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Death, Disinheritance, and Job's Kinsman-Redeemer

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The book of Job offers a rare opportunity to view the response to death in ancient Israel and early Judaism. This response, which encompasses attitudes toward burial and concepts of the afterlife,[1] is both vague and complicated in the Hebrew Bible.[2] Its depiction, however, has been enhanced by archaeology, particularly the excavation of Iron Age II tombs found predominantly in Judah.[3] Yet in spite of the abundance of death imagery in the book of Job, the book's themes are seldom compared with the burial practices that typified the Israelite and early Jewish experience.[4] This is partially due to uncertainties over the book's language and

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[1] This would include what Saul Olyan cogently refers to as "interment ideology" ("Some Neglected Aspects of Israelite Interment Ideology," *JBL* 124 [2005]: 601–16).

[2] For instance, the depiction of the netherworld is bleak and dismal; see John Day, "The Development of Belief in Life after Death in Ancient Israel," in *After the Exile: Essays in Honour of Rex Mason* (ed. John Barton and David J. Reimer; Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1996), 231–37.

[3] Elizabeth Bloch-Smith, *Judahite Burial Practices and Beliefs about the Dead* (JSOT/ASOR Monograph Series 7; JSOTSup 123; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992); and Irit Yezerski, "Burial-Cave Distribution and the Borders of the Kingdom of Judah toward the End of the Iron Age," *TA* 26 (1999): 254–70.

[4] Studies of death in the book of Job are numerous; see, e.g., David Kummerow, "Job, Hopeful or Hopeless? The Significance of גם in Job 16:19 and Job's Changing Conceptions of Death," *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 5 (2004–5), §§3.4 and 4; Dan Mathewson, *Death and Survival in the Book of Job: Desymbolization and Traumatic Experience* (Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 450; New York: T&T Clark, 2006); see also Hans Strauss, "Tod (Todeswunsch; 'Jenseits'?)

the date of its compilation,[5] combined with the indistinct nature of its cultural setting and historical background.[6] Yet the images evoked in the protagonist's speech in Job 19:23–27 reflect archaeologically attested funerary rites that date to the first millennium B.C.E. The role of writing, associated with Job's kinsman-redeemer in this perplexing passage, in fact parallels a similarly difficult Hebrew inscription from a tomb at Khirbet el-Qôm. Furthermore, the funerary images relate to wider themes of death that are debated in Job's second cycle of speeches. The recognition of these multiple contexts (literary and cultural), in turn, allows for a better understanding of the nature and function of the גאל (*gōʾēl*) in Job 19:25. The passionate speech in 19:23–27 evokes the protagonist's confidence that, after his death, a kinsman-redeemer (v. 25) will perform the proper rituals on his behalf in order to preserve Job's name and patrimony for posterity.

Job's speech in 19:23–27, in fact, is indicative of a conflict of ideologies that occurs in the second cycle of speeches. The doctrine of retribution that is preached by Job's friends insinuates that Job's perceived guilt will cause him to suffer the fate of the wicked, a fate that implies he will be denied proper funerary rites. Job counters this doctrine by drawing from the concept of collective fate that was at home in the traditional clan-based society of ancient Israel. Accordingly, Job's image of his fate is tied to his kinsman-redeemer and is consonant with a ritual process that was typically centered at the family tomb. This ritual response would have entailed actions referenced or alluded to in Job 19: the writing/inscribing of an epitaph (vv. 23–24), the act of mourning (v. 25b), and, finally, secondary inhumation rites (vv. 26 and 27b). All of these actions bracket Job's declaration of a kinsman-redeemer in v. 25a, and with the exception of mourning all can be attested in the material remains of ancient Israel. An integrated approach that analyzes Job within both cultural and literary contexts can offer manifold results that not only illuminate an important operating theme throughout the book's discourse but also identify the role and function of Job's kinsman-redeemer.

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im Buch Hiob," in *Gottes Recht als Lebensraum: Festschrift für Hans Jochen Boecker* (ed. Peter Mommer, Werner H. Schmidt, and Hans Strauss; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1993), 239–49; and Bruce Zuckerman, *Job the Silent: A Study in Historical Counterpoint* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 118–35. A few studies briefly interact with burial customs, such as David J. A. Clines, *Job 1–20* (WBC 17; Dallas: Word Books, 1989), 399.

[5] The classic study is Avi Hurvitz, "The Date of the Prose-Tale of Job Linguistically Reconsidered," *HTR* 67 (1974): 17–34. See also Edward L. Greenstein, "The Language of Job and Its Poetic Function," *JBL* 122 (2003): 651–53.

[6] Norman C. Habel, *The Book of Job: A Commentary* (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985), 39–40; Greenstein, "Language of Job," 651–53; S. R. Driver and George Buchanan Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Job* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1921), xxv–xxxiv; and the review in Carol A. Newsom, "Considering Job," *CurBS* 1 (1993): 95–97.

I. The Cultural Background of Death in Job

A. Tomb Inscriptions

Job begins his famous plaint in 19:23–24 with a detailed description of writing. Although the language is fairly straightforward, the images are not well understood. If the images are placed in a context of death and burial, it becomes possible to understand them as a description of a funerary inscription.

מי־יתן אפו ויכתבון מלי מי־יתן בספר ויחקו
בעט־ברזל ועפרת לעד בצור יחצבון

(23)Oh, would that then my words be written! Oh, would that they be engraved in an inscription! (24)With an iron stylus and lead, they be hewn upon a rock forever.

Although the term ספר typically carries the meaning "scroll," it can signify any locus of writing, and in v. 23 the word can be understood as "inscription."[7] A good analogy to the Hebrew term is found in a Phoenician curse inscribed on the sarcophagus of Ahirom, king of Byblos, which states that a trespasser's "inscription" (ספר) will be defaced (*KAI* 1:2). In vv. 23–24, the terms "inscription" and "rock" in the parallel verses are both objects of the verbs "engrave" and "hew," respectively, and together they describe a single location of writing that is consistent with a tomb inscription. This idea is described again in v. 24b, where the permanency of writing Job's words is ensured by its locus,[8] the "rock," and the use of metal implements ("iron stylus and lead").[9] The creation of a tomb inscription, or epitaph, was

[7] H. S. Gehman ("ספר, an Inscription, in the Book of Job," *JBL* 63 [1944]: 303–7) first proposed this interpretation. See also Kurt Galling, "Die Grabinschrift Hiobs," *WO* 2 (1954–59): 5. This interpretation is generally accepted; see, e.g., Clines, *Job 1–20*, 432. The act of writing that is introduced by Job's wish for his "words to be written" (נכתב) in v. 23a is described in v. 23b with the verb חקק ("engrave"), taking the preposition ב- on the object, ספר. Other biblical examples where ספר can be interpreted as "inscription" include Exod 17:14 and Isa 30:8.

[8] As Clines observes, the point of Job's statement is that his words be preserved, which would require a much more durable medium than papyrus (or parchment); therefore, √חקק and √חצב (v. 24b) give a more specific nuance to the act of "writing" (*Job 1–20*, 455–56).

[9] The suggestion that the passage describes a tomb inscription goes back to Galling, "Die Grabinschrift Hiobs," 3–6. Driver and Gray (*Book of Job*, 170–71) suggest three media of writing: a scroll (papyrus/parchment), a tablet (lead), and an inscription (rock). The idea that עפרת relates to a lead tablet is difficult because this form of writing was typically the medium for curses, not blessings (Clines, *Job 1–20*, 456). Speculation that the lead here was poured into the engraved letters goes back to Rashi and has in recent times been related to the Behistun inscription; see Habel, *Book of Job*, 292, and also Clines, *Job 1–20,* 456. Yet the famous monumental inscription of Darius is a bit too distant to provide a cogent analogue for these verses. Furthermore, the context of death that surrounds Job's words makes more sense if the ספר is an epitaph.

an important component of funerary rites in ancient Judah. Yet the relevance of tomb inscriptions is complicated by general issues such as the question of literacy and the function of writing in the Iron Age, as well as by specific problems such as the uncertainty of the artifact's ritual setting. The significance of a tomb inscription, nevertheless, can be evaluated according to its provenance (i.e., placement on/inside a tomb), content, and creation. Careful consideration of these three factors, drawing from a specific Iron II example, will shed light on Job's "words" in vv. 23–24 and place the object alluded to in these verses in the wider context of death evoked throughout Job's discourse.

To begin, the tomb (the inscription's place of provenance) served as a visible symbol of patrimony in ancient Israel.[10] Biblical passages describe not only the importance of family tombs (e.g., Gen 49:29–32; cf. 47:30), but also the filial obligation of the living to preserve the names of dead kin through the creation of an object or a monument, such as in 2 Sam 18:18. The significance of name preservation is clear from the Akkadian phrase "invoke the name" (*zakāru šumê*), which is used often in reference to the dead, for example, UDUG-*ḫul* (line 330), listing incantations against the restless dead (*eṭemmu*). While the Mesopotamian phrase probably refers to an ancestor cult practice (possibly related to the *kispu*), 2 Sam 18:18 uses the same vocabulary to describe the creation of an object, Absalom's "pillar" (מצבת), which was intended for the remembrance (*hiphil* infinitive of √זכר) of the rebellious prince's name after his death.[11] The details are lost surrounding the creation of a funerary inscription, yet זכר could indicate a performative aspect of this type of writing that might relate to Job's words.[12] Nevertheless, the critical nature of this practice was the record (and possibly recitation) of the name of the dead. The importance of preserving the name of the dead, and its filial relevance, is seen in Deutero-Isaiah, where YHWH promises the eunuch "a monument [יד] and a name better than sons and daughters" (Isa 56:5).

The correlate of name preservation is that the person named would be claimed as an ancestor by future generations, illustrating the dynamic nature of this single

[10] The connection between the family tomb and patrimony has been long recognized in the study of ancient Israel; see H. C. Brichto, "Kin, Cult, Land and Afterlife—a Biblical Complex," *HUCA* 44 (1973): 10; and Karel van der Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria, and Israel: Continuity and Changes in the Forms of Religious Life* (SHCANE 7; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 207–8. See the archaeological discussion in G. Barkay, "Burial Caves and Burial Practices in Judah in the Iron Age," in *Graves and Burial Practices in Israel in the Ancient Period* (in Hebrew; ed. Itamar Singer; Jerusalem: Yad Yitzak Ben-Zvi/IES, 1994), 106–7.

[11] This practice is known also from Phoenician artifacts that bear inscriptions declaring the object to be the מצבת of an individual, often in association with their burial place (משכב). For example, *KAI* 53:1 is inscribed "the memorial pillar of remembrance . . . for ʿAbd-tanit" (מצבת . . . סכר לעבדתנת). The name of the dead is always marked by the preposition "for" (-ל).

[12] See S. L. Sanders, "Performative Utterances and Divine Language in Ugaritic," *JNES* 63 (2004): 174–77, for a discussion of the performative nature of invoking the dead in the ritual text *KTU* 1.161.

component ("name") for both the living and the dead. The inscription (or epitaph) provided the names necessary for the entitlement of a kinship group; thus, the group's claim was embodied in the inscribed tomb. It is, therefore, reasonable to assume that the writing of an epitaph was one component of the larger ritual process. Not only did the name become part of the larger collective identity of a kinship group's lineage, but the creation of the epitaph (the actual act of writing) could also potentially establish and restrict important rights and privileges as well as aspects of group identification and affiliation.

The Inscription from Tomb 2 at Khirbet el-Qôm/Makkedah

An unusual funerary inscription from Khirbet el-Qôm (biblical Makkedah) may shed light on Job's kinsman-redeemer.[13] The excavated chambers of tomb 2 contained several inscriptions and iconographic images, which established the names of the deceased along with their claims to the tomb. Yet inscription 3 (= *Qom* 3) stands out because of its unique nature and the fact that it records the name of an additional individual who was possibly a kinsman similar to the figure of Job 19:25. Although the source includes an iconographic element accompanying the inscription (the carved outline of a hand), only the six lines of writing will be dealt with here.[14]

אריהו.העֹשר.כתבה
ברכ.אריהו.ליהוה
ומֹצָריה.לאשרתה.הושע.לה
לאנְיהו
[. . .]ולאשרתה
[. . .]א[ש]רתָּה

(1) Uriyahu, the prosperous, his epitaph. (2) Blessed be Uriyahu by YHWH, (3) and from his enemies, by his Asherah, save him. (4) (Written) by Oniyahu . . . (5) [. . .] and by his Asherah . . . (6) [. . .] his A[sh]erah.

[13] William G. Dever, "Iron Age Epigraphic Material from Khirbet el-Qom," *HUCA* 40–41 (1970–71): 139–204.

[14] The siglum (*Qom* 3) follows that of F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp et al., *Hebrew Inscriptions: Texts from the Biblical Period of the Monarchy with Concordance* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2004), 327–32; in addition, see J. Renz, *Die Althebräischen Inschriften* (ed. J. Renz and W. Röllig; Text und Kommentar, Handbuch der Althebräischen Epigraphik; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1995), 207; and the edition in Ziony Zevit, "The Khirbet el-Qôm Inscription Mentioning a Goddess," *BASOR* 255 (1984): 39–47; idem, *The Religions of Ancient Israel: A Synthesis of Parallactic Approaches* (London/New York: Continuum, 2001), 359–62 (based on his drawing of the original); and J. M. Hadley, "The Khirbet el-Qom Inscription," *VT* 37 (1987): 50–62. For further studies, see the bibliography in Dobbs-Allsopp et al., *Hebrew Inscriptions*, 331–32.

The inscription bears witness to the process involved in recording the name of the dead and serves as an example of the role played by tomb inscriptions as records indicating the primary execution of an estate.[15] The first line identifies the dead, and, although it does not refer to the tomb or the location of Uriyahu's mortal remains,[16] it astutely refers to the inscription itself.[17] The second and third lines dedicate the deceased to divine care,[18] which may indicate the performance of some ritual on behalf of the dead, such as an incantation or the recitation of a prayer. The fourth line introduces a new name with a preposition (*Qom* 3:4): "by Oniyahu" (לאניהו). This line identifies the individual who was responsible for the epitaph (כתב in *Qom* 3:1), either as scribe or as the person who arranged for the inscription. Yet the responsibilities of this individual probably extended beyond a single duty and included activities related to Uriyahu's blessing and protection (*Qom* 3:2–3).[19]

[15] See, e.g., the translation offered in Sandra Landis Gogel, *A Grammar of Epigraphic Hebrew* (SBLRBS 23; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 412, where the first line is rendered "(On behalf of) Uriyahu, the notable, (has) he written it." The referent here is Oniyahu, who is qualified as the "executor" in the translation.

[16] For this reason, Simon Parker did not view the text as a "mortuary inscription" ("Graves, Caves, and Refugees: An Essay in Microhistory," *JSOT* 27 [2003]: 280); cf. similarly Joseph Naveh, "Graffiti and Dedications," *BASOR* 235 (1979): 28. On this basis, Parker reinterprets the inscription as a graffito written by individuals seeking refuge inside the tomb. Yet we simply do not have enough examples to state that *Qom* 3 foregrounds an objective beyond the "interests" of a funerary inscription. Again, based on the unusual opening line, Zevit also avoids the label "epitaph," although his approach is much more cautious (*Religions of Ancient Israel*, 367–68). Zevit interprets *Qom* 3 as a "memorial inscription" that records on Uriyahu's tomb an event that occurred during his lifetime, involving the second person (ibid., 368–69).

[17] Following Zevit, who interprets the word according to its general nuance: "his inscription" ("Khirbet el-Qôm Inscription," 43). See the extended discussion of the morpho-syntactical problems in idem, *Religions of Ancient Israel*, 361–62. Other scholars have interpreted כתבה as a *qal* perfect verb, with a third person masculine singular pronominal suffix; see Hadley, "Khirbet el-Qom Inscription," 53; and Renz, *Die Althebräischen Inschriften*, 207 n. 2. According to Parker, the sense of this reading ("he wrote it") is that Uriyahu commissioned the writing ("Graves, Caves, and Refugees," 279). Regardless of how the word is interpreted, the line makes reference to the inscription in one way or another.

[18] Zevit detected traces of a *taw* at the end of the first word and interpreted it as a first person common singular suffix form: ברכת, "I blessed" ("Khirbet el-Qôm Inscription Mentioning a Goddess," 44; idem, *Religions of Ancient Israel*, 360 n. 9). The general sense of this line is consistent, regardless of how the verb is parsed (Renz, *Die Althebräischen Inschriften*, 208 n. 1), hence the reading here as a *qal* passive participle.

[19] Zevit has suggested that Oniyahu's responsibilities included the blessing of Uriyahu, based on the reading "I blessed" (ברכת) ("Khirbet el-Qôm Inscription," 46). More recently, he has suggested that the activities of Oniyahu (Abiyahu) were mantic, and related to the plight of Uriyahu (on whose behalf the former interceded) (*Religions of Ancient Israel*, 368–69). The interpretation is partly based on the first person verb Zevit reconstructs at the beginning of line 2.

The relationship between tomb and patrimony in ancient Israel may shed light on the function of the additional party named in *Qom* 3:4.[20] The reference to Oniyahu is peculiar, because Hebrew funerary inscriptions mention only the name of the dead, along with a curse against trespassers or a blessing of the dead. These inscriptions do not mention the offspring of the dead, unlike Phoenician inscriptions where it is typical for a son's actions to be credited in establishing the memorial. It may be that additional names were unnecessary if the ownership of the tomb was already known. The typical absence of the names of offspring in Hebrew funerary inscriptions may suggest a ritual context in which the inheritors were made known through some other action that accompanied the writing of the dead benefactor's name. Thus, the unusual reference to Oniyahu in Uriyahu's tomb inscription may indicate that there were extraordinary circumstances that surrounded the latter individual's death and burial.[21] The absence of an immediate family member to perform the required rituals on behalf of Uriyahu may have been the type of circumstance that warranted the acknowledgment of Oniyahu. It is therefore possible to interpret Oniyahu as a kinsman who oversaw the funerary rites for Uriyahu.

According to this interpretation, Oniyahu's actions as a near kinsman (functioning as a גאל) not only would have preserved Uriyahu's name but also would have maintained his ancestral estate within their kinship group. It is important to keep in mind, however, that the ritual performance meant more than simply gaining inheritance. What was at stake was the preservation of identity, both individ-

[20] There is much material on this relationship in anthropological and archaeological studies. One can refer conveniently to Mike Parker Pearson, *The Archaeology of Death and Burial* (Texas A&M University Anthropology Series 3; College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2002), 114–15. The relationship is evident in biblical passages such as Josh 24:29–30 (and Judg 2:9), as well as 1 Sam 25:1 and 1 Kgs 2:34, where the term בית probably means "patrimony" and not a physical structure. It is also implied in passages such as Ruth 4:10; 2 Sam 19:38; and Neh 2:3, as well as the tradition of the Cave of Machpelah (see Gen 49:30, among other references).

[21] Karl Jaroš has suggested that Oniyahu is the head of the kinship group that claimed the tomb (and not necessarily the scribe) ("Zur Inschrift Nr. 3 von Ḫirbet el-Qōm," *BN* 19 [1982]: 34–35; idem, *Hundert Inschriften aus Kanaan und Israel: für den Hebräischunterricht bearbeitet* [Fribourg, Schweiz: Schweizerisches Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1982], cited in Dobbs-Allsopp et al., *Hebrew Inscriptions*, 331). Kyle McCarter has suggested that if Oniyahu was not the name of the scribe, the name could have been that of another person interred in the same tomb, see "Khirbet el-Qom" (trans. P. Kyle McCarter; *COS* 2.52: 179 n. 4). There are no other examples of the commissioning of a tomb inscription; however, a group of Old Assyrian tablets from *kārum* Kanish may offer some support for the actions of Oniyahu (and the גאל in Job 19:25). Klaas Veenhof ("The Death and Burial of Ishtar-Lamassi in Karum Kanish," in *Studies in Ancient Near Eastern World View and Society: Presented to Marten Stol* [ed. R. J. van der Spek and G. Haayer; Bethesda: CDL, 2008], 102–17) has published ten texts that relate to the death of a woman named Ištar-lamassī and her two adult sons (apparently at the same time). With no living sons, and an estate complicated by Ištar-lamassī's second marriage to an Anatolian, much of the responsibility of preserving the Assyrian family's patrimony fell upon another relative, Lamassatum (possibly a sister or in-law of Ištar-lamassī).

ual (Uriyahu) and collective (the kinship group of Uriyahu and Abiyahu), and this preservation was actualized through the burial of kin inside the family tomb. The interpretation of Oniyahu in *Qom* 3 is important for understanding Job 19:25 because it potentially offers a parallel to the role and function of Job's kinsman-redeemer.

B. Burial Practices

Job 19:26–27 continues the funerary image with a perplexing picture of Job's perceived fate (involving a visceral representation of his deteriorating body) that should be understood against the background of burial customs.

ואחר עורי נקפו־זאת ומבשרי אחזה אלוה
אשר אני אחזה־לי ועיני ראו ולא־זר כלו כליתי בחקי

(26)And after my skin is struck off—this—then without my flesh I will see God;
(27)that I myself will see my own, and my eyes gaze but not a stranger, (as) my kidneys shrivel within my bosom.

The corporal imagery begins in v. 26a with Job being stripped of his skin, where the indefinite subject of the third person plural *piel* verb (נקפו, "strike [off]; denude") indicates a passive nuance.[22] The picture here is one of excarnation,[23] which suggests a separative sense for the preposition -מ in v. 26b: "and without my flesh" (ומבשרי).[24] The notion of the body's deterioration continues into v. 27b and extends to Job's vital organs, where the *qal* verb כלו ("shrink") describes the condition of Job's kidneys within his bosom, serving as the final image of his death.[25] These verses relate directly to the status of the dead inside the tomb, for the destined end of Job's decomposing corpse is among the bones of former burials collected within his family tomb.[26]

[22] *GKC* §144*g*. The appearance of the feminine singular demonstrative particle זאת is unusual, and cannot be explained.

[23] Clines also suggests this possibility (*Job 1–20*, 461).

[24] See GKC §119*w*; cf. the translation in Marvin H. Pope, *Job: Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (AB 15; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965), 139.

[25] Despite the difficulty of the clause (masc. verb and fem. noun), the word choice in v. 27b is based on the alliterative affinities between √כלה and כלית ("kidneys"), translating the verb here as "shrinking" ("my kidneys shrink") in the sense of deterioration. This reading signifies the last aspect of physicality in the passage (Hans Walter Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament* [trans. Margaret Kohl; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974; repr., Mifflintown: Sigler, 1996], 65; German original 1973).

[26] The idea that stands behind vv. 26–27 is one of a processual death, where the natural decay of the flesh reflects the gradual diminution of the soul. Cf. Johannes Pedersen's concept of the נפש, or soul (*Israel, Its Life and Culture* [2 vols.; South Florida Studies in the History of Judaism 28; London: Oxford University Press, 1959], 1:179–81). Eric M. Meyers has made similar observations regarding the status of the corpse inside the tomb (body versus bones), associating the concept with burial practices ("Secondary Burials in Palestine," *BA* 33 [1970]: 15–16). See also the

Funerary rites were an important part of ancient Israel's social matrix, where kinship affiliation played a key role in an individual's life and identity. In this patrimonial culture, the use of a communal tomb by a kinship group reified their collective identity.[27] Although the tomb itself was a visible symbol of patrimony, it represented more than just a property marker, as it contained the aggregate remains of a group's lineage.[28] Thus, the very act of interment held symbolic value that reinforced a group's sense of identity. The predominant form of interment in ancient Israel and early Judaism involved secondary rites,[29] where the disarticulated remains of former burials would be removed to another part of the tomb in order to make room for subsequent interments.[30] In principle, this practice was a strategy for maximizing the storage capacity of a single tomb.[31] But the entire burial process implies a ritual setting (now lost) that would have provided a venue for the resolution of issues created by the disruptive nature of death.

The occurrence of multiple burials in a cave, which became common in the southern Levant as early as the third millennium B.C.E.,[32] gave rise to the practice of secondary rites in which the disarticulated remains of the dead would be transferred to another area of the tomb.[33] The practice of secondary rites (and collective interment) continued into the first millennium and is well represented in the common bench tomb found in Judah during the Iron Age II.[34] An excellent example is

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review article by R. E. Tappy, "Did the Dead Ever Die in Biblical Judah?" *BASOR* 298 (1995): 63, where it is briefly suggested that Job 19:25–27 may refer to the postmortem treatment of bones.

[27] See the discussion of funerary rites and the concepts of ancestors in G. Barkay, "The Iron Age II-III," in *The Archaeology of Ancient Israel* (ed. Amnon Ben-Tor; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 360; Bloch-Smith, *Judahite Burial Practices*, 111–12.

[28] Barkay, "Burial Caves and Burial Practices," 108.

[29] The classic study on this is Meyers, "Secondary Burials in Palestine," 2–29.

[30] The practice of transferring human remains is termed "ossilegium" by archaeologists; see Meyers, "Secondary Burials in Palestine," 2; W. G. Dever, "Funerary Practices in EB IV (MB I) Palestine: A Study in Cultural Discontinuity," in *Love and Death in the Ancient Near East: Essays in Honor of Marvin H. Pope* (ed. John H. Marks and Robert M. Good; Guilford, CT: Four Quarters, 1987), 11; and L. Y. Rahmani, "Ossuaries and *Ossilegium* (Bone-Gathering) in the Late Second Temple Period," in *Ancient Jerusalem Revealed* (ed. Hillel Geva; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1994), 191–95; Olyan, "Some Neglected Aspects of Israelite Interment Ideology," 613.

[31] Philip Johnston, *Shades of Sheol: Death and Afterlife in the Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002), 61–62. Yet the manner in which these rites were carried out, along with the grave goods associated with them, suggests that they were much more meaningful than Johnston observes.

[32] See, conveniently, Elizabeth Bloch-Smith, "Cave Tombs," *OEANE* 1:443–44.

[33] See, e.g., the discussion of burial customs in the tomb in R. E. Cooley and G. D. Pratico, "Gathered to His People: An Archaeological Illustration from Tell Dothan's Western Cemetery," in *Scripture and Other Artifacts: Essays on the Bible and Archaeology in Honor of Philip J. King* (ed. Michael D. Coogan, J. Cheryl Exum, and Lawrence E. Stager; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994), 88–89.

[34] Although this architectural feature is a hallmark of the Iron II period, bench tombs first appeared during the Late Bronze Age; see Rivka Gonen, *Burial Patterns and Cultural Diversity in*

the complex of tombs found at Ketef Hinnom, part of Jerusalem's western cemetery, dating from the late Iron Age through the Persian period.[35] The bench tomb typically consisted of a chamber, or multiple chambers, that included benches hewn out of the three walls opposite the entrance, as well as a carved space known as a repository.[36] The dead would initially lie recumbent upon the bench, following what archaeologists call the primary burial. When bench space was required, with the reuse of the tomb, the bones (i.e., decomposed remains) would be removed to the repository.[37] Thus, the architectural plan of the Iron Age bench tomb effectively crystallized a cultural practice that can be traced back into the Bronze Age.

The practice of secondary rites continued in the southern Levant during the late first millennium, despite the fact that the bench tomb plan fell out of use by the end of the Persian period. Evidence from the Hellenistic period indicates that large family tombs would utilize a chamber as a charnel room for the secondary disposal of the dead.[38] During the early Roman period, the use of bone boxes (or ossuaries) replaced the earlier repositories and charnel rooms in the practice of collective burial.[39] Thus, the ideological significance of secondary rites and collective burials remained in place throughout the first millennium, despite the fact that its specific practice may have changed over time. This cultural practice of secondary inhumation, prevalent as it may have been in ancient Israel, is never directly referenced or described in any written source. Nonetheless, archaeologists have recognized that the biblical expressions "gathered to his peoples" and "lay with fathers" reflect this manner of burial custom.[40] Other images that associate a deteriorating condition

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Late Bronze Age Canaan (ASOR Dissertation Series 7; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1991), 23–24. For a full discussion, see Bloch-Smith, *Judahite Burial Practices*, 41–52.

[35] G. Barkay, "Excavations at Ketef Hinnom in Jerusalem," in Geva, *Ancient Jerusalem Revealed,* 85.

[36] Typically, repositories were carved-out spaces underneath a burial bench or built into the corner of the tomb (Bloch-Smith, *Judahite Burial Practices*, 41–52).

[37] For descriptions of this burial process, see Barkay, "Iron Age II–III," 359; Bloch-Smith, *Judahite Burial Practices*, 148–49; and Meyers, "Secondary Burials in Palestine," 12–15. An excellent example of a repository was found in chamber 25 of Ketef Hinnom's cave 24, dated to the Iron IIC and later periods and located in the Hinnom Valley of Jerusalem; see G. Barkay, *A Treasure Facing Jerusalem's Walls* (Jerusalem: Israel Museum Catalogues, 1986), 19–25; idem, "Excavations at Ketef Hinnom in Jerusalem," 85. Note also the undisturbed repository (ninth–eighth century B.C.E.) from Tel Halif, in the southern Shephelah (A. Biran and R. Gophna, "An Iron Age Burial Cave at Tel Halif," *IEJ* 20 [1970]: 151–52, and figs. 2–3).

[38] Jodi Magness, "Ossuaries and the Burials of Jesus and James," *JBL* 124 (2005): 128.

[39] The development of ossuaries in Second Temple Judaism has been linked by Meyers to the earlier (Iron Age) use of repositories ("Secondary Burials in Palestine," 15–16, 27–29). Rahmani argues that ossuaries did not represent an ideological continuation but rather indicated the development of individual theological concerns (related to resurrection), separate and distinct from earlier communal burials conducted by family units ("Ossuaries and Ossilegium," 192–95). For a discussion of these theories, see Magness, "Ossuaries and the Burials of Jesus and James," 131–33.

[40] Barkay, "Iron Age II-III," 360.

in the context of death or the grave, such as Job 19:25–26, should also be related to secondary burial practices— even if only by allusion. This manner of disposing of the dead involved actions that ascribed meaning to the physical changes apparent in the corpse inside the tomb; and although this meaning is still not entirely understood, it stands to reason that the biblical images allude to this same attitude toward death, dying, and the grave.

C. Synthesis

The imagery of vv. 26–27 implies a progression of action that involves Job and his corpse. As Job's body reposes in the family tomb, a kinsman will perform the necessary duties in honor of Job, which includes the recording of his name in an epitaph (vv. 23–24).[41] The preservation of one's name may suggest a strong element of individuality, yet this preservation was facilitated entirely by a collective identity.[42] This ideology of death stands in contrast to the doctrine of retribution, according to which the wicked die dishonorably and are not given proper burial. Instead, the concept of collective fate conjures a benevolent image of reunion with the ancestors, which entails the ability of the dead (through funerary rites) to join a community represented by their kinship affiliation.[43] Thus, the inscription of Job's "words" and the interment of his remains, all in a family burial site, were critical actions that were duties incumbent upon his kin.

II. Job's Kinsman-Redeemer

The recognition of cultural features in Job 19:23–24 and 26–27 gives a better indication of the identity of the גאל in v. 25, which has long frustrated interpreters.[44]

[41] Job's words in v. 23 probably also included a blessing (ברוך; cf. *Qom* 3:2), along with the writing of his name. See, e.g., the silver amulets that contain apotropaic blessings found in the repository of chamber 25 at the cemetery of Ketef Hinnom (cf. Num 6:24–26).

[42] The names of the dead could serve an aggregate purpose for the kinship group, as seen in genealogies and other lists of ancestors. On "perpetuating the ancestral name," see T. J. Lewis, "The Ancestral Estate (נַחֲלַת אֱלֹהִים) in 2 Samuel 14:16," *JBL* 110 (1991): 604–5. For the importance of corporate identity and Job, see also Alec Basson, "Just Skin and Bones: The Longing for Wholeness of the Body in the Book of Job," *VT* 58 (2008): 288.

[43] Lawrence E. Stager, "The Archaeology of the Family in Ancient Israel," *BASOR* 260 (1985): 23; Olyan, "Some Neglected Aspects of Israelite Interment Ideology," 607–11.

[44] H. H. Rowley, *From Moses to Qumran: Studies in the Old Testament* (New York: Association Press, 1963), 180–81 n. 1; see the bibliography (and the review of interpretations) in Clines, *Job 1–20*, 426–27, 463–66; Jan Holman, "Does My Redeemer Live or Is My Redeemer the Living God? Some Reflections on the Translation of Job 19,25," in *The Book of Job* (ed. W. A. M. Beuken; BETL 114; Leuven: Leuven University Press, Peeters, 1994), 377–81; and W. L. Michel, "Confidence and Despair: Job 19, 25–27 in the Light of Northwest Semitic Studies," in Beuken, *Book of Job*, 163–66.

Although the term itself is unambiguous (a *qal* masc. sing. nominal participle of √גאל, "to redeem"),[45] the literary setting of this term in 19:25 raises certain issues that lead to divergent explanations.

ואני ידעתי גאלי חי ואחרון על־עפר יקום

(25)But I indeed know that my kinsman-redeemer lives, and the last one upon the dust will stand .

As Jan Holman outlined in his review of v. 25,[46] the interpretations of the figure of the גאל have adopted one of four identifications: a living person (the approach taken in this study), the embodiment of Job's complaint,[47] a divine being (other than God),[48] or (most commonly) God.[49] The different opinions are predicated on the question of Job's status and can be divided into two positions that Norman Habel has termed "antemortem" and "postmortem."[50] Will the redeemer act during Job's lifetime or after Job has died? The cultural background of vv. 23–24 and 26–27 indicates that v. 25 describes a living person who would act on behalf of the righteous sufferer once he (Job) had passed away. The figure in v. 25 has a central role in Job's speech in vv. 23–27, which is part of a larger dialogue on death that takes place in the second cycle of speeches in Job.[51] The centerpiece, indeed the

[45] See KBL, 169; and H. Ringgren, "גָּאַל," *TDOT* 3:350–55.

[46] Holman, "Does My Redeemer Live," 377–78.

[47] D. J. A. Clines, "Belief, Desire and Wish in Job 19:23–27: Clues for the Identity of Job's 'Redeemer,'" in *"Wünschet Jerusalem Frieden": Collected Communications to the XIIth Congress of the International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament, Jerusalem 1986* (ed. Matthias Augustin and Klaus-Dietrich Schunck, BEATAJ; Frankfurt am Main/New York: Peter Lang, 1988), 363–69; idem, *Job 1–20*, 459.

[48] The idea that the redeemer is a divine being other than God, a "witness in heaven" (16:19), was proffered by Sigmund Mowinckel ("Hiobs *gō'ēl* und Zeuge im Himmel," *BZAW* 41 [1925]: 207–12), who suggested that the divine advocate was a personal god. Mowinkel's suggestion was followed in a different fashion by several scholars; see, e.g., W. A. Irwin, "Job's Redeemer," *JBL* 81 (1962): 228–29; Pope, *Job*, 134–35, 146–47; J. B. Curtis, "On Job's Witness in Heaven," *JBL* 102 (1983): 549–50; and E. T. Mullen, "Go'el," *DDD,* 2nd ed., 372–73. Zuckerman suggests that this character is an antitypical deity (a "counter-deity") whose role is to parody Job's dilemma (*Job the Silent,* 114–15).

[49] Driver and Gray, *Book of Job*, 171–74; A. de Wilde, *Das Buch Hiob: Eingeleitet, übersetzt und erläutert* (OTS 22; Leiden: Brill, 1981), 213–15; John E. Hartley, *The Book of Job* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 292–94; Leo G. Perdue, *Wisdom in Revolt: Metaphorical Theology in the Book of Job* (JSOTSup 112; Sheffield: Almond, 1991), 170; and Jeremiah Unterman, "The Social-Legal Origin for the Image of God as Redeemer of Israel," in *Pomegranates and Golden Bells: Studies in Biblical, Jewish, and Near Eastern Ritual, Law, and Literature in Honor of Jacob Milgrom* (ed. David P. Wright, David Noel Freedman, and Avi Hurvitz; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1995), 401. The divine redeemer interpretation was made christological by the church fathers, and most famously, by Handel in his *Messiah.*

[50] Habel, *Book of Job*, 307.

[51] Job ends his individual speeches by referring to his death (7:21b; 10:21–22; 14:20–22;

climax, of this dialogue is 19:23–27; therefore, in order better to understand Job's position, it is vital to recognize the role and function of his גאל in v. 25.

Job's famous declaration in ch. 19 comes as the concluding remarks in his answer to Bildad's speech in ch. 18. Job 19 begins and ends with Job addressing his friends (vv. 1–2 and 28–29), which provides the framework for the chapter. Although Job never directly addresses God, he begins by blaming the deity for his suffering (vv. 8–12) and follows with a description of his isolation from his kith and kin. In vv. 20–22, Job describes his affliction and his impending death and appeals to his friends for mercy. Thus, Job's speech in vv. 23–27 achieves multiple objectives. The speech is consistent with the description of Job's affliction and his banishment from the community (19:8–22), and it comes as a response to Bildad's allegations (ch. 18), yet it also plays an important role in a larger discourse in the second cycle of speeches concerning the imminence of death. In fact, the extended speech of Job running through chs. 12–14 ends with Job's brief observations on mortality and fate (notably 14:13–22),[52] serving as a rhetorical transition from the first cycle to the next.[53]

The transition in the rhetoric of the speech cycles is important, for the discussion of reward and penalty by Job's friends in the first cycle becomes simply a description of penalty (the fate of the wicked) in the second.[54] The issue is not specifically death, which is inevitable for both the righteous and the wicked, but rather the fate of the deceased.[55] The idea argued in the first cycle is that Job must

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17:11–16; 19:23–27), which Clines interprets, in the first four passages, as Job's frustration that none will come to his defense in this life (*Job 1–20*, 400–401). For Day, these passages belie a contradiction in the manner in which the afterlife is portrayed ("Development of Belief," 251). The topic of death appears again in Job's concluding remarks in the first speech of the third cycle (21:32–33), although here they do not refer to his death. My point, however, is that the accusations against Job hold an implicit threat that he will suffer the fate of the wicked. For this reason, the topic of death is fundamental to Job's defense and is represented in different terms that should not be viewed as contradictory.

[52] The issue of mortality and fate is also found elsewhere in the book; however in chs. 15–21 it is the central concern.

[53] The question of whether ch. 14 belongs to the first or second cycle is a matter of dispute; see the discussion of John E. Course, *Speech and Response: A Rhetorical Analysis of the Introductions to the Speeches of the Book of Job (Chaps. 4–24)* (CBQMS 25; Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1994), 69–88. Course ultimately determined that ch. 14 concluded the first cycle of speeches, yet it is probably best to interpret 12:1–14:22 as a "transitional unit," with Clines (*Job 1–20*, 285–88).

[54] S. E. Balentine, "Job, Book of," *NIDB* 3:327.

[55] The debate revolves around the "moral order of the world" and the concept of "final retribution," a concept in which the righteous are rewarded in life and the unrighteous are not; see Clines, *Job 1–20*, xxxviii–xlii. Job argues against this concept, based upon his personal experience, while his friends defend the view of reward and punishment. According to the doctrine that Job's friends defend, the consequence of Job's guilt is the death of the wicked, an ignominious (and possibly violent) death followed by the denial of proper burial rites.

confess his sin before the community.[56] In this way Job's plight is related to his social demise, and the discussion in the second cycle indicates that this ignominious status would continue on into death. One consequence of Job's unrepentant attitude would be the denial of proper postmortem honors, which fits with the curse of nonburial (or disinterment) found elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible.[57] The adverse nature of nonburial, or at least nonburial in the family tomb, probably relates to a larger constellation of socioreligious problems associated with patrimony and the collective identity of the dead in the afterlife.[58] Thus, Job's response to his friend's accusations, including those of Eliphaz (17:14–16, cf. ch. 16),[59] draws heavily from death imagery and concludes the second cycle of speeches with Job's assertion that even the unrighteous are afforded proper honors upon death (21:7–34).

[56] As Driver and Gray observed, the speeches of Bildad and Zophar (Job 18 and 20, respectively) indirectly accuse Job of some unstated transgression that has resulted in his current condition as punishment (*Book of Job,* lvii).

[57] See, e.g., Deut 28:26; 1 Sam 17:44, 46; and 2 Sam 21:5–10. Conversely, Olyan offers a graded description of five categories of burial types in ancient Israel, with interment in the family tomb given the highest rank ("Some Neglected Aspects of Israelite Interment Ideology," 603–4); see also K. Spronk, "Good Death and Bad Death in Ancient Israel according to Biblical Lore," *Social Science & Medicine* 58 (2004): 991–92.

[58] The fate that concerns Job (and one that he refutes in ch. 21) is described in Bildad's speech in ch. 18, which begins by stating that the wicked have no lasting heritage (vv. 5–6), they often suffer a violent end (vv. 7–12), and their entire being is consumed by death (vv. 13–14), resulting in the annihilation of their collective identity (vv. 15–20). The threat of the "death after death" is visualized by the consumption of Job's skin by the "firstborn of death" (v. 13), ending with his body being dragged from his tent before the "king of terrors" (v. 14). The problematic terms בכור מות ("firstborn of death" [v. 13]), and מלך בלהות ("king of terrors" [v. 14]), probably refer to the finality of death. This sense of completion combines the concept of bodily decay with the symbolically related decay of the deceased's name from the memory of the living (Job 18:17 [below]; cf. Prov 10:7). More explicitly, in vv. 15–19 Bildad states that the tents of the wicked are empty and their pastureland is barren (v. 15) as they are driven from this world (v. 18). Their lineage will perish (vv. 16 and 19) and, as a result, their names will be shamed and forgotten (v. 17).

[59] Job 17:14–16 is traditionally interpreted as expressive of Job's lack of hope (see 16:22–17:1); that is, death and the grave are his only recourse. See E. Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job* (trans. Harold Knight; 2nd ed.; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984), 242–43; and Roland E. Murphy, "Death and the Afterlife in the Wisdom Literature," in *Judaism in Late Antiquity: Death, Life-After-Death, Resurrection and the World-To-Come in the Judaisms of Antiquity* (ed. Alan J. Avery-Peck and Jacob Neusner; Handbook of Oriental Studies/HO, Section 1, The Near and Middle East 49; Leiden: Brill, 2000), 105. Yet the verses seem to express an ironic concern that the accusations against Job will result in a denial of burial in the family tomb. Clines suggests that the metaphorical association of בית and Sheol might reflect communal burial practices (*Job 1–20*, 399). The combination of kinship images with those of death and burial produces a bleak picture of Job's separation from his ancestors and the neglect of his memory by his forebears. The shocking statements of Job, descending to Sheol with no hope and calling the bleak emptiness of the grave his family, reflect his concern that he will be denied a proper burial because the community perceives him as unrighteous.

The progression of thought in the passage begins with a rhetorical expression in v. 23 that is answered later in v. 25;[60] the figure invoked in v. 25 (the גאל) is the one who will write Job's epitaph and effectively preserve his name for posterity. Likewise, the events of vv. 26–27 are conditioned upon the action of the גאל in v. 25. The activities of vv. 23–24 and 26–27 were part of a ritual process that represented the appropriate honors one would expect at death.[61] Needless to say, these activities (writing and burial) are both of this world, which suggests that the גאל is a living person—thus the translation "kinsman-redeemer." For this reason, it is unnecessary to associate the redeemer figure with the heavenly figures that are referenced elsewhere in the book (9:33; 16:19–21; cf. 31:35–37; 33:23).[62] Furthermore, the substantive adjective אחרון ("the last") is used as a noun in the parallel line (v. 25b), which may offer a further indication that the figure invoked is a surviving relative (cf. Isa 44:6).[63] The action of this individual is described as על־עפר יקום, combining a prepositional phrase that recalls funerary rites ("dust," עפר),[64] with a verbal root (קום) that has legal connotations.[65]

The function of the גאל in Job 19 is consistent with the description of the kinsman-redeemer elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. An important obligation of the

[60] Both lines of v. 23 begin with מי־יתן, which has a rhetorical, or optative, force; see Dhorme, *Job*, 281; and Joüon §163*d*.

[61] Basson has tried to interpret Job's physical suffering as a literary representation of his liminal status within the social world of ancient Israel ("Just Skin and Bones," 287–99). Job's deteriorating corporal condition does embody a change in status, but, as highlighted in 19:26–27, this was indicative of the process of dying.

[62] The equation of the redeemer with the intercessors referenced elsewhere in Job is influenced by the book's legal metaphor. (Thus, Job's discourse is presented in a form that would naturally utilize legal vocabulary.) See Habel, *Book of Job*, 54–57; Claus Westermann, *The Structure of the Book of Job: A Form-Critical Analysis* (trans. Charles A. Muenchow; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 4–5; and F. Rachel Magdalene, *On the Scales of Righteousness: Neo-Babylonian Trial Law and the Book of Job* (BJS 348; Providence, RI: Brown Judaic Studies, 2007).

[63] For this translation, see Mowinckel, "Hiobs *gō'ēl*," 211; Pope, *Job,* 146. Pope notes not only the Isaiah passage but also the Rabbinic Hebrew term אחראי, meaning "guarantor." This interpretation is followed also by Michael L. Barré, who suggests (improbably) that the redeemer is a figure that can restore Job's health ("A Note on Job XIX 25," *VT* 29 [1979]: 107); note the critique of Barré in Clines, *Job 1–20*, 433. Clines, however, too easily dismisses the reading of the adjective as a noun.

[64] Driver and Gray, *Book of Job*, 173–74; S. R. Driver, *The Book of Job in the Revised Version* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1906), 127–28; Habel, *Book of Job*, 159.

[65] Magdalene interpreted the redeemer of v. 25 as one of a series of advocates whom Job invokes in his defense as a second accuser against God, which was a known practice in cuneiform legal texts ("Who Is Job's Redeemer? Job 19:25 in Light of Neo-Babylonian Law," *ZABR* 10 [2004]: 292–316). Yet the role of the redeemer in legal disputes is never mentioned or defined in the Hebrew Bible, outside of a few passages in which YHWH symbolically assumes the role on behalf of his people; see Clines, *Job 1–20*, 459.

גאל was to preserve the deceased's patrimony by honoring the name of dead kin.[66] In Ruth, Boaz, who is specifically the יבם ("male in-law"), acts as גאל through his levirate marriage to his יבמה (Ruth). The role assumed by Boaz, however, related as much to the dead (Mahlon) as it did to the living (Ruth), which is made clear in his petition before the elders of Bethlehem, stating that he will marry Ruth "to raise up [להקים] the name of the dead upon his inheritance that the name of the dead not be cut off from among his brothers" (Ruth 4:10; cf. v. 5). This passage in Ruth employs the same verbal root (√קום) that is used in Job 19:25 to describe the action of Job's kinsman-redeemer. Job's גאל was probably his דוד, an elder kinsman (or "father's brother"), who had the responsibility of burying dead kin.[67] The image in vv. 23–27 is of a process performed by Job's redeemer: as Job's body lies in the family tomb, a kinsman will perform the necessary rituals in honor of the dead.

The greater purpose of the literary unit's progressive imagery is encapsulated in vv. 26–27, where Job assumes a type of afterlife status that involves the deity (v. 26b) as well as his own kin (as opposed to a "stranger" [זר]) in v. 27. Although this picture of the afterlife is unclear (and unparalleled in other sources), the indication seems to be that Job believes that some form of final justification will come after he dies (cf. 17:1).[68] What Job responds to is the threat of postmortem annihilation, described as the "dreaded death after death," which is essentially to have one's name extinguished from memory.[69] The image evoked in 19:25 is not intended as a premonition of the theophany that occurs at the conclusion of the book (38:1–42:6),[70] because this event occurs according to divine will and not in response to Job's human desires.[71] Indeed, the appearance of the deity in a whirlwind and his direct challenge of Job mark the remarkable reversal that occurs in the sufferer's lifetime, as described in the book's epilogue (42:7–17). Job's desires in 19:23–27 lay beyond his own lifetime, and his words demonstrate how one's postmortem existence was dependent on proper funerary rites and on interment in one's family tomb.[72]

Job's redeemer is typically interpreted within the larger legal context of the disputation that provides the structure for the speech cycles at the core of the

[66] See, similarly, Lewis, "Ancestral Estate," 607–8 (citing Ruth 4:10).

[67] See Lev 10:4 and Amos 6:10; see Shalom M. Paul, *Amos: A Commentary on the Book of Amos* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 216 n. 31.

[68] For instance, Driver and Gray comment that in the second cycle of speeches (particularly 19:23–27), "Job clearly expects to die *before* his character is cleared" (*Book of Job*, 172).

[69] B. B. Schmidt, "Memory as Immortality: Countering the Dreaded 'Death after Death' in Ancient Israelite Society," in *Judaism in Late Antiquity*, 87–200. See also Murphy, in reference to Job 18:5–21 ("Death and the Afterlife," 106).

[70] Interpreted as such by Day, "Development of Belief," 251–53.

[71] Clines also discusses the irony of Job getting his wish to see God at the end of the book (*Job 1–20*, 463); see, similarly, Habel, *Book of Job*, 309.

[72] Brichto, "Kin, Cult, Land," 22–28.

book.[73] Yet the disputation centers on the doctrine of final retribution, which is a doctrine that involves a distinct ideology of death.[74] It is within this ideology that Job's kinsman-redeemer takes his stand. Because scholars have not recognized the cultural context of Job 19:23–27, they discuss the figure of v. 25 in terminology that is incorrect. The context for Job's kinsman-redeemer is not a courtroom drama set in the divine realm, but rather Job's death and burial. The theme of death (and thus burial) runs through the disputation precisely because the consequence of final retribution, for the unrighteous, is a terrible death.[75] But this fate means much more than the denial of funerary rites, for it implies that Job's name would be eradicated from memory. The desperate nature of this situation is apparent in chs. 29–31, where Job expounds on his virtues, decrying his diminished status in society. Although it is never directly stated in these chapters, the implied and ultimate threat of final retribution is the eradication of his name. It is Job's kinsman-redeemer, through the performance of his duties, who will act against this threat and effectively preserve Job's name.

III. Conclusion

What Job pleads for is the recognition of his innocence and the rehabilitation of his status in society. Concomitant with these provisions would be a proper death, which is otherwise denied according to the attitude of Job's friends. Here the contrasting viewpoints of Job collide with those of his companions, creating a theme that runs through the second speech cycle. Death is the final adjudicator for both Job and his friends. In the eyes of the friends it is an ignoble death that awaits Job unless he confesses his transgression, yet Job believes that he is deserving of a proper fate regardless of how he is perceived among the living. If Job cannot regain his former status in this life, he should at least expect the preservation of his name for posterity. This theme of death and disinheritance is implied throughout chs. 13–21 and is made explicit in certain passages, notably 19:23–27. In particular, these verses express the sufferer's confidence that a kinsman will step forward and perform the necessary actions to afford Job justification in death.

[73] For a balanced view of the legal metaphor, see Carol Newsom, *The Book of Job: A Contest of Moral Imaginations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 150–58.

[74] For Newsom, the legal metaphor is a device used by Job to confront the inadequacies inherent in his companion's accusations, based on the doctrine of retribution (*Book of Job,* 151, 161–62; and eadem, "Job," 491–93). Cf. Mathewson, *Death and Survival*, 92.

[75] Scholars often see the disputants of the second cycle talking past each other, with Job engaged in a legal defense while his friends present the fate of the wicked; see, e.g., Newsom, *Book of Job,* 161; eadem, "Job," 491. In fact, what is being disputed in the second cycle is a conflict in ideologies regarding death. Job brings this to the forefront in ch. 21 (as Newsom correctly observes) by stating that even the wicked are honored in death, thus parodying the position of his friends.

The role of this kinsman (the גאל) is properly understood in the context of burial and all associated rituals, such as the creation of an epitaph. The epitaph, especially, was the medium for staking the claims of dead kin in extraordinary circumstances. This was probably the situation of Uriyahu and his kinsman Oniyahu at Makkedah (*Qom* 3), and this was certainly the case with Job and his kinsman-redeemer. These figures acted to preserve the individual name of the dead within a larger communal setting (the family tomb). The action of these figures ensured that their kinship group's patrimony remained intact, but it also provided a sense of benevolence for the dead through reunion (in burial) with the ancestors. While the picture of the afterlife in the Hebrew Bible was typically gloomy, the idea of a postmortem rest with dead kin contributed to a benevolent image of the dead inside the family tomb.

It is in this sense that the finer points of eschatology debated in Job can be highlighted. Scholars have usually labeled the position of Job's friends as the traditional viewpoint with regard to concepts of fate and retribution, yet Job's position appears much more customary.[76] The final retribution position taken by Job's friends envisioned a fate that was individualized. Even the deaths of Job's children, which could have been interpreted as corporate punishment for his transgression, are understood by Bildad to be the result of their individual wickedness (8:4). Job counters this view of individual retribution by enlisting a traditional view of corporate fate that was predominant in ancient Israel. According to this ideology of death, the fate of the individual was directly related to concepts of collective identity tied to kinship and patrimony. Thus, the defunct individual's identity was preserved within a larger framework of ancestry. This belief was reified through cultural practices such as communal burials inside family tombs and was affirmed by writing the name of the dead in an epitaph.

The identification of the role that Job's kinsman-redeemer played and the placement of this figure within a setting of funerary rites fit within the sociohistorical spectrum of ancient Israel. The social disruptions that occurred already in the late Iron Age and continued into the exilic and postexilic period had a profound impact on the structure of Israelite/early Jewish society. The vicissitudes of this broad historical framework would have given rise to anxiety and tension that resulted from feelings of social isolation (owing to the contraction of the basic family unit from extended to nuclear) and alienation (owing to frequent exiles from the ancestral homeland). In light of these feelings of isolation and alienation, a redeemer figure drawn from the traditional template of family and clan would have taken on a special character in the book of Job.

[76] Jon D. Levenson recently made a similar observation (*Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel: The Ultimate Victory of the God of Life* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006], 77–78).