-Cowley's *Grammer*, Para. 106 m, the use of the perfect to express something in the future is attested, with several examples cited. The paragraph begins with this general statement: The Perfect is used "To express FUTURE actions, when the speaker intends by an express assurance to represent them as finished, or as equivalent to accomplished facts." This can also be called the Prophetic Perfect. And here it is definitely in place. Job had been relating that he would be gazing at his Redeemer without termination; now with the full confidence of faith he projects himself into the future, and regards his activity of seeing God as an accomplished fact. Yes, even though he is sitting there suffering from the ravages of disease and from the false accusations of alleged friends, he is looking ahead to the eternity that awaits him on the other side of the grave, already in his mind's eye seeing that Redeemer whom he confidently hopes to see with his very eyes to all eternity. This beholding of God is a SURE thing, and not conditional. In his commentary, Edward J. Kissane does violence to the text when in the preceding verse he interprets it: "After my skin is stripped off, without my flesh were I to behold God," and then continues in this verse on that conditional basis. Any such interpretation is entirely unfounded. Surely there would be a particle such as ׀ִּׁׂ if a condition were meant. This is only an attempt to get away completely from the clear teaching of the resurrection and the beatific vision of God that this text sets forth. We are convinced that Job is confident of SEEING GOD.

And it is JOB HIMSELF who will see God, as we can clearly conclude from the next two words, also connected by a *maqeph*: ׀ִּׁׂ־׀ִּׁׂׂ. The *waw* here must certainly be translated "and," as all versions except one—that of Jastrow—rendered it, of those that we studied. The word ׀ִּׁׂׂ is the most common negative particle in Hebrew, and, when used with a verb, differs from ׀ִּׂ in that it expresses an absolute prohibition, whereas ׀ִּׂ expresses a temporary or conditional one. Here it means "NOT," and is definitely emphatic. The Septuagint has οὐκ, as we would expect. In general, ׀ִּׂ corresponds to οὐκ and ׀ִּׂ to μή.

The word ׀ִּׁ is the participle of the verb ׀ִּׁׂ. It may be used either as an adjective or as a noun, indicating someone who has the characteristics of or who does what is implied in the verb. The basic meaning of this verb is to "decline," "turn aside from." In its usage it has come to mean "become strange," "estranged," "foreign," "someone else," "someone not the same." It is understandable, therefore, that the Septuagint rendered it, not by the word ἕτερος, which means "other" in the sense of "different in nature and characteristics," but by the word ἄλλος, which simply means "other": another individual. It is the matter of the identity itself, not the characteristics or nature, that is emphasized here. Regarding this Job says: ׀ִּׁׂ־׀ִּׁׂׂ, "AND NOT ANOTHER," or as it could also be rendered "AND NOT A STRANGER." We prefer the former, because we feel that the identification of individuals is most prominent here. Here Job most strongly negates the notion that it will be another: first he uses the negative ׀ִּׂ, and then he closely connects the two words into one unit by the *maqeph*.

As you undoubtedly know, this expression has been interpreted in two ways. Some would refer it to the Redeemer: "AND NOT ANOTHER" in the sense that I shall see my Redeemer AND NOT ANOTHER: the Redeemer HIMSELF. Thus in Jamieson-Faussett-Brown's *Commentary*, where we read: "Mine eyes shall behold Him, but *no longer* as one *estranged* from me, as now." Likewise Marshall, who paraphrases it: "Whom I shall see on my side and not as a stranger." Also Kissane, who also says, "not estranged." You will also detect *that* interpretation in some of the translations before you. As you may observe, however, it is possible that the translations in themselves may be ambiguous, as this writer's also is, without additional explanation or paraphrase.

Now, there is nothing wrong with either the logic or the theology of that interpretation. No one will contest that the identity of the Redeemer will be the same then as now, or as in Job's day. He is true God from eternity to eternity. And in the Book of Revelation, we are told that even those who pierced Jesus will look upon

that same Savior. But is that what our text tells us? We would say “NO!” Both the syntax and the context demand the other interpretation: “I, AND NOT ANOTHER,” SHALL BEHOLD HIM. If וְרָ were to refer to the Redeemer, we might expect the prepositional prefix כְּ before it: “as” another, or “like” another, although in poetry this would not be essential. However, the *waw* before the וְרָ makes it clearly preferable to refer it back to וְרָאֵה , near the beginning of the sentence, which would be morphologically preferable, or perhaps to וְרָאֵה , which would be syntactically preferable, since it is closer to this expression. This does not refer back to וְרָאֵה . Whichever explanation one would take, it would turn out the same: it is JOB who will behold Him; and not someone else who will see Him. And, of course, the context, with its emphasis on Job’s being enclosed with his imperishable skin, looking out from his glorified flesh, and seeing God with his own eyes, gives overwhelming evidence that this expression refers to JOB and not the Redeemer. We have here, then, a clear statement of the identity of the believer here on earth while occupying a sinful and frail body with the believer after the resurrection, when he will occupy a sinless, immortal, and glorified body. Paul’s discussion of this matter in I Corinthians 15 is apropos here.

There remains now only the last portion of this verse, the three words $\text{כָּלֹּי בְּחַקִּי בָּחַקְי}$. Following the *athnach*, this short portion stands in balance to the longer first portion of eight words. Since in the verse that follows Job resumes his discussion with his three friends, this verse closes this Messianic portion. It is often characteristic of Messianic passages that they apparently suddenly appear, often in unexpected places, and then disappear again. These words we have translated thus: “MY KIDNEYS ARE CONSUMED WITHIN MY BOSOM,” While this sounds very physical, that is what the words say. Job is using concrete language throughout this passage. There is no warrant for adding the word “though” as the King James version does. כָּלֹּי is the 3rd plural perfect *qal* of the verb כָּלַף , a verb that is found about 210 times in the Old Testament. It means “be complete,” “at an end,” “finished,” “accomplished,” “spent,” “used up,” “consumed.” Its cognate in Akkadian means to “put an end to,” and to “cease,” “vanish,” “pass away.” In Ugaritic the same word means to “be spent,” “used up.” It is, therefore, well attested not only in Hebrew, but also in other Semitic languages. The perfect tense significantly indicates this as a condition which has already taken place. The verb is, of course, intransitive, with the subject following.

That word, כָּלֹּי , lacks the *daghesh lene* in the first letter because of the previous open syllable. The suffix is that of the first person used with the plural of a noun. The word is written defectively, without the usual *waw* for the feminine plural, probably because there are already two *yodhs* in the word, and there is an interesting Hebrew economy in the use of *yodhs* and *waws*. The singular of this word is כָּלַי , which means “kidney,” and of course “kidneys” in the dual or plural. Apparently the Septuagint misread this word for the similar word כָּל , “totality,” “all,” which is derived from כָּלַל , which means “comprehend,” “contain,” and which surely appears to be related to כָּלַף , just as we can see a certain relationship between their English meanings. The Septuagint word is *πάντα*. However, in his Greek version, Theodotion rendered these words: *ἐξέλιπον οἱ νεφροί μου ἐν τῷ κόλπῳ μου*, an excellent translation. The Vulgate is rather free and even inaccurate here: *Reposita est haec spes mea in sinu meo*. In Hebrew and other Semitic languages, the kidneys in particular and other vital organs in general are regarded as the seat of the tenderest and deepest affections, especially of love, desire, longing and anxiously awaiting something, as here. Another example from the Old Testament is Psalm 119:123, where the eyes are described as failing. There, too, we have the verb כָּלַף , as we also do in Psalm 73:26 “My flesh and my heart faileth.” It is significant also that in Hebrew the word which is expressive of the deepest mercy and compassion is the word for “womb,” רֶחֶם , which in its plural form is רַחֲמִים , and which is translated “compassion.” Such imagery is also carried into the New Testament, where the word *σπλάγχχνον*, “entrails,” is used in the phrase *σπλάγχχνα ἐλέους*, “bowels of mercy” in the King James Version, which to the Hebrew mind expressed the deepest feelings of compassion. In our verse, however, it is another deep-seated feeling that is expressed: longing, expectation. In his misery, Job was looking forward to a far better life than this. As he gave thought to that Last Day when his Redeemer would rise up over his grave,

clothe his body in a perfect skin no longer covered with boils or lacerated with sores, give him a glorified body out of which to look with his own eyes and see his Redeemer, he was so anxious and eager for that time to come that his very innermost feelings, described as his kidneys, were entirely spent and consumed within him.

כִּבְחִי means literally “in my bosom,” “in my lap.” Obviously it does not mean the outer part of the anatomy known as the lap, but the very insides where the vital organs are found. It, therefore, adds another concrete expression to what immediately precedes, so that the closing words read: “MY KIDNEYS ARE CONSUMED WITHIN MY BOSOM,” which, of course, is a concrete expression for something like this: “My deepest feelings are spent within me,” as I anxiously and eagerly anticipate the joy and bliss of what lies before me. To Job as well as Jacob the words of the hymn well apply: “I’m but a stranger here, Heaven is my home.” In his commentary on this 27th verse, Charles Girdlestone appropriately stated, putting his words into Job’s mouth: “Low as I am reduced by sickness, and nigh as I am to death, yea, and however long time after death this mortal body may lie in the grave and moulder in corruption, yet shall I hereafter see God with my own eyes; such great things will my Redeemer do for me. How much less then ought ye my friends to think of vexing me, seeing that I am so strongly rooted in this hope of a Redeemer! How much more ought ye to be afraid of provoking His wrath, by your unjust treatment of one who believes in Him, when ye consider that He is coming to judge all mankind!” (Vol. III., p. 63.)

As we consider this portion of Scripture, then, we can surely come to no other conclusion than that it speaks of the resurrection from the dead. Critics will, of course, object on many grounds. They point to the fact that the discussion continues much as it had gone on before these five verses. We have already mentioned that such is the case with many Messianic passages, and we must not expect to find a gradual preparation for each prophecy. Critics will state that nowhere else does Job refer to the resurrection, and that, for example, in chapter 14 he speaks quite differently about the condition of the dead. Suffice it to say here that competent critics find no contradiction between chapters 14 and 19, and, in fact, find some evidence of the teaching of the resurrection in chapter 14 also. It is, of course, the critics “party-line” to state that the doctrine of the resurrection was not understood or known until much later, as we have already mentioned. But, as Frew rightly maintains in his criticism of Barnes’ anti-messianic view, “The doctrine of the resurrection was involved in the covenant made with Abraham,” and that “the covenant name is cited in proof of the resurrection of the body. The resurrection was the subject in dispute, and the Scribes on the occasion held the argument from Moses decisive, while the objectors were silenced” (p. XX). He further relates that the covenant name WAS produced in proof of the resurrection. Nor were the minds of the patriarchs occupied by so gloomy views of the state after death as is sometimes supposed. (Cf. Heb. 11:13, 16.) (p. XXI.) And Frew’s closing remarks in his critique on Barnes are worth quoting: “This most disputed passage will appear to be most consistently explained of that glorious occasion, when all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of man, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation! John 5:28; Dan. 12:2” (p. XXII).

We are, therefore, convinced that Job knew, confessed and confidently hoped for his own resurrection from the dead on the Last Day, when his Redeemer, who Himself rose from the dead, would raise him up into life everlasting. That this was his belief, and that this is what his words in chapter 19, verses 23–27 referred to, many competent Bible scholars from early days until now have believed. Thus Jerome understood and translated his words; thus Luther; thus Girdlestone, Matthew Henry, Stoeckhardt, Fuerbringer, Kretzmann and others. And thus Christians have sung for centuries. We have mentioned the beautiful aria from Handel’s MESSIAH. We also have the freer paraphrase of this text in the hymn “I Know That My Redeemer Lives.” And we have references to Job’s confession in other Easter hymns. It would, then, be fitting to close our attempt to study these words, difficult and challenging but truly rewarding, by quoting two stanzas of a beautiful Easter hymn, by an unknown author, which perhaps more clearly than any other hymn refers to the passage we have studied together: the hymn “JESUS CHRIST, MY SURE DEFENSE,” No. 206 in the *Lutheran Hymnal* These are stanzas 5 and 6:

Glorified, I shall anew

With this flesh then be enshrouded;
 In this body I shall view
 God, my Lord, with eyes unclouded;
 In this flesh I then shall see
 Jesus Christ eternally.

Then these eyes my Lord shall know
 My Redeemer and my Brother;
 In His love my soul shall glow,—
 I myself, and not another!
 Then the weakness I feel here
 Shall forever disappear.

Appendix I

Translations of Job 19:23–27

Septuagint

- 23 τίς γὰρ ἂν δώῃ γραφῆναι τὰ ῥήματά μου,
 τεθῆναι δὲ αὐτὰ ἐν βιβλίῳ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα
 24 *ἐν γραφείῳ σιδηρῷ καὶ μολίβῳ
 ἢ ἐν πέτραις ἐγγλυφῆναι;
 25 οἶδα γὰρ ὅτι ἀνάσος ἔστιν ὁ ἐκλύειν με μέλλων ἐπὶ γῆς.
 26 ἀναστήσαι τὸ δέρμα μου τὸ ἀνατλῶν ταῦτα·
 παρὰ γὰρ κυρίου ταῦτά μοι συνετελέσθη,
 27 ἃ ἐγὼ ἐμαυτῷ συνεπίσταμαι,
 ἃ ὁ ὀφθαλμός μου ἑώρακεν καὶ οὐκ ἄλλος
 πάντα δέ μοι συνετέλεσται ἐν κόλπῳ.

Vulgate

- 23 *Quis mihi tribuat ut scribantur sermones mei?*
quis mihi det ut exarentur in libro,
 24 *Stylo ferreo, et plumbi lamina,*
vel celte sculpantur in silice?
 25 *Scio enim quod Redemptor meus vivit,*
et in novissimo die de terra surrecturus sum:
 26 *Et rursus circumdabor pelle mea,*
et in carne mea videbo Deum meum.
 27 *Quem visurus sum ego ipse,*
et oculi mei conspecturi sunt, et non alius:
reposita est haec spes mea in sinu meo.

Luther

- 23 *Ach, dasz meine Reden geschrieben würden!*
Ach, dasz sie in ein Buch gestellet würden,
 24 *mit einem eisernen Griffel auf Blei*
und zu ewigem Gedächtnis in einen Fels gehauen würden!
und er wird mich hernach aus der Erde auferwecken;
und er wird mich hernach aus der Erde eufferwecken;
 26 *und werde danach mit dieser meiner Haut umgeben werden*
und werde in meinem Fleisch Gott sehen.
 27 *Denselben werde ich mir sehen,*
und meine Augen werden ihn schauen, und kein Fremder.
Meine Nieren sind verzehret in meinem Schosz.

Stoeckhardt

- 23 *O, dasz doch aufgeschrieben würden meine Worte,*
dasz sie doch in ein Buch verzeichnet würden,
 24 *mit Eisengriffel und Blei auf ewig in den Fels gehauen:*
 25 *Und ich weisz, dasz mein Erlöser lebt,*
und als Letzter wird er auf dem Staube sich erheben;
 26 *und nachher umgibt man reich mit dieser meiner Haut,*
und yon meinem Fleische aus werde ich Gott schauen;
 27 *welchen ich schauen werde mir zu gute,*
und meine Augen sehen ihn und kein Anderer.

Heerboth

- 25 *Abet ich weisz, dasz mein Erlöser lebt,*
und als Letzter wird er auf dem Staube auftreten.
 26 *Und danach wird man mir meiner Haut dieses umgeben,*
und aus meinem Fleische werde ich Gott sehen.
 27 *Denselben werde ich mir (zugute) schauen,*
und meine Augen werden (ihre Lust) sehen, und nicht ein
Anderer!
Meine Nieren sind verzehret in meinem Schosze.

Fuerbringer

- 25 *And I, I know that my Redeemer lives*
and that He shall stand as the last one upon the earth.
 26 *And after my skin which they thus destroy*
and out of my flesh will I see Eloha.
 27 *Whom I shall see to myself,*
and my eyes shah behold Him and not a stranger;
my kidneys are consumed within my bosom.

King James Version

- 23 Oh that my words were now written!
oh that they were printed in a book!
- 24 That they were graven with an iron pen and lead
in the rock for ever!
- 25 For I know *that* my redeemer liveth,
and *that* he shah stand at the latter *day* upon the earth:
- 26 And *though* after my skin *worms* destroy this *body*,
yet in my flesh shall I see God:
- 27 Whom I shall see for myself,
and mine eyes shall behold, and not another;
though my reins be consumed within me.

American Standard Version

- 23 Oh that my words were now written!
Oh that they were inscribed in a book!
- 24 That with an iron pen and lead
They were graven in the rock for ever!
- 25 But as for me I know that my Redeemer (or: vindicator)
liveth,
And at last he will stand up upon the earth:
- 26 And after my skin, *even* this *body*, is destroyed,
Then without my flesh shall I see God;
- 27 Whom I, even I, shall see, on my side (or: for myself),
And mine eyes shall behold, and not as a stranger.
My heart is consumed within me.

Revised Standard Version

- 23 Oh that my words were written!
Oh that they were inscribed in a book!
- 24 Oh that with an iron pen and lead
they were graven in the rock for ever!
- 25 For I know that my Redeemer (or: Vindicator) lives,
and at last he will stand upon the earth (or: dust);
- 26 and after my skin has been thus destroyed,
then without (or: from) my flesh I shall see God,
- 27 whom I shall see on my side (or: for myself),
and my eyes shall behold, and not another.
My heart faints within me!

The Old Testament: An American Translation (Smith)

- 23 Would, then, that my words were written!
Would that they were inscribed in a scroll!
- 24 That with an iron pen and lead

They were hewn in the rock forever!
 25 But I know, my Vindicator lives;
 And hereafter he will rise up upon the dust;
 26 And after my skin has been torn off,—like this!—
 And from my flesh, I shall see God;
 27 Whom I shall see on my side,
 And my eyes will see unestranged.
 My emotions are spent within me!

Delitzsch (translated by Bolton)

23 Oh that my words were but written,
 That they were recorded in a book,
 24 With an iron pen, filled in with lead,
 Graven in the rock for ever!
 25 And I know: my Redeemer liveth,
 And as the last One will He arise upon the dust.
 26 And after my skin, thus torn to pieces,
 And without my flesh shall I behold Eloah,
 27 Whom I shall behold for my good,
 And mine eyes shall see him and no other—
 my reins languish in my bosom.

The Anchor Bible

23 O that my words were written,
 Were engraved in copper,
 24 With an iron stylus on lead,
 Carved in rock for all time.
 25 I know that my Vindicator lives,
 A guarantor upon the dust will stand;
 26 Even after my skin is flayed,
 Without my flesh I shall see God,
 27 I will see him on my side,
 My own eyes will see him unestranged,
 My heart faints within me.

Addendum

Since this article was originally written, two significant translations of the Bible have been published: *The Holy Bible: The New Berkeley Version in Modern English* (1969), and *The New English Bible* (1970). Instead of changing the body of this presentation, we shall make a few brief comments on each of these two translations in this addendum.

The New Berkeley Version is, as is stated in the first sentence of the preface, “a completely new translation.” Edited by Gerrit Verkuyl, it is the work of conservative Bible scholars and is, for the most part, faithful to the original and a good translation. In the New Berkeley Version our passage is rendered as follows:

23 Oh, that my words were recorded

- that they were inscribed in the book!
 24 Oh, that with an iron pen they were engraved on a rock
 and sealed with lead forever!
 25 For I know that my Redeemer lives
 and at last He will stand upon the earth;
 26 and after my skin has thus been destroyed,
 then, out of my flesh I shall see God;
 27 whom I myself shall see;
 whom my own eyes shall behold, and not another.
 My reins fail within me as I wait in hope!

There are many commendable features in this translation. The interpretation is clearly Messianic, as we can see from the capitalization of both “Redeemer” and “He” in verse 25. In verse 23, “the book” also is more exact than most translations, since the article is used in the Hebrew. Moreover, there is no attempt on the part of the translators to change the Hebrew text in the manner of modernistic interpreters. In verse 26, “out of my flesh” correctly expresses the Hebrew מִבְּשָׁרִי.

However, in the last three verses there are a number of instances in which this writer would differ with the New Berkeley translation. In verse 25 “at last” is not the best translation for אַחֲרָיוֹן. In verse 26, אַחֲרֵי is rendered as a conjunction “after”; it ought to be translated adverbially, “afterwards.” עוֹרִי is not the subject of the clause, but rather an adverbial expression. זֹאת is not “thus,” but “this.” נִקְפָּוֹ does not mean “destroyed” but rather “surrounded” or “enveloped.” (See the discussion under verse 26 above.) And, finally in verse 27, the last five words in the New Berkeley Version are added by way of interpretation: “as I wait in hope!” Those words are not in the text. Basically, however, this new translation is as good as most translations available in Bible versions on this verse, and it does uphold the Messianic interpretation.

Such is not the case with the New English Bible, unfortunately. While that highly readable translation has been praised by many, it has a number of serious flaws, of which we shall mention two. One is its tendency to amend the Hebrew text when a difficulty arises; the other is the anti-Messianic bias of the translators, as can be seen from a study of Messianic portions of the Old Testament. Both come to the fore in our passage. First we shall give the translation in the NEB, and then a few comments:

- 23 O that my words might be inscribed
 O that they might be engraved in an inscription
 24 cut with an iron tool and filled with lead
 to be a witness in hard rock!
 25 But in my heart I know that my vindicator lives
 and that he will rise last to speak in court;
 26 and I shall discern my witness standing at my side
 and see my defending counsel, even God himself
 27 whom I shall see with my own eyes,
 I myself and no other.
 28 My heart failed me when you said,

One immediately detects such external matters as re-arrangement of verses (cf. 23 and 24, 27 and 28 in part) and an attempt at the literary at the expense of the literal (cf. v. 27 and 28 in NEB: “see with my own eyes,” “my heart failed me.”)

Of a more serious nature, however, are the many instances of textual emendation in the NEB on these verses. In verse 24, לְעֵד (“for ever”) is emended to read לְעֵד (“to be a witness”). The former is suggested as a possible reading in a footnote. In verse 25, עַל-עָפָר (“upon the dust”) is, without any warrant, rendered “in court.” In the following verse עוֹרִי (“my skin”) is translated as though it were עֵדִי (“my witness”). נִקְפָּוֹ is

rendered “I shall discern,” a meaning the word *never* has. This is entirely arbitrary. How the translators arrive at the phrase “standing at my side” is beyond this writer’s powers of imagination. The same applies to the last half of verse 26: “and see my defending counsel, even God himself.” As an explanation for this impossible translation, the NEB adds a note following the first half of line 26: “Heb. unintelligible.” We believe that such is not the case, in spite of the fact that the Hebrew is difficult in this verse. (See discussion under verse 26.)

Finally, the NEB removes from this passage the Messianic content. By translating נָאֵלִי as “my vindicator” instead of “my Redeemer” it expresses only one aspect of our Savior’s role as Redeemer. And by failing to capitalize the word it rules out the Messianic interpretation. We cannot, therefore, recommend the NEB on this passage, in spite of its many merits as a translation in other passages.

Appendix II

Old Testament Occurrences of the Verb נָקַף

A. In the *piel* (rather than the *niphal*, which would be the same form).

וְהִלְכֶנּוּ בְּאֲדִיר יְפוּל: —Isaiah 10:34

וְאַחַר עוֹרֵי נִקְפוּ-זֹאת וּמִבְּשָׂרֵי אֲחִנָּה אֱלֹהִים: —Job 19:26

B. In the *qal* (found only once).

סָפוּ שָׁנָה עַל-שָׁנָה חֲגִים יִנְקָפוּ: —Isaiah 29:1b

C. In the *hiphil*

a. Followed by a direct object preceded by אֶת

וּסְבַתְּם אֶת-הָעִיר כֹּל-אֲנָשֵׁי הַמֶּלֶךְ הָקִיף אֶת-הָעִיר פַּעַם אֶחָת —Joshua 6:3a

וַיִּפְקְעוּם מִתַּחַת לְשִׁפְתוֹ סָבִיב סָבִיב אֶתוֹ עָשָׂר בָּאַמָּה מִקְפִּים אֶת-הֵימָס סָבִיב —I Kings 7:24a

כִּי-הִקְיִפָּה הַזְּעָקָה אֶת-גְּבוּל מוֹאָב —Isaiah 15:8a

וַיְדַמּוּת בְּקָרִים תַּחַת לוֹ סָבִיב וְסָבִיב סוּבְבִים אֶתוֹ עָשָׂר בָּאַמָּה —II Chronicles 4:3a

וְהִקְיִפוּ הַלְוִיִּם אֶת-הַמֶּלֶךְ סָבִיב אִישׁ וְכִלְיוֹ בְּיָדוֹ מִקְיִפִּים אֶת-הֵימָס סָבִיב —II Chronicles 23:7a

b. Followed by a direct object without אֶת

לֹא תִקְפוּ פֹאת רֵאשֶׁכֶם וְלֹא תִשְׁחִית אֶת פֹּאת זְקִנְךָ: —Leviticus 19:27

c. Followed by an objective pronominal suffix.

כִּי סָבְבוּנִי כָל-בָּיִם עַד־תִּמְרָעִים הִקְיִפוּנִי —Psalm 22:17a

סָבוּ צִיּוֹן וְהִקְיִפוּהָ סָפְרוּ מִגְדָּלֶיהָ: —Psalm 48:13

d. Followed by the preposition *עַל* and either a pronominal suffix or a noun object.

מִפְּנֵי רִשְׁעִים זֶה שָׁדוּנִי אִיבִי בְּנִפְשׁ יִקְיִפוּ עָלַי: —Psalm 17:9

—Psalm 88:18 סְבוּגֵי כָּל־הַיּוֹם הַקִּיפּוֹ עָלַי יָחַד:

—Job 19:6 דְּעוּר־אִפּוֹ בִּי־אֱלֹהֵי עֲוֹתָנִי וּמְצוּדוֹ עָלַי הַקִּיפָה:

—II Kings 6:14 וַיִּשְׁלַח־שָׂמָּה סוּסִים וְרֶכֶב וַחֲמִיל כָּבֵד וַיָּבֵאוּ לַיְלָה וַיִּקְפוּ עַל־הָעִיר:

—II Kings 11:8a וְהַקְּפָתָם עַל־הַמֶּלֶךְ סָבִיב אִישׁ וּכְלָיו בְּיָדוֹ

e. No object expressed, but probably implied from the preceding.

—Joshua 6:11a וַיִּסַּב אַרְוֹן־יְהוָה אֶת־הָעִיר הַקָּרָה פַּעַם אַחַת

—Lamentations 3:5 בָּנָה עָלַי וַיִּקָּר רֹאשׁ וַתֵּלֶאֱדָה:

f. Takes no direct object or object of preposition Intransitive.

—Job 1:5a וַיְהִי כִּי הַקִּיפּוֹ יָמֵי הַמְּשֶׁתֶּה וַיִּשְׁלַח אִיּוֹב וַיִּקְדָּשׁם

Related words: נִקְּרָה, participial form, found in phrases נִתְּנָה כְּנִקְרָה twice (Isa. 17:6 and 24:13) and rendered “shaking” or “beating.” Also נִקְּפָה, a noun form, found once (Isa. 3:24) and translated “rope.”

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