

ABSTRACT

Job 42:5-6: Ellipses, Janus Prallellism and the Message of the Book of Job.

Did Job or God Repent?

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Finally, the Book of Job makes sense to me (after studying it, professionally, since 1966).

THE MASORETIC TEXT

לְשִׁמְעוֹתֵי אָזְנוֹן שָׁמַעְתִּי כָּ

42:5

וְעַתָּה עֵינַי רָאִתִּי כָּ

עַל־כֵּן אֶמְאָס וְנִחַמְתִּי

42:6

עַל־עֲפָר וְאֶפֶר

TRANSLITERATION

lě-šēma^c ḵōzen šēma ṯ-tî-kā

wě-attāh ḵn-î rā ūt-kā

al-kēn ʿem ʿas wě-niḥam-tî

al:|: ūl āpār wā-ēper

- 42:5 By the hearing of (my) ear I have heard - **YOU**, = tradition
 and now my own eye has seen - **YOU**, = own experience, so, merismus, = totality
 42:6 therefore, I despise (i.e., **YOU**) actually, I feel sad/feel pity (i.e., for **YOU**)
O Most High:|:a suckling of Dust-and-Dirt = an epithet of the Underworld, Sheol
 :|: = Janus-parallelism

MY REASONS FOR THIS TRANSLATION ARE:

- . the -y of *ḵn-î* does double duty for *ḵōzen*. Actually, parts of the body do not need a suffix in poetry.
- . the two suffixes, -*kā*, in v. 5 (vertical parallelism), do double duty also in v. 6 for *ʿem ʿas* and *niḥam-tî*. The problem is that the verb *niḥam-tî*, as a Niph'al, can not take an object. But, in Judges 21:6 the phrase לְוַיִּנְחָמוּ, *wayyinnāḥāmû* (N) "and (the people of Israel) had compassion," occurs, and in Judges 21:15 וַיִּנְחָמוּ, *niḥām lě* (N), "(the people) had compassion on (Benjamin)." This may mean that the poet wants us to be aware of ellipses after *ʿem ʿas* (i.e., -*kā*,"YOU") and *niḥam-tî* (i.e., *lěkā*, "to YOU") (horizontal parallelism). The ellipses leave the option open to *innocent* sufferers to complete these thoughts in their hearts/minds.
- . the term *l* may be a preposition, but, I think, that it needs to be read twice, as a Janus Parallelism, first as *ʿal*, "Most High," and then as *ūl*, "suckling;"
- . the expression *āpār wā-ēper* functions as a double entendre, (1) as an epithet of Sheol, the underworld, and (2) as a reference to mortal human beings.

This reading makes it unmistakable that Job passes the ultimate test by rejecting the behavior of God during the God-Speeches as an *inappropriate*, pompous and abusive execution of God's creative powers and a breach of the covenant. Job's *rib* (law-court pattern of prayer, cf. Jeremiah and about 50 Psalms) becomes clearer and compelling.

In this reading the message of the book is a *warning* to all tyrants, authoritarians, despots, dictators (divine or human), small and great. But, and more importantly, it is also an *invitation* to all victims of *unjust* oppression to despise, reject and then (either immediately or after some meditation) to pity, have compassion, and even empathy, with all those who are so weak that they need to resort to *authoritarian* behavior in a relationship which is only based on raw power.

In 42:7ff. the poet then tells us that it is God who is very pleased with Job, because Job did not bow before the *inappropriate* behavior of God (during the Prologue and the God-Speeches).

God then chides the "Friends" for also not behaving *appropriately* (*někônāh*) in their relationship to Job, by imposing a perfectly good theo-logy (i.e. reward and retribution, see, esp. Deuteronomy) on Job in an *inappropriate* situation (i.e. he had not sinned, and suffering is not always an automatic indication of punishment for sin).

Finally, God, like a convicted thief, repents and tries (vainly, though) to make restitution. A thief was commanded to restore *double* the stolen items (cf. e.g., Exodus 22:6f.). Some even restored *four-fold* (cf. e.g., 2. Samuel 12:5-6; Luke 19:8). If this is the sense of Job 42:5-6 then the efforts to suppress this meaning (beginning with the LXX) is understandable, but, pathetic.