

All Turned against Him: Exploring the Social Dimensions of Job's Suffering  
in Light of the Mediterranean Ethos of Honor and Shame

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All Turned against Him: Exploring the Social Dimensions of Job's Suffering  
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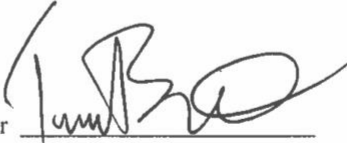
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## Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	Anchor Bible Dictionary. Edited by David Noel Freedman. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
ACW	Ancient Christian Writers
<i>Am.</i>	<i>Ethnol. American Ethnologist</i>
<i>Ann.</i>	<i>Rev. Anthropol. Annual Review of Anthropology</i>
<i>AQ</i>	<i>Anthropological Quarterly</i>
<i>ASR</i>	<i>African Studies Review</i>
ASV	American Standard Version
BIS	Biblical Interpretation Series
<i>BTB</i>	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CRS	Classics in Religious Studies
<i>CSR</i>	<i>Christian Scholars' Review</i>
<i>CSSH</i>	<i>Comparative Studies in Society and History</i>
ESV	English Standard Version
FC	Fathers of the Church
<i>HeBAI</i>	<i>Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel</i>
<i>Hist.</i>	<i>Anthropol. History and Anthropology</i>
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
<i>HUCA</i>	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
ILLUM	Illuminations
<i>JAOS</i>	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JCFS</i>	<i>Journal of Comparative Family Studies</i>
<i>J. Cross-Cult. Psychol.</i>	<i>Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology</i>
<i>JESHO</i>	<i>Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient</i>
<i>JR</i>	<i>Journal of Religion</i>
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement
JSJSup	Supplements to the Journal for the study of Judaism
<i>JSP</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha</i>
KJV	King James Version
LFHCC	Library of Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church
<i>LTP</i>	<i>Laval Théologique et Philosophique</i>
OTL	Old Testament Library
<i>OTE</i>	<i>Old Testament Essays</i>
<i>MLN</i>	<i>Modern Language Notes</i>
<i>Mod. Theol.</i>	<i>Modern Theology</i>
NEB	New English Translation
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version

<i>PEQ</i>	<i>Palestine Exploration Quarterly</i>
<i>PRS</i>	<i>Perspectives in Religious Studies</i>
<i>QJS</i>	<i>Quarterly Journal of Speech</i>
SFSHJ	South Florida Studies in the History of Judaism
<i>SJDR</i>	<i>Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research</i>
Targ.	Targum
TDOT	Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament
TNIV	Today's New International Version
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
Vulg.	Vulgate
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
<i>West. J. Commun.</i>	<i>Western Journal of Communication</i>
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

## INTRODUCTION

### 1. Justification for this Study: Job's Inconspicuous Social Suffering

Job suffers in various dimensions of his existence. A series of dialogues in the poetic center of the book—which I take to include both the cycles of speeches in Job 3–27 and Job's so-called response in Job 29–31<sup>1</sup>—unfold a conglomeration of various arguments, complaints, and emotional expressions, which indicates a complex quality of suffering that resists a simplistic way of understanding it. Not surprisingly, interpreters have developed various inquiries into the nature of Job's suffering. These inquiries identify several potential constituent features of the suffering one may observe from the text, such as mental distress from the deaths of family and the loss of one's own health, physical pain or deformation from skin disease, the conflict of the theological–moral world view that his experience poses to the retributive justice of God, and social exclusion by the public. As John Hartley says, “Job, a man of great faith and flawless character, suffers deeply in every dimension of his existence—physical, social, spiritual, and emotional.”<sup>2</sup>

Among these discernible constituent features of Job's suffering, mental distress and physical pain introduced in the Prologue (Job 1–2) are constant throughout the Dialogue. First,

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<sup>1</sup> Despite the interruption of the poem to wisdom in Job 28, which admittedly sets off chs. 29–31 as a distinct unit, Job's “defense” appears as his final poetic reply to the friends. Many interpreters take a similar stance when they interpret Job's defense in relation to the cycles of speeches in 3–27. Francis I. Andersen, *Job* (Leicester, England; Downer Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1976), 232; David Clines, *Job 21–37*, WBC 18A (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 987; Hanneke Van Loon, *Metaphors in the Discussion on Suffering in Job 3–31*, BIS 165 (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2018), 208; Choon Leong Seow, *Job 1–21: Interpretation and Commentary*, Illuminations (Grand Rapids; Cambridge [Eng.]: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2013), 68.

<sup>2</sup> John E. Hartley, *The Book of Job*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 47.

we can observe in Job 16 that Job correlates his loss of his family (1:18-19) with his mental distress. In 16:6, associating his psychological pain with the matter of speaking, Job argues that his distress would not be relieved either by silence or speech: “If I speak, my pain is not assuaged, and if I forbear, how much of it leaves me?” Despite this irrecoverable impact of his mental pain, in the following verses he presses on with describing how he feels God perpetuates his distress. In Job’s description, God stands as the prime granter of relentless violence: God has worn (16:7a), torn, hated (16:9), and given him into the hands of the wicked (16:11). What’s notable in these verses is his inclusion of the loss of his company (חַדָּוָה) in divinely granted violence. The Hebrew term, חַדָּוָה (company), being used to indicate the main target of God’s desolating power in 16:7b, generally refers to a group of people whose origins and orientation may take various forms, such as tribal (Num 1:2), legal (Lev 10:17), military (Judg 20:1), and cultic (Lev 8:3–5).<sup>3</sup> The current context that portrays Job as a suffering townsman appropriately locates these people among those whose relationship with him has been abruptly severed by God in conceivable social spaces, along with, most notably, his own household, as mentioned in the Prologue and Job 19:13–18.<sup>4</sup> As such, interpreting God as the perpetuator of his severed social relations, Job finds his alienation from his fellow citizens and his loss of family distressing and frustrating: “he [God] has made desolate all my company.”

The story is not so different for Job’s loss of his own health. He embeds in various places of his speeches the lingering impact of his skin disease (2:7–8) that continues to afflict him physically. For example, in Job 7 and 30, Job gives direct descriptions of his miserable skin

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<sup>3</sup> Levy, Milgrom, Ringgren, Fabry, “חַדָּוָה,” *TDOT* Vol. 10: 470–481.

<sup>4</sup> Robert Gordis, *The Book of Job: Commentaries, New Translation, and Special Studies*, Moreshet Series 2 (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1978), 175–176; Clines, *Job 1–20*, WBC 17 (Dallas: Word Books, 1989), 381–82.

conditions as a main source of his physical pain: “My flesh is clothed with worms and dirt; my skin hardens, then breaks out again (7:5)”; “My skin turns black and falls from me... (30:30a).” Job’s bodily illness does not appear to stop at inflicting physical pain on him; it also afflicts him mentally. Dell suggests that some of Job’s detailed descriptions of his own conditions gesture toward symptoms of mental affliction combined with physical torment. These conditions include a sense of filthiness and uncomfortable clothes (“yet you will plunge me in to filth, and my own clothes will abhor me,” 9:31), being eaten away (“One wastes away like a rotten thing, like a garment that is moth-eaten,” 13:28), and dim vision and inability to recognize his members (“My eye has grown dim from grief, and all my members are like a shadow,” 17:7).<sup>5</sup>

In the Dialogue, these two constituent features of Job’s suffering—mental distress and physical pain—function as an integrated stimulus for advancing more essential discourse about Job’s sudden calamities. Specifically, Job’s mental distress and physical condition bring to the fore the unfairness of divine treatment of him, the exploration of which becomes the main thrust of Job’s speeches. The two aforementioned complaints of Job on his loss of company (16:7) and his psychosomatic affliction (9:31) aptly capture how he ascribes his suffering to what he believes is God’s unjust treatment of him. In these instances, Job perceives God as the ultimate cause of his mental distress, attributing to him the design of situations that led to losing all his close people (“*he [God]* has made desolate...” [emphasis added], 16:7) and compromising his own health (“yet *you [God]* will plunge me...” [emphasis added], 9:31). Job does not stop here. In other parts of his speeches, he explores his perception of divinely generated violence, turning it into a moral inquiry to assess the propriety of such treatment. What he discovers during this process is the unjustness of this divine treatment. He reasons that, despite God’s intention to

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<sup>5</sup> Katherine J. Dell, “What Was Job’s Malady?”, *JSOT* 41, no. 1 (2016): 68–70.

uncover sins from him through such treatment, as far as he believes, there is none significant in him: “though there is no violence in my hands, and my prayer is pure” (16:17). Indeed, Job believes the divine knows of his innocence, even as God augments Job’s suffering: “...you [God] seek out my iniquity and search for my sin, although you know that I am not guilty...” (10:6-7).

Job seems to have believed that his upright character, like that which is recounted in the very beginning of the book and in his final speech (especially Job 29), should have enabled his continuing prosperity. And this belief appears to have prompted him to dedicate a large portion of his speeches to the intellectual struggle with theological–moral issues of his undeserved plight.<sup>6</sup> The following statement articulates Job’s verdict that divine injustice characterizes his situation of suffering: “For he [God] crushes me with a tempest, and multiplies my wounds without cause... Though I am blameless, he would prove me perverse” (9:17–20). In Job’s speech, his intellectual struggle takes the form of defending his personal integrity using legal language.<sup>7</sup> Stressing divine accountability for his suffering enables him to argue for his own integrity. To this end Job deploys legal terms, such as ריב, יכה, משפט, צדק, גאל—words that evoke a trial where his case against God’s mistreatment would be handled: “I have indeed prepared my case (משפט); I know that I shall be vindicated (צדק)” (13:18; cf., 9:3; 16:19; 19:25; 23:4, 7).<sup>8</sup>

However, such an effort exacerbates rather than solves the theological and moral issues with which Job wrestles and the situations these issues have brought forth. On one hand, Job’s

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<sup>6</sup> Habel similarly derives Job’s perception of divine injustice from Job’s belief that “he [God] is supposed to bless the righteous, not afflict him.” Habel, *The Book of Job*, 61; cf., Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 49.

<sup>7</sup> Newsom, *The Book of Job: A Contest of Moral Imaginations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 154; Habel, *The Book of Job*, 54–55; Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 37–38; John B. Frye, “Legal Language in the Book of Job” (PhD diss., University of London, 1973), 178–180.

<sup>8</sup> Norman C. Habel, *The Book of Job* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1985), 55; Clines, *Job 1–20*, xliii–xliv; Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 44.

questioning of divine justice stirs up a feud with his friends. They never doubt God’s ability to execute justice, and Job’s theological-moral standpoint only provokes strong reactions from them. For instance, in Job 15, Eliphaz is angered by Job’s standpoint, which Job frames around his appeal for vindication in his preceding speech (“I have indeed prepared my case; I know that I shall be vindicated,” 13:18). Greatly disturbed by Job’s direct confrontation against God, Eliphaz stresses the inappropriateness of such an attitude, equating it to sin (עוֹן): “But you are doing away from the fear of God, and hindering meditation before God. For your iniquity (עוֹן) teaches your mouth, and you choose the tongue of the crafty” (15:4–5). On the other hand, his intellectual inquiry into theological-moral problems about God does not alleviate his own uneasiness and dread. Instead, it intensifies these feelings, reinforcing his imagination of a silent God who, in his mind, never responds to him due to his stubbornness: “If I go forward, he is not there; or backward, I cannot perceive him...But he stands alone and who can dissuade him? What he desires, that he does...Therefore I am terrified at his presence; when I consider, I am in dread of him” (23:8–15; cf., 30:20).<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, however hard Job attempts to confront and manage intellectually what he believes to be his unjust treatment by God, what continues to emerge in his mindset are God’s relentless hostility and destructive power to crush him: “God has made my heart faint; the Almighty has terrified me” (23:16); “I know that you [God] will bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living” (30:23; cf., 6:9; 9:1–35).<sup>10</sup> As Newsom states, Job’s recent calamities are “experientially inscribed on his [Job’s] psyche”;<sup>11</sup> he

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<sup>9</sup> Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 45, 47–48; Gerhard von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel* (Nashville: SCM Press, 1972), 219.

<sup>10</sup> Seow, *Job 1–21*, 459; Newsom, “Job,” in *The New Interpreter’s Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 4:410; Clines, *Job 1–20*, 171, 233, 235; Habel, *The Book of Job*, 147, 193.

<sup>11</sup> Newsom, *The Book of Job*, 94.

appears to be suffering from a prolonged state of “turmoil” (זגג, 3:26), which stems from what he perceives as the divinely granted misfortune. Overall, these external and internal problems caused and worsened by his theological and moral inquiry into God’s role in his misfortune indicate that his intellectual struggle constitutes another facet of his suffering.

Compared to the suffering Job experiences due to his-mental distress, physical condition, and the challenge to his theological–moral world view, the social nature of his suffering might initially seem to be a less salient feature of Job’s speeches. Unlike the first two features that tie in closely with, and develop out of, the deaths of his children and the loss of his own health, as well as theological–moral concerns, to which the dialogue (and commentators) pays most attention, the social aspect of Job’s suffering does not make an obvious appearance in the book. It emerges only when Job describes himself as the isolated object of others’ judgmental and mocking gaze (“Surely there are mockers around me, and my eye dwells on their provocation,” 17:2). Yet, Job’s revelation of his public isolation is not an isolated theme. He develops it as an integral part of his more conspicuous pursuit of the theological meaning behind his suffering, wherein his experience of public isolation serves as a gateway to understanding divine violence or animosity; “He [God] has made me a byword of the people” (17:6a; cf. 19:13; 30:11).

Subsequently, the inconspicuous quality of Job’s social suffering in the text seems to corroborate, and correlate with, the primary ways a majority of premodern and modern interpreters conceive of his suffering in theological–moral, psychological, and physical terms, but not much in social terms. Despite not being completely absent in earlier readings of the book, it is not until recent decades that interpreters have begun to draw serious attention to the social dimension of Job’s suffering. As will be discussed in the following sections, these interpreters



successfully demonstrate the substantial relevance of Job's bodily condition to,<sup>12</sup> and a group mentality that fosters,<sup>13</sup> his social exclusion. However, their discussions have still left unanswered some distinct aspects of Job's public isolation as portrayed in the book—namely, people's dramatic and unanimous turning against Job and his lingering agitation over such a social reality.

One reason that the social dimension of Job's suffering has received renewed attention is due to biblical scholarship's growing concern to understand to the socio-cultural background of ancient Israel. In the last century, many scholars explored the social elements inscribed in the book that refer to an agricultural society that is governed by particular social values, such as honor, paternalistic ethics, and patronage.<sup>14</sup> Thanks to this broader trend, interpreters of the book of Job have come also to identify cultural and religious norms that affect the public response to Job's bodily condition, the response that led to his public isolation.<sup>15</sup> However, many discussions about the settings of ancient Israel do not lead to a comprehensive thematic examination of his public isolation as a reality of suffering; instead they focus primarily on the socio-economic injustice inherent in his social world and his potential participation in it. For example, as

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<sup>12</sup> Dell, "What Was Job's Malady?", 65, 71–72; Alec Basson, "Just Skin and Bones: The Longing for Wholeness of the Body in the Book of Job," *VT* 58, no. 3 (2008): 291–294; Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 287–88; Habel, *The Book of Job*, 277; Clines, *Job 1–20*, 445–46; C. J. Ball, *The Book of Job: A Revised Text and Version* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1922), 272–73.

<sup>13</sup> René Girard, *Job: The Victim of His People* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987); James G. Williams, *The Bible, Violence, and the Sacred* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991).

<sup>14</sup> Newsom, "Job," 4:485, 537; Michael D. Coogan, "The Social Worlds of the Book of Job," in *Exploring the Longue Duree: Essays in Honor of Lawrence E. Stager*, ed. J. David Schloen (Winona Lake: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009), 78; Walter J. Houston, *Contending for Justice: Ideologies and the Theologies of Social Justice in the Old Testament* (New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 44–51; Johannes Pedersen, *Israel: Its Life and Culture*, 2 vols., SFSHJ 28–29 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991), 1:213–26; S. R. Driver and George Buchanan Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Job*, ICC 14 (New York: Scribner, 1921), 1:lxvi–lxvii.

<sup>15</sup> Dell, "What Was Job's Malady?"; Alec Basson, "Just Skin and Bones: The Longing for Wholeness of the Body in the Book of Job," *VT* 58, no. 3 (2008).

Newsom has claimed, Job's moral consciousness to help the marginalized and vulnerable conceals the limitation of his society structured upon "the logic of inequality."<sup>16</sup> While such an observation has contributed to readers' ability to assess Job's integrity from the perspective of underlying socio-economic values in the book, the usual verdict that Job has participated in, and accepted as given, a world based on inequality easily overlooks his recurrent claim that he suffers from public isolation.

Overall, previous studies on Job's suffering and the settings of ancient Israel have enabled avenues to examine the nature of his public isolation. Its correlation with his physical condition is one of the most noticeable fruits that these avenues have yielded. Despite this overt advancement in understanding the relatively less conspicuous aspect of Job's suffering, the previous studies are not without limitations. Specifically, they struggle to incorporate the book's broader thematic framework, which portrays Job as an innocent sufferer, into their central discussions. As a result, the previous studies tend to have weak foundations for answering some significant questions that the thematic framework poses to Job's public isolation, such as why and how he perceives isolation as suffering and what he does to deal with it.

## **2. Aim of this Study**

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<sup>16</sup> Newsom, "Job," 4:540–41, 547–48; cf., Walter Brueggemann, "Theodicy in a Social Dimension," *JSOT* 10, no. 33 (1985): 5, 18–21; Habel, *The Book of Job*, 419; Clines, *Job 21–37*, 1037–1038; Clines, "Those Golden Days: Job and the Perils of Nostalgia," in *On the Way to the Postmodern*, ed. Clines, JSOTSup 293 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 792–800; Geoffrey J. Aimers, "The Rhetoric of Social Conscience in the Book of Job," *JSOT* 91 (2000): 99–107; Geoffrey J. Aimers, "'Give the Devil His Due': The Satanic Agenda and Social Justice in the Book of Job," *JSOT* 37, no. 1 (2012): 57–66.

This dissertation thus critically examines Job’s anguish over his public isolation in order to understand better the social dimensions of his suffering. To this end, I will provide an anthropological literary reading of the Joban dialogue that examines Job’s social relations, which become integral to his suffering following the initial loss of his household members, properties, and health, as recounted in the Prologue. This reading strategy centers as an analytic lens what anthropologists have called a Mediterranean ethos of honor and shame. Through this lens it will be possible to decode social elements within the prevailing theological-moral discourses of the book of Job, and subsequently to synthesize these elements into a concrete social discourse, and thereby be able to delve into the origins and repercussions of Job’s ruined social relations. This strategy entails a cohesive reading of the final form of the book, specifically focusing on analyzing characters’ rhetoric, ideologies, and socio-cultural and economic contexts. This cohesive reading approach presumes thematic interrelatedness across what are surely originally independent sources within the book, especially the frame narratives and the poetic center.<sup>17</sup> It considers this interrelatedness as a cue to read the book as a coherent whole. Reading the final form of the book in this way is not entirely a new concept. Other scholars have also noted the interrelatedness among different Joban sources. Newsom, for example, highlights Kautzsch’s claim that the generic differences between prose and poetic sections of Job should not discount their interrelatedness.<sup>18</sup> Pope similarly states that despite the incongruities of the book, “there is a considerable degree of organic unity.”<sup>19</sup> Habel, similarly, points to an overarching plot structure

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<sup>17</sup> For scholarly discussions about the origins and the editorial stages of these sources, see James Crenshaw, “Job,” *ABD* 3:863; Hartely, *The Book of Job*, 20; Pope, *Job*, XXIII–XXX; Nahum M. Sarna, “Epic Substratum in the Prose of Job,” *JBL* 76, no. 1 (1957): 13.

<sup>18</sup> Newsom, *The Book of Job*, 6

<sup>19</sup> Marvin H. Pope, *Job: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 15; New York: Doubleday, 1965), XXX.

within the book, which he argues the author (or final redactor) intended by integrating dialogues into the same narratives. He uses this plot structure as a basis for reading the book as a whole in terms of plot development.<sup>20</sup> Not completely unlike others, I find the coherence of the book specifically in the theme of suffering, the presentation of which overlaps in and develops across its different parts. For example, as mentioned previously, Job's loss of his household members and his own health similarly appears in both the Prologue and his speeches in the Dialogue. In addition, the unmerited nature of his misfortune, introduced in the Prologue (1:1–2:13), serves as a fitting gateway into the characters' inquiry into the theological and moral complexities of "a just person's suffering" in the poetic center (3:1–41:34), a journey that concludes when Job no longer continues this inquiry in the Epilogue (42:1–42:17). Attending to the thematic coherency that the theme of suffering creates and its development within the book, my reading aims to provide an in-depth understanding of its social dimensions. Ultimately, it seeks to offer valuable insights into human well-being across religious, social, cultural, political, and intellectual realms. Its exploration of Job's "inexplicable"<sup>21</sup> suffering, particularly his struggle with the public indifference and hostility, will broaden our views on the modern counterparts of Job and the people from his community.

My choice of the Mediterranean ethos of honor and shame as an analytic lens to read the Joban dialogue derives primarily from its interpretive benefits in explaining ideological and

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<sup>20</sup> Habel, *The Book of Job*, 25–27. Newsom attends to both interconnection and disjoints among difference sources but still attempts to read the book as a whole. Specifically, she strives to listen to the constructive voices that the different parts of the book constitute as they engage one another "dialogically." Newsom, *The Book of Job*, 16–17.

<sup>21</sup> Although the Prologue provides a reason for his suffering in decisions made in a heavenly counsel, Job is not aware of this. Consequently, in the Dialogue, he does not admit his suffering as just divine treatment, and instead struggles hard to explain its cause. The challenge, frustration, and agitation that arise during this struggle have captivated numerous commentators, prompting them to delve into the significance of suffering. See the section 2.1.1. of Chapter 1.

social foundations of behavioral and thought patterns in human relations. As will be discussed in the last three chapters of this study, exploring Job's socially oriented suffering requires identifying contrasting modes of validating (or not) his claim of integrity—both his own perspective and those of individuals around him—and examining the impact these validations have on his and others' estimation of his worth and how this shapes his behaviors. In other words, this task should involve identifying the gap between how he views himself and how others view him and the influence of this gap on how he and others perceive his present situations at theological-moral and social levels. The notions of honor and shame can aid this interpretive task. Ethnographical data and theories that disclose the moral and social underpinnings of interpersonal dynamics in Mediterranean societies provide useful analytic resources that elucidate the foundation of the rupture between Job and others in considering his social and theological-moral worth. In short, because studies of honor-shame cultures and discourses uncover the dynamics between an individual's worth and its public recognition, and a person's morality and its social effect, it is a useful interpretive lens for studying the dynamics of Job's social suffering. My working assumption is that the values of honor and shame in the society the book of Job imagines for the character Job entail a regulatory force that is sufficiently similar to honor and shame values in some modern Mediterranean societies that we can analytically use developed scholarly theories and discussions about these values in modern societies to explore Job's social relations. This analysis and comparison will illuminate aspects of Job's socially oriented pain that readings with other scholarly foci or approaches have not clearly or directly addressed.

After laying out the theoretical groundwork for this study in chapters 1 and 2, the main discussions in chapters 3 to 5 will proceed in the order of the three specific questions I pose to

the text of Job, particularly addressing the dialogues from Job 3:1 to 31:40, and Elihu's speech in 32:2–37:24 for chapter 5: first, why is public isolation so problematic to Job?; second, what kind of effort does he make to overcome this problem?; and third, is such an effort ultimately viable for Job? My exploration of these questions will reveal that Job's public isolation signals the denial of his worth not only in social terms, but also in a theological-moral sense and that Job resists this reality by taking steps to restore the positive public recognition (i.e., honor) he once enjoyed. My analysis of the Joban dialogue will suggest that these steps he takes include his use of legal language and appeal to the public's collective memory about his previous honor: with legal language, he intends to secure his right to speak for his own righteousness and construct admissible intentions to speak directly to God in his hypothetical court; with the appeal to the public's collective memory, he seeks to utilize people's collective recollections about his former honor, aiming to evoke their positive impression of his previous interactions with them while insisting on his present righteous moral condition. Yet despite these efforts to restore his damaged worth, Job appears unlikely to succeed in drawing any positive recognition from those around him for at least two reasons: 1. Job's loss of status renders him unqualified to contend with those of higher status; 2. A lack of tangible evidence to support his moral claim regarding his continued righteousness. I will argue that the most difficult hurdle in Job's effort to persuade his audience and thereby restore his worth is the second reason, especially in relation with his present poverty, since in Job's social world and moral imagination, this poor economic condition is not compatible with his claim that he is righteous. It was after all his wealth that enabled him practically to achieve his righteous moral state in the past; people would confirm his righteousness only when he was economically able to support slaves (31:13), the poor (31:16, 19, 21), orphans (31:17–18), and strangers (31:32). Just as ascriptions of honor are typically tied

to one's possession of wealth and power in many societies characterized by the honor and shame culture, it is his economic abilities that once made visible his righteous moral condition to the eyes of the people. The overt disjunction that his moral claim and his present economic state creates would therefore keep dissuading people from admitting his claim.

I envision this study to make two principal contributions, one to biblical scholarship and the other for more general readers. For the former, this study will add to the already diverse set of approaches to the study of Job's suffering, providing one feasible route to magnify the social discourse intricately interwoven into the theological-moral discourse of the Joban Dialogue. In so doing, it will provide viable explanations for exegetical questions related to certain (con)textual or structural elements in the book that previous views struggle to explicate, or do not explain as fully as I strive to do here. For instance, it will suggest reasonable grounds for Job's uncompromising stance towards his friends, his "pompous" idealization of his former life, and his obsession with public recognition. Moreover, it will shed light on some uncharted areas that previous readings tend not to mention or are quick to pass over, areas such as the social ground of the rhetorical impasse between Job and the friends and the unanimous nature of Job's public isolation.

For general readers, this study will help use the biblical text as a self-reflective tool to better deal with certain "real-life" issues. Its focus on human characters and their social world will reveal that their experiences are not alien to what many of us experience in our daily lives. Once perceived, this resonance can guide contemporary readers into an ongoing dialogue with the biblical story, subsequently producing ideas, insights, or questions useful for dealing with inherent human relationship issues, such as the loss of public recognition, or the experience of

shame. Indeed, I will conclude this study by offering specific suggestions regarding how Job's social struggle can shed light on the real-world experiences of some of us today.



## **CHAPTER 1. Preliminary Outlook: Job's Social Suffering in the Book of Job and in Biblical Interpretation**

Before turning to a full discussion of the nature of Job's social suffering in light of the categories of honor and shame, it will be helpful to focus attention both on what the book of Job itself says about Job's social suffering and the typical ways readers have understood the theme of suffering in the book. Exploring these points will assist us in understanding where and how to examine the theme of suffering. It will also help narrow down a specific interpretive strategy for effectively examining the social factor of his suffering. As a first step, I will provide an overview of the presentation of Job's socially oriented suffering in the book. This process will examine how Job incorporates a sense of isolation and its actual realities into his broader theological-moral discourses. Following this, I will review how previous readers have approached the theme of suffering in their interpretations to develop an interpretive strategy suitable for the goal of this study.

### **1. Job's Public Isolation in the Book of Job**

Job suffers from his physical illness, psychological distress, and intellectual struggle with theological-moral issues regarding divine justice. I discussed briefly in the beginning of this study how these elements of suffering are interrelated and develop within the book. As mentioned, these elements are relatively conspicuous as they appear at the outset of the book and gain prominence as the story progresses. While Job's socially oriented suffering is not immediately addressed in the book and may appear inconspicuous compared to other aspects of

his suffering, it becomes a significant part once the tension between Job and his friends escalates in the Dialogue. Job incorporates a sense of isolation and its actual realities in the public arena in his description of how violent and unjust he believes God is, and it is through this theological-moral discourse that we can grasp the social aspect of his suffering.

Job's talk of isolation appears especially in Job 16, 17, 19, and 30. Job deals with primarily two ideas about his isolation in these places: a. God as the primary author of his isolation and b. the nature and depth of his public alienation.

### **1.1. God as the Primary Author of Isolation**

In his intellectual struggle with theological-moral issues regarding divine justice, Job develops certain metaphorical images of God that evoke a sense of isolation. Job intends these images to express his perspective of God as designing and perpetuating his isolation using the divine's merciless power. The image of a siege work in 19:6, 8, and 10, which Job includes in his response to Bildad's elaboration of the fate of the wicked, is one notable place where we can observe the reason for his isolation Job ascribes to God.<sup>22</sup> In these verses, the leading words and images, such as נקף (to surround) with a "net," גדר (to wall up) a "path," and to "surround" סביב (in a circuit or round about), create rhetorically the sense of isolation. Job likens God's ruthless power to a net encompassing him ("know then that God has put me in the wrong, and closed his net around me [נקף]," 19:6) and to a situation in which God walls up and darkens his way ("He has walled up [גדר] my way so that I cannot pass, and he has set darkness upon my paths," 19:8)

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<sup>22</sup> The second cycle of the friends' speech (Job 15, 18, 20) focuses extensively on the misfortunes that they believe will unmistakably fall on the wicked, whom they identify as godless (15:33; 18:21) and those who do not know God (18:21). Newsom explains that the images and arguments in their speeches construct "the nature of the world" that counterargues the one provided by Job in Job 12. Newsom, *The Book of Job*, 115–25.

and breaks him on every side (“He breaks me down on every side [סביב],” 19:10). While this language also appears in Psalms and Lamentations with the similar purpose to depict God’s isolating power, Job’s use of them expresses the ruthlessness and intolerableness of such power more dramatically than these other books due to the absence of submissive rhetoric. This absence perpetuates the threats and experiences of isolation, which in instances of Psalms and Lamentations are rhetorically short lived and ultimately removed. For instance, in Psalms 22 the speaker instills a sense of isolation in his complaint that equates his abandonment by God (“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” 21:2a) to a situation in which strong and dangerous enemies encircle him: “Many bulls encircle (סבב) me...” (22:13); “For dogs are all around me (סבב). A company of evildoers surround me (נקר)...” (22:17). The speaker in Lamentations 3 makes a similar complaint using similar language. He complains that God has besieged and enveloped him (“he has besieged and enveloped [נקר] me with bitterness and tribulation,” 3:5) and that the divine has walled him in making escape impossible (“He has walled [גדר] me about so that I cannot escape,” 3:7). Despite the overt threatening imagery this rhetoric deploys, the potential impact of God’s isolating power tends to be toned down with the supplications that the speakers utter following their complaints: “But you, O Lord, do not be far away! O my help, come quickly to my aid!” (Ps 22:20); “The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end” (Lam 3:22). Job, however, does not include any submissive rhetoric in his description of God’s role in creating his situation. Instead, he relies on violent imagery only, thereby emphasizing the intensity of distress he experiences due to God’s isolating power: “...he [God] has uprooted my hope like a tree. He has kindled his wrath against me...” (19:10–11). In her discussion of Job’s parody of traditional language, Newsom also underscores the rhetorical effect of the absence of submissive language in Job’s highlighting of divine violence. She argues

that Job deliberately omits this rhetoric while employing conventional language to describe God and that this move reflects “Job’s attempt to express his own truth about the violence he has experienced.”<sup>23</sup>

Besides rhetoric of isolation, Job also deploys images of God’s collaboration with his own minions to reveal how divine power is directed to increase his experience of isolation. One of these images describes God’s attack of Job, backed by his own archers and troops: “his [God] archers surround me. He slashes open my kidneys, and shows no mercy; he pours out my gall on the ground” (16:13). In this description, Job evokes God as a military commander who directs his archers to encircle him and cut off any escape routes, allowing divine’s merciless violence to thoroughly destroy him. Compared to Lamentations 3:13, where God alone shoots arrows (“He shot into my vitals the arrows of his quiver”), the group image evoked in this verse magnifies the sense of isolation that Job appears to feel.<sup>24</sup>

Another image involving divine minions that Job deploys portrays siegeworks which God’s troops build up against Job at their master’s command. The portrayal of Job as a lone city surrounded by God’s siege troops dramatizes his sense not only of vulnerability but of a vulnerability exacerbated by total isolation: “His troops come on together; they have thrown up siegeworks against me, and encamp around my tent” (19:12).<sup>25</sup> Still other images that Job makes use of describe God as manipulating unspecified terrestrial minions, such as the ungodly, the wicked, and ordinary people: “God gives me up to the ungodly, and casts me into the hands of

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<sup>23</sup> Newsom, *The Book of Job*, 131–32, 136–38.

<sup>24</sup> For God as a commander, see Seow, *Job 1–21*, 736; Clines, *Job 1–20*, 384; Habel, *The Book of Job*, 273; Newsom, “Job,” 4:459.

<sup>25</sup> For the group image and its effect, see Clines, *Job 1–20*, 445. Seow, *Job 1–21*, 799–800; John E. McFadyen, *The Problem of Pain* (London: James Clarke & Co., Limited, 1917), 124–25.

the wicked” (16:11); “He has made me a byword of the peoples, and I am one before whom people spit” (17:6). The picture of a wide-ranging and coordinated attack on Job by God and his minions, which the images in these instances together construct, emphasizes not only a power disparity between Job and his opponents. They underscore Job’s sense of isolation, a lack of solidarity with others who might provide succor, or in other words, his social isolation.

## **1.2. Job’s Public Isolation as a Basis of His Inquiry into Divine Violence**

In Job's speech, the metaphorical images of God that depict the divine as the primary author of Job's isolation seem to have a social foundation, for he describes in several places a reality in which he is alienated by the public. Two passages that illustrate this reality are Job 19:13–19 and 30:1–15. Presented as instances of how God wields his isolating power against him (“He [God] has put my family far from me,” 19:13; “Because God has loosed my bowstring and humbled me,” 30:11), these passages preserve concrete social pictures that likely correlate to real contexts of public isolation in ancient honor based societies like the one depicted in the book of Job.

In 19:13–19, Job describes how God designed his isolation from those people closest to him, by offering a realistic social map in which his acquaintances, kinsfolk, and household isolate him:

He has put my family far from me, and my acquaintances are wholly estranged from me. My relatives and my close friends have failed me; the guests in my house have forgotten me; my serving girls count me as a stranger; I have become an alien in their eyes. I call to my servant, but he gives me no answer; I must myself plead with him. My breath is

repulsive to my wife; I am loathsome to “my brothers.”<sup>26</sup> Even young children despise me; when I rise, they talk against me. All my intimate friends abhor me, and those whom I loved have turned against me. (19:13–19 NRSV)

Job’s depiction of social alienation resembles the conventional form of laments, like those that can be found in Ps 69:9 and 88:19: “I have become a stranger to my kindred, an alien to my mother’s children”; “You [God] have caused friend and neighbor to shun me; my companions are in darkness” (Cf., 31:12-14; 38:12; 41:10; 55:13–14).<sup>27</sup> What distinguishes Job’s words, however, is the way he weaves images of social alienation into a fuller and concrete social picture. In specific, compared to the psalmic laments, whose use of a language of isolation, such as זור (stranger, 66:9), נכר (foreign, 66:9), and רחק (to shun, 88:19), focuses primarily on evoking a general sense of exclusion and distress caused by it, Job’s language is more descriptive; it identifies actions and social arenas of those who exclude him. A salient effect of such a rhetorical choice by Job is that he can convey a relatively clearer understanding of the “empirical basis” of his socially oriented suffering. For example, in Job’s own words, people isolate him with specific actions of not responding (ענה) to his calling (קרא, 19:16), resisting his breath (רוחי, 19:17), and talking against him, ignoring his presence (אקומה וידברו-בי, 19:18). His words reveal that his isolation took place in loci of marital relations (“my breath is repulsive to my wife,” 19:17), kin relations (“I am loathsome to my brothers 19:17), master-servant relations

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<sup>26</sup> This follows the suggestion of interpreters who translate “בני בטני” as “sons of my womb (i.e., my uterine brothers),” “the sons born from the same womb as Job.” This translation resolves the conflict that its other possible translation, “sons of my belly (i.e., my children),” raises against the Prologue, according to which the sons of his belly have all died and thus are not currently with him. NRSV translates this phrase as “my own family.” For the detailed discussion about translation issues around “בני בטני,” see Clines, *Job 1–20*, 448–49; Cf., Edouard Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job*, trans. Harold Knight (Nashville; Camden; New York: Thomas Nelson, 1984), 277–278; Newsom, “Job,” 4:477.

<sup>27</sup> Seow, *Job 1–21*, 800; Clines, *Job 1–20*, 446; Newsom, “Job,” 4:477.

(“my serving girls count me as a stranger,” 19:15; “I call to my servant but he gives no answer,” 19:16), and patron-client relations (“the guest in my house have forgotten me,” 19:15). Job’s current perception of these relations as a distressing reality, representative of the divine’s violent power, implies that he considers such treatment of him as neither right nor just.

Job’s anguish over how people treat him correlates with his thwarted expectations for his treatment in each relation evoked in his description of social reality. One of his expectations regards the authority and respect that ought to be conferred to the head of family, to someone like Job. Several places in the book of Job give a glimpse into his family context and his status within it. On one hand, the number of those in his family arena appears relatively large as it includes not only his direct family members, such as his children (1:4–5), wife (2:9; 19:17), and brothers (19:17), but also his male and female slaves who serve them (19:15–16; 31:13). On the other hand, his previous interplay with his family members as portrayed in the book presumes his high status perceived by these members. In the Prologue, Job stands as the head of his family who tends to and gives orders to his children (“Job would send and sanctify them,” 1:5); he also receives reports from his servants (“a messenger came to Job and said,” 1:14, 16, 17, 18); his disturbing claim in 31:10 that he would “let his wife grind for another” if he succumbed to illicit sexual desire retains a presumption that he has a power to use his wife as his possession. Habel similarly discerns behind this rhetoric “a society where the wife is the virtual possession of the husband.”<sup>28</sup>

This presumed status of Job in the family context implies that, as typical in patriarchal societies (e.g., Gen 9:20–27; Num 30:3–5), he feels that his family members should acknowledge his authority and pay respect to him. The problem for Job in the “present” of Job

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<sup>28</sup> Habel, *The Book of Job*, 434.

19:13-19 regards the fact that the way in which these family members treat him does not align with the typical manner patriarchal heads are to be treated in his society. His wife and brothers simply disrespect him. Moreover, his male and female servants ignore him. This latter experience would have been particularly disgraceful to Job because, in societies like his, they occupy the lower position of the social hierarchy; slaves were expected to pay particular attention to orders or requests from the wealthy landowners, like Job, who because of their high social position, were able to own them.<sup>29</sup> As Clines puts it, their ignoring him “goes against the grain for Job,”<sup>30</sup> and would have exacerbated the distress he experiences from his social relations in the family context.

Job likely has similar expectations for those outside the family context, especially individuals who had been under the direct or indirect influence of his beneficence. According to his later depiction of his former social relations with others in Job 29 and 31, he was a benefactor and benign patron to many members of his society, especially those in need: “I was a father to the needy” (29:16a); “If I have rejected the cause of my male or female slaves...what then shall I do when God rises up?...” (31:13–14). In light of his recollections, we can assume that the guests (גֵר) in his house (19:15) would have been among the direct beneficiaries of his former support, similar to those he mentions in 31:32: “the stranger (גֵר) has not lodged in the street; I have opened my doors to the traveler.” Job would have offered these guests a shelter to stay in his house, expecting at least a small degree of loyalty that benefactors would normally receive from their beneficiaries in societies like his.<sup>31</sup> Newsom also underscores this type of loyalty in her

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<sup>29</sup> I will provide more detailed information of Job’s society and social position in the following chapter.

<sup>30</sup> Clines, *Job 1–20*, 448; Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 288.

<sup>31</sup> I assume here a patron-client relationship. I will discuss more details about this relationship when I reconstruct his society in the following chapter.



comment on the guests in 19:15, stating that these kinds of people would “ordinarily be bound by the strongest motives of loyalty to the one [like Job] who had given the outsider a place.”<sup>32</sup> What they currently show to Job, however, is the very opposite to his expectation for the guests. Instead of loyalty, they treat him with indifference. His inclusion of this reality to the list of his public isolation shows how distressing his thwarted expectations regarding his former beneficiaries would be to him.

In 30:1–15, Job gives another depiction of his public isolation. The gloomy social contours of the social place he describes in these lines contrast sharply with an idealistic social world he sketches in the previous chapter. In both places, Job stands at the center, and the stark contrast between the two places dramatizes the greatness of his fall in status. According to Job’s description of his past in Job 29, he was a revered person, a man of honor, in his community. Although, as Clines notes, Job’s social reconstruction in this chapter may not be a simple “transcript of social reality,” particularly in terms of the authentic perspective of those involved, this would not invalidate the general phenomenon of public recognition of Job’s high status, which enables him to reconstruct his previous interactions with people around him.<sup>33</sup> The Job he conceives of now (Job 30), however, is different from the past. He finds himself mocked and disgraced by those around him: “But now they make sport of me those who younger than I” (30:1); “And now they mock me in song...they do not hesitate to spit at the sight of me” (30:9–10). Job’s profound distress over this dramatic shift in people’s attitudes becomes evident as he equates it with a complete loss of the status and respect that were once bestowed upon him by

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<sup>32</sup> Newsom, “Job,” 4:476; Clines, *Job 1–20*, 446–47; Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 288.

<sup>33</sup> Clines, *Job 21–37*, 1002; Habel, *The Book of Job*, 418.

these very individuals: “my honor is pursued as by the wind, and my prosperity has passed away like a cloud” (30:15).

What heightens the sense of deprivation in Job’s description of the change in public attitude is the low status of the perpetrators of his isolation. Regarding their status, Job’s words refer to the age of those who mock him in 30:1, identifying them as “younger (צעיר)” than he. Job’s selection of their youth as one of the decisive pieces of evidence for his diminished status and respect implies that he believes they lack the authority or experience to evaluate him as they do now in mockery. As Newsom suggests, Job’s attention to their age reflects “the values of hierarchy of age, in which youth respects age.”<sup>34</sup> From his perspective, therefore, these young people should withdraw themselves from him and stay silent as he described earlier in 29:8 (“the young men saw me and withdrew”) instead of giving a rash evaluation.

Besides their age, the low status of the youth can also be glimpsed at from their contemptible state. Job’s disclosure of their fathers’ former state in 30:1b is one place we can observe this aspect. Job’s utterance here retains a dismissive view of their fathers whose status the sons share. What’s notable in this view is that it builds on one of the strongest expressions for contempt coming from his mouth: he compares their fathers directly with animals: “whose fathers I would have disdained to set with the dogs of my flock.” Clines points out that at this point Job is using “vicious language” because “to compare a human with a dog is a grave insult (cf. 1 Sam 17:43; 2 Sam 3:8; 2 Kgs 8:13) or an extreme form of self-abasement (2 Sam 9:8).”<sup>35</sup> With language reflecting extreme contempt, Job reveals that in his eyes, those younger than he hold no status deserving of respect or dignity.

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<sup>34</sup> Newsom, “Job,” 4:544.

<sup>35</sup> Clines, *Job 21–37*, 996.

In the following verses, especially from 30:2 to 30:8, Job gives detailed descriptions of the specific social conditions of the youth<sup>36</sup> that seem to justify his extreme contempt of them. These descriptions focus primarily on two aspects of their lives that locate them in the lowest place of his society—i.e., poverty and exclusion. Concerning poverty, Job elaborates in 30:3–4 how they are deprived of food and shelter necessary for their basic survival: “Through want and hard hunger they gnaw the dry and desolate ground, they pick mallow and the leaves of bushes, and to warm themselves the roots of broom.” As for exclusion, Job regards them as social outcasts who have lost their place in his community due to their dangerous dispositions: “They are driven out from society; people shout after them as after a thief” (30:5). For Job, these aspects of their lives prove that they have no worth in social terms and put their existence into question. He thus calls them נבל (fool) and בני בלי-שם (sons of no-name)—the terms that, according to Clines, refer to intellectual and moral deficiency and no known identity or reputation respectively.<sup>37</sup> By using this rhetoric, he finds no suitable place for their existence in his society: “sons of fool, sons of no-name; they have been scourged out of the land” (30:8).<sup>38</sup>

What is unbearable to Job with these marginal people is the reality that he does not receive due respect and attention, even from them. Viewed from this context, it is not surprising to see Job complaining that his reality is like a city under siege (30:12–14) that imposes on him a

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<sup>36</sup> There are scholarly debates over the identification of the class under consideration in 30:2–8, whether it aligns with the younger people or their fathers. For our current discussion, identifying the exact group under consideration is not to be sought because either possibility validates the low status of the youth and the sense of deprivation it magnifies in Job’s speech. Cf., Clines, *Job 21–37*, 997.

<sup>37</sup> Clines, *Job 21–37*, 1000–1001. See also Newsom, “Job,” 4:545.

<sup>38</sup> This is my literal translation of 30:8.

surge of terror (בלהה, 30:15). Job has become a total outsider to his community, occupying the lowest rung of the social hierarchy without receiving any positive regard from the public.<sup>39</sup>

## **2. The Theme of Public Isolation in Biblical Interpretation**

Despite its noticeable appearances in the Dialogue, the theme of Job's public isolation has not attracted the attention of biblical interpreters as much as his other modes of suffering. In this section, I will examine previous readers' approaches to, and interpretations of, the theme of suffering in the book of Job in order to develop an interpretive strategy that can shed light on the areas and questions of social suffering and public isolation left underdeveloped in previous scholarship. This process will reveal a typical strong scholarly interest in drawing theological or more general insights about the meaning of human suffering from Job's story. It will also introduce a group of interpreters whose reading strategies magnify and analyze aspects of his social suffering that I will build on later in this study. By way of conclusion, I will propose that, in order to comprehensively address issues involving Job's social suffering, we need to prioritize the analysis of the text over appropriations of the meaning of Job's suffering by employing an interpretive lens that fully and directly focuses on and helps explain Job's social relations and his perception of them.

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<sup>39</sup> Newsom, "Job," 4:544; Clines, *Job 21–37*, 996.

## 2.1. Previous Interpretations

### 2.1.1. Theological, Existential Exploration of Human Suffering

The relative inattention paid to the social dimensions of Job's suffering correlates with interpreters' distinct interest in appropriating theological and/or existential insights from the phenomenon of human suffering. We can observe this trend across different eras. Throughout premodern and modern periods, for example, a large number of interpreters have focused on finding theological lessons from Job's suffering that they believe may enhance their understanding of the divine scheme that involves human suffering. These lessons take largely two oppositional standpoints toward Job's suffering.

A relatively small but still noticeable number of interpreters examine Job's life in order to find his moral faults, which they view became the reason for his misfortunes given as divine punishment. Their approach to Job's suffering aligns with the act-consequence framework found in the wisdom literatures.<sup>40</sup> Frequently associated with the notion of retribution, this framework presumes a principle of worldly order that assigns particular results to particular human actions—namely, a link between good results and good actions and between bad results and bad actions: “The righteous are delivered from trouble, and the wicked get into it instead” (Prov 11:8); “The sinner will not escape with plunder, and the patience of the godly will not be frustrated” (Sir 16:13). This framework considers God's scheme as working in harmony with the retributive

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<sup>40</sup> Klaus Koch brought serious attention to this framework in his examination of the notion of retribution in the Hebrew Bible. Although his claim that denies any significant judicial role of God in this framework (i.e., God simply completes a built-in system of action and its consequence) has been seriously challenged by later scholars, many still consider it as a useful means to approach the notion of retribution. Klaus Koch, “Is There a Doctrine of Retribution in the Old Testament?” in *Theodicy in the Old Testament*, ed., James Crenshaw (Philadelphia: Fortress Press; London: SPCK, 1983), 59–62; Adams Samuel, *Wisdom in Transition: Act and Consequence in Second Temple Instruction*, JSJSup 125 (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2008), 3–4.

principle of moral order, with God himself taking the initiatives to assign the right result to each action of an individual: “Does not he [God] who keeps watch over your soul know it? And will he not repay all according to their deeds?” (Prov 24:12); “The fear of the Lord delights the heart, and gives gladness and joy and long life” (Sir 1:12).<sup>41</sup>

A group of early Jewish readers appear to approach Job’s suffering in the same way the act-consequence framework does, since their readings presume a solid causality between his current situation and his previous actions. Specifically, they understand Job’s misfortune to be a consequence of his previous sins or flaws that deserve such a harsh treatment administered by the divine. Judith R. Baskin points out that “some rabbinic traditions (such as Exodus Rabbah 21:7<sup>42</sup> and Genesis Rabbah 57:4<sup>43</sup>) explain Job’s suffering as just punishment for his role as one of Pharaoh’s counselors.” She adds that, in these traditions, Job’s fault is evoked in his portrayal as remaining “silent” when “Balaam persuaded Pharaoh to decree that all male Israelites must be drowned.” She believes that what lies behind their approach to Job’s suffering is their adherence to divine justice, according to which God assigns right consequences to one’s actions: “That there was a reason for his suffering was axiomatic for the rabbis, whose view of divine justice precluded the possibility of undeserved misfortune.”<sup>44</sup> Some early Jewish readers seek another source of Job’s fault. Raba in Baba Batra (16a), for example, singles out Job’s impious thoughts,

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<sup>41</sup> Samuel, *Wisdom in Transition*, 3–5.

<sup>42</sup> “He [God] gave him [Samael the angel] Job, who was one of Pharaoh’s advisers, of whom it is written...” “Shemot Rabbah 21,” *Sefaria*, accessed June 2024, [https://www.sefaria.org/Shemot\\_Rabbah.21.7?lang=bi&with=all&lang2=en](https://www.sefaria.org/Shemot_Rabbah.21.7?lang=bi&with=all&lang2=en).

<sup>43</sup> “While they [Jacob’s family] were going down to Egypt, he [Job] was born, and while they were going up [from there], he died...” “Bereshit Rabbah 57,” *Sefaria*, accessed June 2024, [https://www.sefaria.org/Bereshit\\_Rabbah.57?lang=en](https://www.sefaria.org/Bereshit_Rabbah.57?lang=en).

<sup>44</sup> Judith R. Baskin, “Rabbinic Interpretations of Job,” *The Voice from the Whirlwind: Interpreting the Book of Job*, ed. Leo G. Perdue and W. Clark Gilpin (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992), 103.

such as those that he utters in 9:24 (“The earth is given into the hand of the wicked; he covers the eyes of its judges—if it is not he, who then is it?”). Raba comments: “he [Job] did not sin with his lips, but he sinned in his heart.”<sup>45</sup> Baskin offers her analysis of Raba’s standpoint as follows: “Raba’s point is that even though Job did not utter any blasphemies until after his suffering began, God knew that he was harboring such impious thoughts in his heart and was therefore compelled to punish him.”<sup>46</sup>

As opposed to these early Jewish readers, however, a majority of readers seeking theological lessons tend not to actively apply the act-consequence framework to their interpretation of Job’s suffering. They instead focus on exploring or enhancing positive aspects of his attitude towards his suffering, frequently viewing him as a model or archetype of the patient person who appropriately endures suffering and misfortune. A consequence of this popular focus is that numerous interpreters tend to view the phenomenon of suffering as a whole and do not primarily seek to describe the various components of Job’s suffering. We can discover on many occasions in their readings that they assign a relatively small, or even no, space to dealing with his public isolation in their interpretation. For instance, the author of the *Testament of Job*, one of the earliest readers of the book of Job, does not show significant interests in disclosing or recounting Job’s socially oriented pain in retelling the biblical story of Job,<sup>47</sup> while highlighting his patience and endurance. Generally speaking, *T. Job* considers Job’s suffering as a conceivable dimension of human life staged by the divine, through which he

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<sup>45</sup> Yasaif Asher Weiss (elucidated) and Hersh Goldwurm (ed.), *Talmud Bavli: Tractate Bava Basra*, vol. 1, Artscroll Series 44 (New York: Mesorah Publications, 2001).

<sup>46</sup> Baskin, “Rabbinic Interpretations of Job,” 104.

<sup>47</sup> Lorenzo DiTomasso, “Pseudepigrapha Notes IV: 5. The *Testament of Job*. 6. The *Testament of Solomon*,” *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha*, Vol 21.3 (2012): 314.

achieved the piety required of the righteous. As Seow states, “Job’s piety and righteousness are never in doubt” in the book, and we can see this in multiple occasions.<sup>48</sup> For example, in Job’s replies to Bildad’s thorny questions about his sanity and rebellious attitude toward God there is no question about his trust in God: “So he [Bildad] said, ‘In whom do you hope’ And I [Job] said, ‘In the God who lives,’” (*T. Job* 37:1–2); “...Why should I [Job] not speak out the magnificent things of the Lord? Or should my mouth utterly blunder regarding the Master? Never!...” (38:1–2).<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, Job in *T. Job* inculcates in his children the value of patience, which he believes sustained him during his struggle with Satan, the instigator of his suffering: “Then Satan, ashamed, left me for three years. Now then, my children you also must be patient in everything that happens to you. For patience is better than anything,” (27:6–7).<sup>50</sup>

As Baskin argues, *T. Job*’s emphasis on Job’s piety may have resulted from its prime interest in retelling Job as portrayed in the frame narrative of the Masoretic version of Job. She states: “Such texts as *the Testament of Job* and *a Life of Job*...had glorified the pious sufferer of Job 1 and 42 as an innocent and pragmatic model of patience under duress.”<sup>51</sup> An inevitable outcome of this interest in certain parts of the MT’s Job would be what we now see as the weak presentation of the socially suffering Job in *T. Job*. Although this aspect stands out in the

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<sup>48</sup> Seow, *Job 1–21*, 118. For the retelling of Job, see also Mark J. Larrimore, *The Book of Job: A Biography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 42–46.

<sup>49</sup> I quote R. P. Spittler’s translation and follow his chapter and verse divisions. R. P. Spittler, “Testament of Job,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Vol I, ed., James H. Charlesworth (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1983), 829–868.

<sup>50</sup> Satan, שטן, in MT refers to adversaries or accusers with an emphasis on their function. As Clines and Newsom rightly point out, the Satan in MT Job should be understood as an adversary of Job in a direct sense considering his subordinate position to God (1:6). Later traditions, both early Jewish and Christian, however, developed Satan into an opponent of God, understanding the world, in Hamilton’s terms, as “a battleground fought over by both benevolent and malevolent deities.” Clines, *Job 1–20*, 20; Newsom, “Job,” 347–48; V. P. Hamilton, “Satan,” *ABD*, 5: 988.

<sup>51</sup> Baskin, “Rabbinic Interpretations of Job,” 104.



Dialogue in MT, *T. Job* does not incorporate it as fully as MT in its portrayal of Job's suffering. For example, while *T. Job* articulates Job's loss of wealth (*T. Job* 16), deaths of his children (*T. Job* 17–19), and skin disease (*T. Job* 20), it does not give much attention to his public isolation. Its closest reference to Job's public isolation comes from the mouth of Eliphaz rather than his own, when Eliphaz asks, "Are you [Job] the one who jeered at the unjust and the sinners, but now you too have become a joke?" (*T. Job* 32:11; Cf., *Job* 12:4).

Numerous early and Medieval Christian and Jewish interpreters take a standpoint similar to *T. Job* in approaching the theme of suffering in the book of Job. They also tend to focus on Job's patience and endurance that for them demonstrate his piety, with little or no interest in discussing his socially oriented suffering. For instance, John Chrysostom (398–404 CE) articulates this perspective in his homily on troubles experienced by his audience. To encourage them not to relinquish their piety, he directs their attention to Job's response to his misfortunes, which he argues exemplifies such piety. For John, through his thankfulness, and despite his loss of possessions and own health, Job defeated devil's plot to lead him into sin. He writes: "After the devil took away Job's possessions and wounded his body, he saw Job giving thanks.... He [devil] had suffered a disgraceful and irreparable defeat; he had made God's athlete shine with greater splendor."<sup>52</sup> A sermon by Augustine (354–430 CE) preserves a similar perspective. He argues that, if one wishes to see God, he/she needs to have a "clean" heart devoid of "avarice" because it displeases him. To support this claim, Augustine points to Job's words of full submission to God in *Job* 1:21: "the Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Here Augustine frames his point in a question, "He [Job] certainly had lost

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<sup>52</sup> John Chrysostom, *On the Incomprehensible Nature of God*, trans. Paul W. Harkins, FC 72 (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1982), 135.

all things. Whence, then, did he produce such gems of praise for the Lord?” His answer: the fact that Job uttered these pleasing words to God after his misfortunes proves he possessed a clean heart that is an adequate place for God to dwell. In arguing so, he implies that Job’s misfortunes functioned as validation of his piety.<sup>53</sup> Didymus (313–398 CE) views Job’s piety similarly with the two aforementioned Church Fathers. In his comment on 1:21, he argues that Job passed a divinely granted trial (1:12)<sup>54</sup> and proved his “virtue”: “...Job is not diverted from virtue, either on account of goods or of children.”<sup>55</sup> Didymus’s view on Job’s piety in the Prologue continues to underlie his comments on Job’s rebellious speech in the Dialogue. For example, he argues that Job takes a confrontational stance against the divine judgement for a pious purpose in 3:11 where he says: “Why did I not die at birth, come forth from the womb and expire?” The purpose of this rhetorical question is to educate those in need of enlightenment regarding the divine judgement. Didymus understands that, by purposefully adopting a role of “those who are morose,” like the Psalmist in 73:1–2,<sup>56</sup> Job is expected to enhance the impact of the message he has been assigned to promote as a pious person. Didymus states: “Holy persons—out of piety—pray to be entrusted with the help of the weaker ones. For this very reason he himself says in the following: ‘Why didn’t I come forth from the womb and perish immediately?’”<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Augustine, *Sermons on the Liturgical Seasons*, trans. Mary Sarah Muldowney, FC 38 (New York: Fathers of the Church, Inc., 1959), 383–85.

<sup>54</sup> “So, trials occur neither by the allotment of fate, or spontaneously, but out of the consent of God, in order to show forth – as has already been said – Job’s virtue.” Edward F. Duffy, “The Tura Papyrus of Didymus the Blind’s Commentary on Job: An Original Translation with Introduction and Commentary” (PhD Diss., Graduate Theological Foundation, 2000), 17, 65.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>56</sup> “But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled; my steps had nearly slipped. For I was envious of the arrogant; I saw the prosperity of the wicked” (NRSV)

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 112–14; For more, similar views of the Church Fathers on Job’s piety, see also Gregory the Great, *Morales on the Book of Job*, trans. James Bliss, Library of Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church 31 (Oxford: J. H.

The Church Fathers' focus on Job's piety does not extend significantly to his social situation. We can observe this tendency from the types of human suffering they deem comparable to Job's misfortune. In many cases, these sufferings are irrelevant or less relevant to social challenges but resonate more with other dimensions of his suffering, such as his skin disease. For example, Palladius (c. 365–425 CE) cites Dioscorus the priest of Mount Nitria, who references the sickness of Job when commenting on a pious person named Benjamin, who suffered from "dropsy": "Come here, see a new Job who possesses boundless gratitude while in a state of great bodily swelling and incurable sickness."<sup>58</sup> Similarly, most of the sufferings Chrysostom comments on in his exhortatory remarks for encouragement, based on Job's suffering, do not directly relate to its social dimensions: "Let us endure the other things with courage: loss of money, bodily sickness, business reverses, abuse, slander, and whatever other trouble may come upon us."<sup>59</sup> Among sufferings in Chrysostom's remarks, only abuse and slander may constitute an exception, for they usually cause socially oriented stresses to their victims.

Similar to readers in this early period, commentators in later epochs have also pointed primarily to Job's suffering as a sort of training that nurtured his moral and spiritual capacity. Saadia Gaon, a Mesopotamian Jewish philosopher and commentator from the 9<sup>th</sup> century C.E.,

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Parker, 1844 – 1850) 3.2:19–21, and Origen, "Origen De Principiis," in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Alexander Robert and James Donaldson, trans. Frederick Crombie, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1995), 4:329, 333–34.

<sup>58</sup> Palladius, *Palladius: The Lausiatic History*, trans. Robert T. Meyer, ACW 34 (Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, 1965), 47–48.

<sup>59</sup> Chrysostom, *On the Incomprehensible Nature of God*, 135–136; cf., Paulinus, of Nola, *Letters of St. Paulinus of Nola*, trans. P. G. Walsh, ACW 36 (Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, 1967), 62–64; Origen, *Prayer: Exhortation to Martyrdom*, trans. John J. O'Meara, ACW 19 (Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, 1954) 128–129; Athanasius, *The Life of Saint Antony*, trans. Robert T. Meyer, ACW 10 (Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, 1950), 45.

is one of these commentators. He identifies three types of suffering, which he believes that God assigns to upright persons. The first type is “discipline and instruction” for a human’s good. The second type is “purgation and punishment,” which God causes in order “to clear the transgressor’s guilt wholly or in part.” The third type is the one that grants humans ultimate blessings when overcome.<sup>60</sup> Saadia Goan classes Job’s suffering among the third type, understanding that Job experienced through his suffering a trial and testing that led to divine rewards. He comments: “Further, we have the record of the history of one righteous person who was tested and bore test with fortitude that was acknowledged. He was assured eternal bliss in the hereafter and granted far more than he had hoped for in this life. That was the prophet Job (peace be upon him).”<sup>61</sup> Similar to Saadia Goan, Thomas Aquinas in the 13<sup>th</sup> century C.E. casts a positive light on Job’s suffering. He believes that Job keeps all potentially negative feelings about his suffering under good control throughout the book. He argues that the seven days of silence before Job opened his mouth (3:1) prove Job’s wise use of reason rather than passion and, accordingly, his patience. Aquinas writes: “Now by speaking he [Job] shows the sadness which he was suffering, for it is usual among wise men that they express according to reason the emotions of passion which they feel, just as Christ said in Matthew 26:38.”<sup>62</sup> For Aquinas, Job’s suffering is a sort of divine testing to demonstrate his virtue to people. We can see this view when he comments on 23:10 that “... Job has been proved through adversity not so that his virtue might appear before God but so that it might be manifested to men. Now he says ‘he

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<sup>60</sup> Saadia Ben Joseph Al-Fayyūmī, *The Book of Theodicy: Translation and Commentary on the Book of Job*, trans. L. E. Goodman (New Haven: London: Yale University Press, 1988), 125.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

<sup>62</sup> “Then he said to them, ‘I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and stay awake with me’” (NRSV); Thomas Aquinas, *The Literal Exposition o Job: A Scriptural Commentary Concerning Providence*, tr., Anthony Damico, Classics in Religious Studies 7 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 100.

[God] will prove' about the future, as if presenting himself through patience even for future examination."<sup>63</sup> Close to Aquinas, Nicholas Lyra, a Franciscan exegete from the 13<sup>th</sup> century claims that Job's complaints regarding God's sending of misfortunes to him in the second speech cycle do not intend to refute divine justice. Aaron Canty explains in his analysis of Nicholas's commentary on Job that Job adopts complaints for a rhetorical purpose to argue that "God is just and merciful and may be afflicting him in order that he may merit greater rewards in the afterlife."<sup>64</sup> Nicholas's understanding of Job's suffering echoes that of Saadia Gaon. Both of them views his suffering as a gateway to future rewards. Martin Luther, a theologian and reformer born in the 15<sup>th</sup> century C.E., who was largely active during the early 16<sup>th</sup> century C.E., holds a similar view. For Luther, Job's suffering all functioned to "test and purify" his faith. Ascribing the origin of suffering to Satan, Luther states that the godly like Job experience misfortunes "solely in order that they may be tested."<sup>65</sup>

Similar to the readers of Job from the early centuries, the primary focus of the Medieval Jewish and Christian interpreters is clearly on Job's patience and endurance, a fact that often entails relatively less attention being paid to his socially oriented pain or difficulties. This does not mean that these interpreters do not at all mention Job's public isolation. For example, Aquinas recognizes the extreme nature of Job's socially oriented pain from the way in which he is treated by those around him in 19:14–19, including the people from inside and outside his household as well as the foolish and the wise. Others, such Calvin and Gersonides, acknowledge

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 303.

<sup>64</sup> Aaron Canty, "Nicholas of Lyra's Literal Commentary on Job," in *A Companion to Job in the Middle Ages* (Leiden: Boston: Brill, 2016), 240.

<sup>65</sup> Ronald K. Rittgers, "Job in the German Reformation," in *A Companion to Job in the Middle Ages* (Leiden: Boston: Brill, 2016), 267–68.

Job's social suffering, when commenting on the same passage where he explicitly mentions his public isolation.<sup>66</sup> This attention, however, does not entail delving into its deeper realms. The majority approach Job's suffering as a general phenomenon, and this results in a vague presence of Job's socially oriented suffering in most of their discourses and commentaries.

Many biblical readers from more recent periods have followed the common trend of prioritizing the extraction of theological insights from the theme of suffering in the book of Job. For instance, Søren Kierkegaard, a Danish philosopher and theologian from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, focuses on Job's faith in times of trouble. He finds Job's confession in 1:20–21 to be a pivotal moment reflecting such faith, elevating him as the timeless model of piety for humanity. He argues that those in trouble should look to this confession as it can give them comfort: "For Job keeps faithfully by his [a troubled person's] side and comforts him... as one who witnesses that the terror is endured, the horror experienced, the battle of despair waged, to the honor of God, to his own salvation, to the profit and happiness of others."<sup>67</sup> For Kierkegaard, the true gem in Job's response to suffering is his deliberate rejection of worldly wisdom that he argues would never explain his situation properly. By attributing all his experiences to God ("the Lord took"), Job maintained his confidence in him, avoiding despair and ultimately finding the ability to bless his name ("Blessed be the name of the Lord"). In regard to Job's victory over worldly wisdom,

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<sup>66</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *The Literal Exposition on Job*, 265–67; cf., John Calvin, *Sermons from Job*, trans. Leroy Nixon (Grand Rapids: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1952), 105–108; Gersonides, *The Commentary of Levi Ben Gersom on the Book of Job*, trans., Abraham L. Lassen (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1946), 125–26.

<sup>67</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *Edifying Discourses*, vol. II, trans. David F. Swenson (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1944), 9.

Kierkegaard writes: “Hence Job not only overcame the world, but he did what Paul had desired his striving congregation to do: after having overcome everything, he stood.”<sup>68</sup>

Similar to Kierkegaard, Karl Barth, a theologian of the 20th century C.E., seeks a theological lesson from Job’s experience of suffering, but approaches it with a more neutral angle. Questioning Kierkegaard’s idea that Job was always right in comprehending and speaking of God in relation to his suffering, Barth focuses on both the right and the wrong aspects in Job’s struggle to understand God; “In Job’s complaint as such we cannot distinguish between right and the wrong in such a way as to fix on any of his utterances and say that this is right, or this is wrong.”<sup>69</sup> For Barth, what should inspire his audience in Job’s story is the challenging aspect of grappling with divine governance, without diminishing or exaggerating any part of this process. So, he writes: “All that we can do is to read the drama of his [Job’s] history, and particularly of this partial action in which it is the drama of his suffering and complaint, with fear and pity, or rather with awe and love.”<sup>70</sup>

Harold Kushner, an American Rabbi from the 20<sup>th</sup> century C.E., makes similar effort to the two aforementioned readers in extracting theological insights from the theme of suffering in the book of Job. His main focus is to reconcile the tension created by the reality of suffering with the conventional understanding of God’s role in it. Interpreting God’s speech in 40:9–14 as God’s concession to his inability to take a full control of the cosmic order, Kushner recommends his audience relinquish a common theological assumption that “God is all-powerful and causes everything that happens in the world.” On the benefit this change can bring to them, he states:

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>69</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. IV, part three, first half, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1961), 406.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 408.

“We can maintain our own self-respect and sense of goodness without having to feel that God has judged us and condemned us.”<sup>71</sup>

Despite relatively less attention being paid to it, these recent readers recognize the social aspect of Job’s suffering, especially when commenting on passages that feature his public isolation. For example, Barth acknowledges Job’s public isolation as a significant aspect of his suffering, added later to those introduced in the Prologue—i.e., loss of family, property, and health. He states: “And new factors seem to be introduced as compared with chapters 1 and 2. He is forsaken and even despised by his relations and acquaintances and even his brethren (19:13–19)”<sup>72</sup> And yet, the recent readers’ occasional attention to Job’s public isolation does not go so far as to investigate or explain its deeper realms. As with the earlier examples of the Medieval Jewish and Christian interpreters, they tend to treat Job’s suffering as a whole, and, whatever its detailed dimensions, its extremity and inexplicable nature suffice for their efforts to glean theological insights into human suffering. In the case of Barth, he takes all aspects of Job’s suffering as an entry to explore the depth of grief reflected in his complaint: “It is obvious that Job sees himself struck by all these adversities and swept into the mounting stream of dissolution which relentlessly hurries him towards destruction, death, and the underworld...in dissolution which seems to be the bitter element in all his bitter experiences and to form the basic subject of his complaint.”<sup>73</sup>

We can observe the trend of prioritizing extraction of insights from the theme of Job’s suffering even among interpreters who do not necessarily approach this theme from the

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<sup>71</sup> Harold S. Kushner, “Why Bad Things Happen: Lessons from the Book of Job,” *Areopagus* 7, no. 1 (1994): 12; cf., Paul Raabe, “Human Suffering in Biblical Context,” *CJ* 15, no. 2 (1989):139, 144.

<sup>72</sup> Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 399–400.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 400.



conventional religious settings that prefer viewing Job as a model of piety. Over the past century, an increasing number of interpreters have been focusing on the parallels between Job's story and the lives of ordinary humans. In reading the theme of Job's suffering, they focus on much broader instances and contexts of human suffering and their resonances or dissonances with this theme. Those instances and contexts include political and economic crisis, incurable diseases, genocide, and domestic violence, all of which are reckoned as contexts where individuals suffer in a way that is analogous to Job's suffering. Despite their much wider focus, the interpretive aim of these sorts of readings does not differ from those who seek theological messages from the book of Job. They intend to garner from the book existential or practical insights applicable to their own situations. One way many of these interpreters approach Job is to focus on how a reading of the book might empower sufferers. Elsa Tamez, for example, finds Job's resistance to unjust adversities helpful for empowering Latin Americans who have suffered from political and economic injustice over the past centuries. She states: "Job's protests reaffirm the right of the Latin American people to protest against injustice. First against conquest, then against dictatorship, and now against economic globalization."<sup>74</sup> Gerald West and Bongi Zengele observe the same effect of reading Job's suffering on modern Africans diagnosed with HIV/AIDS. They report that Job's curse on his birth in Job 3 gave these people a sense of "emotional freedom" from the repression of their church who "silenced" their internal anger regarding their health conditions.<sup>75</sup> Elie Wiesel also finds Job's protest in the Dialogue the most empowering aspect of the book. With an acute denunciation of Job's surrender, Wiesel implies

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<sup>74</sup> Elsa Tamez, "From Father to the Needy to Brother of Jackals and Companion of Ostriches: A Meditation on Job," in *Job's God*, ed. Ellen van Wolde (London: SCM Press, 2004), 105.

<sup>75</sup> Gerald West and Bongi Zengele, "Reading Job 'Positively' in the Context of HIV/AIDS in South Africa," in *Job's God*, ed. Ellen van Wolde (London: SCM Press, 2004), 118–20

that what would comfort the survivors of the Holocaust like him is persistent resistance to injustice, which Job preserved until he suddenly reconciled with God: “I was offended by his [Job’s] surrender in the text. Job’s resignation as man was an insult to man...He should have continued to protest, to refuse the handouts.”<sup>76</sup> Marlene Underwood should also be counted among this group of interpreters as her womanist reading of the book of Job aims to support African American victims of domestic violence in modern-day United States. She argues that Job’s protest against God in the Dialogue is the most needed message to those victims because his resistance, consisting of an “affirmation of innocence” and “cries for justice,” is the very attitude required for their survival.<sup>77</sup>

Despite their weak interests in viewing Job as a model of piety, as with the earlier Christian and Medieval readers, these recent interpreters acknowledge the social aspects of Job’s suffering. For instance, Wiesel attends to the social alienation Job experiences from his wife and friends, which instigated his need to demand a response from God about his suffering.<sup>78</sup> In a somewhat implicit manner, Tamez is also aware of public isolation as part of Job’s suffering, especially when she deems a sense of “abandonment” identifiable in his complaints as comparable to the experiences of the Latin Americans.<sup>79</sup> The attention of the above interpreters to this particular aspect of Job’s suffering, however, does not lead to its full investigation as I suggested was the case with all other interpreters mentioned in this section. Due to their

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<sup>76</sup> Elie Wiesel, *Messengers of God: Biblical Portraits and Legends* (New York: Random House, 1976), 234.

<sup>77</sup> Marlene Underwood, “Battered Love”: Exposing Abuse in the Book of Job,” *Womanist Interpretations of the Bible*, ed. by Gay L. Byron and Vanessa Lovelace (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016), 178.

<sup>78</sup> Wiesel, *Messengers of God: Biblical Portraits and Legends*, 224.

<sup>79</sup> “You [Job] are a spectre, as we are, ill, abandoned, despised, oppressed.” Tamez, “From Father to the Needy to Brother of Jackals and Companion of Ostriches: A Meditation on Job,” 104, 108.

inclination to utilize facets of Job's suffering for broader discursive frameworks that, for instance, highlight their empowering capacity, their focus on its social aspects often diminishes rapidly, yielding to the construction of more central discourses.

### **2.1.2. With More Attention to Job's Socially Oriented Suffering**

More serious discussions about the social dimensions of Job's suffering arise among the readers whose interpretive orientation leans toward explaining and analyzing the phenomenon of suffering. Rather than extracting insights and finding meaning from it, they endeavor to explore the nature of Job's suffering, and this effort sometimes necessitates them investigating specific matters pertinent to his public isolation, such as its origins and interrelations with his other conditions. For example, Dell's study that examines identifiable outcomes of Job's "physical impairment" in the book of Job attends to his social exclusion as a direct result of this impairment, along with his psychological distress and physical pain. She counts his repulsive breath to his wife in 19:17 and skin disease implied in his description of bones clinging to skin in 19:20 as notable reasons for his social rejection by those surrounding him.<sup>80</sup> Much like Dell, Basson's examination of Job's physical condition delves into the direct link between Job's ailing body and his social isolation, albeit with a more pronounced emphasis. Basson interprets Job's recognition of his ailing body and social isolation in light of the purity culture of ancient Israel, where "only a pure and whole body that contains itself within fixed boundaries was regarded as the ideal body."<sup>81</sup> This approach has led him to a conclusion similar to Dell's, namely that his public isolation directly results from his physical impairment. Regarding this, he states: "Because

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<sup>80</sup> Dell, "What Was Job's Malady?" 71–72.

<sup>81</sup> Basson, "Just Skin and Bones: The Longing for Wholeness of the Body in the Book of Job," 290.

of his impure body, Job is considered a dangerous person who can wreak havoc on his surroundings.”<sup>82</sup>

Other commentators also sometimes count Job’s ailing body as a reason for his social exclusion as well, especially when they comment on symptoms relating to his illness. For example, Dhorme argues that the theme of public isolation introduced in 19:13 (“He [God] has put my family far from me...”) underlies Job’s complaint over his wife’s and sons’ revulsion against him in 19:17 (“My breath has become repulsive to my wife. And I have become fetid to the sons of my bowels”).<sup>83</sup> In this interpretation, Dhorme considers Job’s physical condition marked by “foul smell” and “infection” as decisive reasons for their reluctance to stay close to him.<sup>84</sup> Newsom brings a theological implication of Job’s skin condition to her discussion of his social isolation. Like others, she correlates “social revulsion” with his contraction of a skin disease. She derives this correlation from the theological connotation of the skin condition as “a sign of divine displeasure” due to sin, as found in the Hebrew Bible and some Ancient Near Eastern texts, such as Deut 28:35<sup>85</sup> and the Prayer of Nabonidus.<sup>86</sup> According to Newsom’s interpretation, the public must have viewed Job’s deformed skin as a divinely approved mark for his exclusion or dissociation.

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 294.

<sup>83</sup> The provided translation of 19:17 is Dhorme’s version. Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job*, 277.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 278.

<sup>85</sup> “The Lord will strike you on the knees and on the legs with grievous boils of which you cannot be healed, from the sole of your foot to the crown of your head” (NRSV)

<sup>86</sup> “[1] Words of the prayer, said by Nabonidus, king of Babylonia, [the great] king, [when afflicted], [2] with an ulcer on command of the most high God in Tayma: [“I, Nabonidus,] was afflicted [with an evil ulcer], [3] for seven years, and far from [men] I [was driven, until I prayed to the most high God.] And [4] an exorcist pardoned my sins.” “4Q242 Prayer of Nabonidus,” *Articles on Ancient History*, accessed June 2024, <https://www.livius.org/sources/content/dss/4q242-prayer-of-nabonidus/>; Newsom, “Job,” 4:355.

Among Bible readers who delve more deeply into Job's public isolation, René Girard conducted one of the most extensive analyses of Job's social exclusion. His main effort is to explain the group psychology behind the public's exclusive attitude toward him using his theories of collective violence, namely scapegoat and mimesis theories. These theories consider violence as the critical but concealed medium for any human society to achieve internal peace and harmony.<sup>87</sup> Based on these theories, Girard suggests that the people's sudden and unanimous turning against Job reflects their mimetic group mentality that seeks to create a moment of union by collectively persecuting a single victim—i.e., a scapegoating process.<sup>88</sup> Concerning the unifying effect of public isolation, Girard states: "For everyone to join in the cursing of Job is divine work, since it strengthens the groups' harmony and applies a sovereign remedy to the community's wounds."<sup>89</sup> Because of Girard's ingenuity in dealing with the theme of public

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<sup>87</sup> While many admit Girard's contribution to anthropological studies of primitive human societies, especially regarding the role and origins of sacrifice, numerous anthropologists have questioned the validity of his claims regarding the generative act of violence due to its insufficient direct evidence. For Girard's theory in detail, see René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. Patrick Gregory (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977; reprint, New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 1, 4, 8–10, 11, 14–16, 19, 21, 29, 32; Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and Novel* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1965), 3; Girard, *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1987), 13, 14; Girard, "To double business bound": *Essays on Literature, Mimesis, and Anthropology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 165. For the critiques of his theory, see Ninian Smart, review of Girard's *Violence and the Sacred*, in *Religious Studies Review*, vol. 6, no. 3 (1980): 173–77; Richard D. Hecht, "Studies on Sacrifice, 1970–1980," *Religious Studies Review*, vol. 8, no. 3 (1982): 257–59.

<sup>88</sup> Girard, *Job: The Victim of His People* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987), 13, 117; cf. James G. Williams, *The Bible, Violence, and the Sacred* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), 165–167. Williams employs Girard's insight in his reading of Job. Yet, he does not take steps toward an extensive application of scapegoat theory to the book of Job as Girard does. His effort at applying Girard's theory to the text can be seen primarily in his viewing the social orders, endorsed by the friends and resisted by Job, as reflecting the collective violence toward a single victim that operates in Job's society.

<sup>89</sup> Girard, *Job: The Victim of His People* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987), 71.

isolation in the book of Job, later interpreters take heed of his reading, especially when they explain the group behavior that dissociate Job completely from his society.<sup>90</sup>

## **2.2. Searching for a Fitting Interpretive Strategy for This Study**

### **2.2.1. Analyzing Previous Interpretations**

The above overview of previous interpretations of Job's suffering casts light on the following three factors I take into account in order to meet my interpretive goal to comprehensively address its social dimensions. First, our interpretive focus on Job's suffering needs to be microscopic rather than macroscopic. One salient reason for the relative inattention to Job's public isolation by those whose reading of his suffering searches for meanings applicable to their own situations or interests is their macroscopic take on the theme of suffering, which focuses broadly on its rarity, extremity, and inexplicability. With this focus, they do not need to explore beyond the negative impact of his social exclusion, as it sufficiently addresses the broader challenges of human suffering upon which they base their larger discourses. On the other hand, the interpreters whose reading have successfully offered several conceivable reasons for Job's social exclusion intently narrow their interpretive focus down to particular aspects of his suffering. This effort allows them to explore more of the nature of those aspects of his travails, including his public isolation. Our interpretive strategy should then adopt a microscopic focus similar to the second group, particularly emphasizing the examination of Job's social relations and his perception of them.

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<sup>90</sup> Newsom, "Job," 4:545; Dahl, "Job and the Problem of Physical Pain: A Phenomenological Reading," 45–46.

Second, our interpretive orientation should focus on explaining the text rather than searching our broader possible meanings for it. We can derive this point from the fact that the second group of interpreters with a microscopic view provides more robust discussions about his public isolation. Given that their interpretive orientation to explore what lies beneath certain aspects of Job's suffering, and how his suffering develops, has started to yield important results, we should adopt this manner in our interpretive strategy if we are to examine other, uncharted areas of Job's socially oriented suffering. Although the first group of interpreters with a macroscopic view sometimes do recognize and comment on Job's social exclusion, their interpretive orientation in finding meaning for it is not as effective for our main purpose because it limits their social discourses to only those applicable to particular themes of their interest, such as Job's piety, and to more general human experiences.<sup>91</sup>

Third, our interpretive strategy needs to be able to reveal a relatively confined presentation of Job's socially oriented suffering. Our review of the first group of interpreters has shown that many readers of Job tend to prioritize theological matters, which the book of Job itself also takes up in some form. The theme of suffering develops around and runs through the theological-moral discourses not merely of interpreters of Job but (unsurprisingly) in the structure of book's discourse. Especially for the character Job, all of his references to different aspects of his suffering become a vehicle to struggle with understanding divine involvement in his misfortune. The story is not so different for his three friends. As will be discussed in more detail in section 1.1. of Chapter 4, his reality of suffering has become the main source for one of the friends' important theological messages: that he should take heed to God's chastisement of

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<sup>91</sup> Therefore, I will adopt the first groups' interpretive orientation only when providing practical insights for general Bible readers at this end of this study.

his presumed sins (e.g., “If you turn to God, you will be restored,” 22:23a). Numerous interpreters note the centrality of theological concerns in the book of Job. Gutierrez, for example, considers the theological messages to be central to the book. He states: “The point of view that I myself adopt in this book is important and classic, and I believe, central to the book itself: the question of how we are to talk about God.”<sup>92</sup> Others, too—e.g., Newsom,<sup>93</sup> Penchansky,<sup>94</sup> and Dell<sup>95</sup>—concur that the final redactor (or the author responsible for the final form of the book) intended to integrate various forms into the book—such as didactic narratives, legal processes, laments, psalms, and proverbs—to convey contradictory voices on theological and moral issues within the book. As these readers commonly observe,<sup>96</sup> the overall design of the book of Job brings theological inquiries to the forefront of its discourse, and unsurprisingly this very design draws the attention of many readers. Ricoeur’s understanding of the role of text illuminates this readerly inclination to prioritize the theological discourses of the book of Job. He discusses this point in his hermeneutical analysis of explanation as a mode of reading the internal relations of a text.<sup>97</sup> He contends that the text controls the direction of reading because the semantic areas to

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<sup>92</sup> Gutierrez, *On Job: God-Talk and the Suffering of the Innocent* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1987), xvii.

<sup>93</sup> Newsom, “Job,” 4:326.

<sup>94</sup> David Penchansky, *The Betrayal of God: Ideological Conflict in Job* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990), 25, 43, 55, 61, 64.

<sup>95</sup> Katharine J. Dell, *The Book of Job as Sceptical Literature*, BZAW 197 (Berlin; New York; De Gruyter, 1991), 135, 148.

<sup>96</sup> Others, like Pope (“Job,” LXXIII), largely concur: “It has been generally assumed that the purpose of the book is to give an answer to the issue with which it deals, the problem of divine justice or theodicy.”

<sup>97</sup> Another mode of reading Ricoeur introduces as part of this discussion is interpretation. Whereas explanation focuses on text, interpretation extends and applies discoveries from the text to the readers’ own interests. Paul Ricoeur, “What Is a Text?” reprinted in *Hermeneutical Inquiry Vol I: The Interpretation of Texts*, David E. Klem (ed.), 233-246 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1986), 240, 242.



which the structure of a text refers lead readers naturally to the intention of the text.<sup>98</sup> He thus says: “What the text wants, is to orient our thought according to it. The sense of the text is the direction which it opens up for our thought.” Ricoeur’s conceptualization of the role of text suggests that the current design of the book of Job is determinative for the direction of many Bible readers’ reading; the predominant theological issues addressed in the book guide them into focusing on these very issues.

Still, although I will strive to focus somewhat narrowly on the theme of social suffering in Job, the overall design of the book poses an important task for my inquiry: it is necessary to unearth the social discourses embedded within the book’s theological discourses in order to discover a complete and coherent social picture of the social world imagined and presumed by the text, upon which to base our discussions. In order to achieve this goal, our interpretive strategy should acknowledge and account for the two following limitations of the presentation of social world as evoked in the current form of the book. First, the book of Job does not have serious interest in providing readers with sufficient data to reconstruct a concrete social reality that it imagines or takes for granted. In fact, it provides limited information about Job’s society in scattered places, such as 15:33, 24:2, 3, 11, 18, and 31:39, where certain agricultural images and social relations within this agricultural context are presented fragmentarily. Second, even this limited information is tailored substantially to the book’s theological-moral arguments, and this fact hinders our ability to comprehend the specific socio-cultural context needed to envision

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<sup>98</sup> Another factor that may affect the direction of reading is certain preconditions or views that the reader brings to the text as Hans-George Gadamer’s idea of the fusion of the two horizons suggests. David Jasper, *A Short Introduction to Hermeneutics* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 16; Bernard Lategan, “Hermeneutics,” *ABD vol. 3*, 149; Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, Revised edition (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2004), 578. See also Klemm’s discussion on Heidegger’s hermeneutic circle in David E. Klemm (ed.), *Hermeneutical Inquiry Vol I: The Interpretation of Texts* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1986), 23, and Ricoeur’s reflective hermeneutics in Paul Ricoeur, “What Is a Text?”, 242.

Job's social world. For example, Job's argument that he did not eat any produce of his land without payment in 31:39 ("if I have eaten its yield without payment") does not provide a complete cultural and social context that the author imagined when projecting it onto the text. While the author intends this imagery primarily to present Job's moral claim about his innocence and uprightness, as well as his contention with the divine ("Here is my signature! let the Shaddai answer me!" 31:35), he left us without much data to explore the deeper realm of the actual society behind such an image.

The two limitations mentioned regarding the book's lack of interest in presenting a comprehensive social picture of Job's world necessitate that our interpretive strategy synthesize scattered information about his society and provide an analytic tool by which to reconstruct the social world presumed by the book and to identify and understand the social relations in such a social world.

### **2.2.2. Employing an Interpretive Lens**

Utilizing relevant concepts that are external to the biblical text and developed outside of biblical studies proper as an analytical lens can fulfill the conditions mentioned for the objective of this study. They can help construct a coherent and complete picture of Job's socio-cultural context from limited data, enable a reader to identify the social discourses embedded within much broader theological discourses, and thereby permit an analysis of Job's social relations. In fact, such an interpretive approach has helped many biblical readers accomplish interpretive goals similar to ours. For instance, a group of interpreters have found psychological research a

helpful tool for analyzing and examining the perceptual world of characters in the book of Job.<sup>99</sup> Marcia Webb's use of trauma studies is a good example. Trauma studies help her identify and explain characters' intellectual crises triggered by Job's tragedies. According to Webb, Job's misfortune has initiated forced alterations in characters' cognitive system—or "schemas" in her language—regarding divine governance of cosmic order; and these alterations inevitably disturb the characters because "people are generally resistant to alterations in schematic constructions."<sup>100</sup> Especially for Job the alterations cause enormous psychological pressure, for they force him to relinquish his former schema that God is just.<sup>101</sup> Others in the second group of interpreters mentioned earlier in this chapter also utilize interpretive or methodological strategies that are needed for our study. For example, Basson uses "the ancient Israelite principle of bodily wholeness"<sup>102</sup> as an analytic lens for his inquiry into the correlation between Job's body and his social exclusion. This interpretive strategy has proven effective for his goal as it helped him elicit a comprehensive view of Job's impure bodily condition from his complaints (e.g., 7:5; 17:7; 30:30) and demonstrate its potential connection with the varied reactions of the public to him, such as mockery (12:4; 16:10; 17:6), spitting (17:6), and cutting off their reciprocity with him (19:13–20).<sup>103</sup> Basson's interpretive strategy allows him to consider Job's abject body as what

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<sup>99</sup> Jack Kahn, *Job's Illness: Loss, Grief, Integration: A Psychological Interpretation* (Oxford; New York; Toronto; Sydney; Paris; Braunschweig: Pergamon Press, 1975); Ronald Quillo, "Naked Am I: Psychological Perspectives on the Unity of the Book of Job," *PRS* 18 (1998); Herman van Praag, "Job's Agony: A Biblical Evocation of Bereavement and Grief," *Judaism* 37, no. 2 (1988). Cf., Dan Mathewson, *Death and Survival in the Book of Job: Desymbolization and Traumatic Experience* (New York: T & T Clark, 2006), 1-2; Philippe Nemo, *Job and the Excess of Evil* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1998).

<sup>100</sup> Marcia Webb, "The Book of Job: A Psychologist takes a Whirlwind Tour," *CSR* 44, no. 2 (2015): 158.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 166–67.

<sup>102</sup> Basson, "Just Skin and Bones: The Longing for Wholeness of the Body in the Book of Job," 289.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 293–94.

renders him as “the center of infection” to the people surrounding him, including his friends and family.<sup>104</sup> Girard’s use of his scapegoat theory for his study of Job’s social exclusion has yielded similar interpretive benefits as Basson’s. It helped him focus on the social discourses embedded within theological discourses in the book of Job and to draw a coherent social picture in which he traces the main cause of Job’s distress, which he believes originates from the public’s collective hostility toward him. For example, the concept of collectively victimizing a single person allows Girard to consider the three friends’ confrontation with Job as elements that constitute his social exclusion and to assume their undeniable contribution to Job’s suffering. He thus argues: “Their [the friends] hostile speeches are not merely an image of collective violence, they are a form of active participation in it.”<sup>105</sup>

### **2.2.3. The Notions of Honor and Shame as an Interpretative Lens**

Our discussions so far have laid out a specific direction for this study. I will adopt the interpretive strategy, found in the second group of interpreters discussed above, that uses relevant concepts developed outside of biblical studies as an analytic lens. With this choice, I intend to utilize benefits from this particular strategy in focusing on social discourses in the book of Job, constructing a coherent picture of Job’s social relations, and analyzing those discourses to answer the three main questions addressed earlier in this study: 1. Why is the public isolation problematic to Job?; 2. What kind of effort does he make to overcome this problem?; and 3. Is such an effort is viable for Job?

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 293.

<sup>105</sup> Girard, *Job: The Victim of His People*, 26.

With regard to the specific concepts to be used, I will deploy insights from scholarship focused on Mediterranean honor and shame cultures. In particular, I will harness their analytical focus on the critical influence of social relations on individual perception and behavior to understand Job's social world and the impact of public isolation in it. As will be discussed in Chapter 3 in more detail, this focus can illuminate Job's fractured social relations, their impact on his and others' estimation of his worth, and how this shapes his perception and attitude as seen in the Dialogue in the book of Job.

Previous interpreters have shown the interpretive benefits of using the notions of honor and shame in the study of the Bible. Charles Muenchow and Geoffrey Aimers each offer notable interpretations of Job that utilize these benefits. One significant advantage of employing the notions of honor and shame for these two readers is that it allows them to trace the contours of Job's society in which they can estimate the critical influence of his social relations on his worth as perceived by himself and others. For example, Muenchow's assumption that Job is a noble man, who considers honor as a condition for an ideal man in his society, points to the harmful effect of his public isolation on his worth in his community. Muenchow contends that this effect is the main cause of Job's distress in his last speech. He states: "in chaps 29-31, Job bemoans his lost honor."<sup>106</sup> Aimers' assumption that subscribing to honor codes is what makes Job an ideal man in his society allows him to focus on the issue of justice that arises from the socio-economic context of Job's society. In particular, with this focus Aimers reveals the paradox of Job's calling for divine justice, pointing out that "he [Job] ignores the truly legitimate grievance of the poor, that their exploitation under him is not being properly redressed."<sup>107</sup> In addition to the benefit of

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<sup>106</sup> Charles Muenchow, "Dust and Dirt in Job 42:6," *JBL* 108, no. 4 (1989): 604.

<sup>107</sup> Aimers, "The Rhetoric of Social Conscience in the Book of Job," 104.

focusing on Job's society and its impact, the notions of honor and shame enable both Muenchow and Aimers to identify Job's concern for honor as an important factor that shapes his mode of speech. For instance, both of them read God in the divine speeches of Job 38–41 as being provoked by Job, whose need to restore his honor disturbs God provoking the divine to appear to the scene.<sup>108</sup> Overall, I expect that the advantages demonstrated by previous interpreters in using the notions of honor and shame as an analytic lens will also benefit the goals of this study. They will help us understand how Job's past and present social relations have influenced his perceptual and social realms, as well as his current rhetoric as evident in the Dialogue.

While I share with these scholars the goal of utilizing the analytic benefits of the concepts of honor and shame, I limit my focus to exploring “the world within the text,” which is embodied by observable features at the literary level, such as the characters, their rhetoric, and the themes they develop. This focus differs particularly from that of Aimer, who extends his analysis of honor discourse in the book to “the world behind the text” that goes beyond the literary level of the book and reaches its particular political and historical background. His analysis aims especially to disclose the author's intention to resolve the class conflict between the noble elites and the rural poor during the author's own time by using Job as a didactic device to promote the just distribution of resources—i.e., social justice. He states: “The book of Job is seen as equivalent to a political satire...it is concerned with derogating a personal quality (the honor that corrupts a judge) and persuading the reader to take action (spiritual reform) in the future, using the example of Job.”<sup>109</sup> As will be discussed in the following section on hermeneutics, my use of

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<sup>108</sup> In their view, God is a verbal rival of Job. Charles Muenchow, “Dust and Dirt in Job 42:6,” 607; Aimers, “The Rhetoric of Social Conscience in the Book of Job,” 101.

<sup>109</sup> Aimers, “The Rhetoric of Social Conscience in the Book of Job,” 106.

the notions of honor and shame aims primarily to expand the understanding of the theme of suffering in the book, exegetically and existentially, paving the way for Bible readers to utilize it for a practical, spiritual, or intellectual purpose.

## **CHAPTER 2. Hermeneutics, Methodology, and Job's Society Imagined**

This chapter will discuss the reading strategy I will employ to effectively address our main questions. Specifically, I will provide hermeneutic orientation and presumptions of this strategy and discuss specific honor and shame concepts and theories to be used in this study. As part of my hermeneutic exploration of methodology to be taken for this study, I also provide a reconstruction of Job's society based on social images and language found in the book of Job. Identifying the specific socio-cultural milieu of Job's society is essential before delving into the details of his social world because, as will be shown in the following chapters, an individual's perceptions and behaviors are profoundly shaped by, and inseparable from, his/her society and its ideologies.

### **1. Interpretive Strategy: Anthropological Literary Reading**

Hermeneutically speaking, exploring the social dimensions of Job's suffering occurs through a reader's in-depth interactions with the information obtained from the text. In this interaction, the text provides data relevant to the interpreter's concerns, while the interpreter interweaves this data into a coherent social discourse to analyze. This interaction is akin to what Hans-Georg Gadamer's calls "the fusion of the two horizons,"<sup>110</sup> where the horizon of the reader, their own concerns, questions and so forth engage the text, as the other horizon, which imparts its own concerns to a reader. Our interpretive goal is to facilitate the interactions between these

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<sup>110</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 578; David Jasper, *A Short Introduction to Hermeneutics*, 16; Bernard Latagan, "Hermeneutics," 149.



two horizons to produce an interpretation that expands our understanding of the social dimensions of Job's suffering.

Success in achieving this goal would require these interactions to shift the dominant direction of reading established by the book of Job's main focus on theological discourses. We need to read the book in a way that uncovers and enables an analysis of the social facets and presuppositions of the book's predominant theological discourses, as opposed to focusing on the theological matters overtly promoted by the design of the book. This reading requires intentional shifting of focus to social matters relevant to our main inquiries. Concepts of honor and shame in Mediterranean cultures is the lens I will deploy to meet this focus requirement.

The intentional shift of focus that I will carry out in this study is similar to what Newsom introduces as reading "against the grain"—an interpretive practice employed by many ideological biblical critics. She explains that this practice intently reads against the "directionality" of the text, constituted by the system of ideas that encode "the interests of some elements of a society."<sup>111</sup> She understands that the efficacy of this mode of reading lies in its capacity to enable readers to comprehend the impact such a system has on those it influences.<sup>112</sup> Gale Yee points to three specific loci that ideological criticism investigates. They are "(1) the production of the text by a particular author in a specific, ideologically charged historical context, (2) the reproduction of ideology in the text itself, and (3) the consumption of the text by readers in different social locations who are themselves motivated and constrained by distinct

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<sup>111</sup> Newsom, "Reflections on Ideological and Postcritical Perspectives," in *Method Matters: Essays on the Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Honor of David L. Petersen* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 541–44.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 543–44.

ideologies.”<sup>113</sup> In short, ideological criticism extends readers’ capacity to examine those matters that the original design of the text left unclear, particularly regarding the function of ideologies that affect the author, the text, and the reader. Yee summarizes the main interests of ideological criticism as follows: “In its broadest sense, ideological criticism examines ideology at work in three variables of biblical interpretation: the author, the text, and the reader.”<sup>114</sup> My reading retains the similar hermeneutic orientation with ideological criticism concerning the reader. It intently avoids following directionality of the text toward theological issues, expecting that this intentional shift of focus will help readers probe into how social ideologies encoded in theological-moral discourses actually impact those more dominant issues.

While my reading shares a similar hermeneutic orientation with ideological criticism, my interpretive goal differs from that of the ideological critic. Actual practices of ideological criticism tend to put significant weight on raising heightened attention to power and economic issues, which ideologies encoded in the text promote or challenge. Newsom says, “the practice of ideological criticism is often seen as a form of resistance to unacknowledged and oppressive power and thus as raising issues of the ethics of interpretation.”<sup>115</sup> As she notes, we can discover from numerous practitioners of ideological criticism their special efforts to resolve power issues that ideologies ingrained in the text engender across various realms, including politics, economy, gender, and race.<sup>116</sup> Unlike these practitioners, I put the greatest weight of my reading on

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<sup>113</sup> Gale Yee, “Ideological Criticism,” in *Methods of Biblical Interpretation: Excerpted from the Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation*, forward by Douglas A. Knight (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2004), 345.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 345.

<sup>115</sup> Newsom, “Reflections on Ideological and Postcritical Perspectives,” 545.

<sup>116</sup> Yee, “Ideological Criticism,” 346; Newsom, “Reflections on Ideological and Postcritical Perspectives,” 545–47.

explaining certain representations of social phenomena observable in the text. Instead of offering “alternative ideologies that may have resisted the dominant ones,”<sup>117</sup> my reading aims to utilize reader’s ability to fill in gaps<sup>118</sup> by setting the idea of Job’s need for public recognition as a central interpretive focus and considering outcomes of this focus in light of the honor and shame notions. This mode of reading is advantageous for our primary inquiries because it permits a focus on Job’s social relations, enabling an exploration of how this socially oriented need shapes and influences his perceptual world and behavioral patterns.

## **2. Justification of Direct Application**

My proposed use of the notions of honor and shame in shifting focus from theological discourses to social discourses presupposes their direct application to what Ricoeur defines as “the world displayed by the text in front of itself,” which he approaches in light of the influence the reader and the text exert on one another. This world is where the readers’ role is significantly limited to obtaining information offered by the text, without allowing their interests or presuppositions to affect the data it originally retains. He thus refers it to “the inside of the text,” where “the work displaces its readers.”<sup>119</sup> Gadamer’s notion of the horizon of the text may illuminate the world displayed in front of the text. It is the world that readers come to grasp as they intentionally follow along the line drawn by the information or ideas the text imparts to

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<sup>117</sup> Yee, “Ideological Criticism,” 346.

<sup>118</sup> Regarding the notion of these gaps, I refer to Robert Alter’s idea of “a certain indeterminacy of meaning” of the text, which the author (or the final redactor) of the book might have intended. Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 12.

<sup>119</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred: Religion, Narrative, and Imagination* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press 1995), 240.

them—i.e., the structure of the text in Ricoeur’s terms. And it is this very world upon which I will base my analytic use of the notions of honor and shame.

The specific area of “the world displayed by the text in front of itself” to which I will apply these notions is Job’s society as evoked in the book of Job. This approach involves making comparisons and conducting analytical assessments using various theories and ethnographic data from Mediterranean anthropological studies. The rationale for this direct application is the presumed analogous socio-cultural matrixes of modern Mediterranean societies to Job’s society. Anthropologists note that societies significantly influenced by the ethos of honor and shame, such as those in the Mediterranean basin, often exhibit cultural traits emphasizing group orientation, including strong kinship ties, patron-client relationships, agriculture, pastoralism, and nomadism.<sup>120</sup> As David D. Gilmore says, in Southern Europe, North Africa, and the Levant a set of social issues that encompass “male-female relations, community orientations, and patron-client dependencies” regularly are prominent and inflected in certain ways.<sup>121</sup> The societies in which the ethos of honor and shame exerts a strong influence on people’s lives, and that share similar cultural traits related to the group orientation, include not only modern Mediterranean

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<sup>120</sup> John Davis, *People of the Mediterranean: An Essay in Comparative Social Anthropology* (London; Henley; Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977), 20–28, 41–54, 132–150, 167–238; John Campbell, *Honour, Family, and Patronage* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), 1-18; Julian Pitt-Rivers, “Honor and Social Status,” *Honour and Shame*, ed. J. G. Peristiany (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1966), 39–73; Ahmed Abou-Zeid “Honour and Shame Among the Bedouins of Egypt,” *Honour and Shame*, ed. J. G. Peristiany (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1966), 245–259; Carmelo Lison-Tolosana, *Anthropology and History in an Aragonese Community*, ed., J. W. Fernandez (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 8, 24–32.

<sup>121</sup> David D. Gilmore, “Anthropology of the Mediterranean Area,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 11, no. 1 (1982): 175.

villages but also other communities around the globe, including in Africa,<sup>122</sup> Asia,<sup>123</sup> Middle East,<sup>124</sup> and certain parts of North and South America.<sup>125</sup>

## **2.1. Job's Society Imagined**

Based on textual information from the book of Job, we can say that Job's society has collectivistic cultural traits comparable to those found in modern, honor-shame Mediterranean societies studied by anthropologists. The socio-cultural and economic images conveyed through the narrative and the characters' speech in the book of Job, which evoke ancient Israel, lead us to this assumption.

### **2.1.1. Literary Presentation of Job and His Society**

Although Job is presented as a non-Israelite in the narrative, as seen in the narrator's direct reference to his origin in "the land of Uz" (1:1), the broader portrayal of Job within the book presents him as closely resembling a Hebrew patriarch, with his society deeply connected to ancient Israel. For example, the use of certain names of God by characters in the book, such as El and Shaddai (55 times and 31 times respectively according to Coogan), suggests Job's society

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<sup>122</sup> Mark Moritz, "A Critical Examination of Honor Cultures and Herding Societies in Africa," *African Studies Review*, vol. 51, no. 2 (2008), 99-117.

<sup>123</sup> Eiko Ikegami, *The Taming of the Samurai: Honorific Individualism and the Making of Modern Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 11.

<sup>124</sup> Carroll Pastner, "A Social Structural and Historical Analysis of Honor, Shame and Purdah," *Anthropological Quarterly*, vol. 45, no. 4 (1972), 248-261.

<sup>125</sup> Ruth Horowitz, *Honor and the American Dream: Culture and Identity in a Chicano Community* (New York; London: Rutgers University Press, 1992); Lyman Johnson and Sonya Lipsett-Rivera (eds), *The Faces of Honor: Sex, Shame, and Violence in Colonial Latin America* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998); Cf., Patricia M. Rodriguez Mosquera, Anthon S. R. Manstead, Agneta H. Fischer, "Honor in the Mediterranean and Northern Europe," *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 33 (2016): 16-18.

resonates with Israelite traditions. Coogan argues that, by referring to a “pre-Israelite ancestral deity,” these names parallel Job with the early patriarchs in Genesis.<sup>126</sup> Another locus where we can find some Israelite qualities in Job would be certain literary forms incorporated in the book, such as “the hymn, the psalm of praise, and the complaint psalm.” According to Newsom, these forms display a “command of the genres of Israelite piety.”<sup>127</sup> She also notes that certain thematic and rhetorical features like “the theme of fearing God,” “sapiential counseling,” and “creation motifs” occur in the biblical wisdom literature, in books such as Proverbs and Ecclesiastes.<sup>128</sup> Coogan also directs attention to Israelite ethical principles implied in characters’ delineation of wicked and righteous lifestyles and the corresponding consequences of such conduct in the book of Job.<sup>129</sup> Specifically, he discovers these principles in the Joban characters’ strong resistance to abusive treatment toward others (22:5-9; 24) and their endorsement of beneficence toward the powerless and the afflicted (29, 31). Evaluating Job’s pursuit of a righteous lifestyle as described in his final speech, Coogan states: “Job, then, has complied fully with the requirements of Israel’s covenant: exclusive worship of God and respect for the neighbor.”<sup>130</sup>

Social images ingrained in the discourses of the book’s characters, such as agriculture, social stratification, and a walled city, also appear consonant with ancient Israel. With regard to the images evocative of an agricultural society, they can be seen from characters’ speech that

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<sup>126</sup> Coogan, “The Social Worlds of the Book of Job,” 77; Pope, *Job*, XXXII.

<sup>127</sup> Newsom, “Job,” 4:326.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 326–27.

<sup>129</sup> Coogan, “The Social Worlds of the Book of Job,” 79–80.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

refer to certain crops and livestock. For example, Job mentions olive oil and wine in 24:11 and 24:18 where he describes the miserable condition of the poor and the cursed condition of the wicked; the poor helplessly “press out oil” and “tread the wine press” (24:11); for the wicked, “no treacher turns toward their vineyard” (24:18). Eliphaz, in his description of the fate of the wicked in the second speech cycle, alludes to the same types of crops. He argues that, as punishment, the wicked will “shake off their unripe grape, like the vine, and cast off their blossoms, like the olive tree” (15:33). In his final speech, Job identifies himself as an owner of a land that produces wheat and barley: “If my land has cried out against me...let thorns grow instead of wheat and foul weeds instead of barley” (31:38–40). Job also mentions agricultural animals, those that are important means for ploughing, threshing, and transport,<sup>131</sup> such as bull (שׁוֹר), cow (פָּרָה), and donkey (חֲמֹר). For instance, as an example of the prosperity of the wicked in 24:11, he notes that “their bull breeds without fail, their cow calves and never miscarries.” In 24:3, Job accuses the wicked of their exploitation of the powerless, stating that “they drive away the donkey of the orphan; they take the widow’s ox for a pledge.”

These crop and livestock images align with the economy of ancient Israel, which scholars assume was primarily centered on agriculture. Scholarly consensus contends that the monarchic era (circa 1000–586 BCE)<sup>132</sup> had seen the significant growth of agricultural practices. The Samaria ostraca provide salient evidence for this view. Found in sites considered to have belonged to ancient Samaria, these ostraca contain epigraphs that refer to “aged wine” (yn yšn)

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<sup>131</sup> Clines, *Job 21–37*, 603.

<sup>132</sup> I draw on the timeline of ancient Israel typically agreed upon by historical critical scholars. This period also falls roughly within the Iron Age in archeological periods. On the ancient Israelite historical timeline, see J. Maxwell Miller, *The Old Testament and Historian* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 77–87; Michael D. Coogan, *The Old Testament: A Historical and Literary Introduction to the Hebrew Scripture* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 21–23; Victor H. Matthews and Don C. Benjamin, *Social World of Ancient Israel, 1250–587 BCE* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1993), ix.

and “olive oil” (šmn rḥṣ). Scholars postulate that these texts belong to 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE and that they reflect the strategic use of agricultural commodities “to buttress political support” of an Israelite king (Nam)<sup>133</sup> or for “a royal attempt to align, influence, and control tribal elites” in Samaria (Niemann).<sup>134</sup> Some contend that the high demand of wine and olive oil led to village-based or institutionalized agriculture. Hopkins, for example, derives the desirability of wine and olive oil from their “taxable,” “storable,” “transportable,” and “exchangeable” condition.<sup>135</sup> Although Roland Boer points out that telling evidence for the suggested advantages of these crops is relatively scarce, especially regarding their “long-distance trade,” scholars more or less find it plausible to assume their increased popularity over time.<sup>136</sup> For instance, Houston notes the increased demand for these crops during the monarchic period. He states: “For Israel and Judah, the archeological evidence indicates a rapid spread in the eighth century of installations associated with vine and olive husbandry.”<sup>137</sup>

Besides agricultural images, the book of Job presents Job’s society through rhetoric evocative of social stratification. In varied places, Job identifies his society as composed of individuals with differing social statuses. His final speech perhaps preserves the clearest picture of these people. On one hand, Job includes community chiefs (שרים) and royal officials (נגידים), those who he claims would pay respect to him; “the chiefs refrained from talking...the voices of

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<sup>133</sup> Roger S. Nam, “Power Relations in Samaria Ostraca,” *PEQ* 144, 3 (2012): 160.

<sup>134</sup> Hermann Michael Niemann, “A New Look at the Samaria Ostraca: The King-Clan Relationship,” *Journal of the Institute of Archeology of Tel Aviv University* 35:2 (2008): 249.

<sup>135</sup> Hopkins, “The Dynamics of Agriculture in Monarchical Israel,” *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers*, ed. Kent Harold Richards (Chico: Scholars, 1983), 196.

<sup>136</sup> Roland Boer, *The Sacred Economy of Ancient Israel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015), 166.

<sup>137</sup> Houston, *Contending for Justice*, 30.



royal officials were hushed...” (29:9–10). Although Job does not provide the specific identity of these people, his rhetorical purpose to highlight his formerly high status implies that those who would recognize his significance include individuals having just such a high social status. Clines similarly points out that these chiefs and officials loosely fit into the category of the high social rank and that they may have constituted “the members of the town council.”<sup>138</sup>

On the other hand, Job repeatedly mentions in his final speech his previous interactions with the socially lowest populace. Among these people there are the traditional triad of the underprivileged—namely, the orphan, the widow, and the stranger—whom he claims to have supported: “because I delivered...the orphan who had no helper” (29:12; cf. 31:21); “I have championed the cause of the stranger” (29:16; cf. 31:32); “If I...have caused the eyes of the widow to fail...then let my shoulder blade fall from my shoulder...” (31:16–22). This populace also includes people with disabilities.<sup>139</sup> He claims in 29:15 that he provided help for the blind and the lame: “I was eyes to the blind and feet to the lame.”

Despite their less conspicuous presence in Job’s final speech, the peasants, alluded to in 31:39, may loosely fit between the higher-ranking individuals (e.g., chiefs and officials) and the underprivileged (e.g., the triad, the blind, and the lame). In terms of economic standing, many of these peasants<sup>140</sup> may have overlapped—at least occasionally—with the group of people Job identifies as the poor (עני) and the needy (אביום), for whom he also cared: “because I delivered the poor who cried” (29:12a); “I was a father to the needy” (29:16a).

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<sup>138</sup> Clines, *Job 21–37*, 986.

<sup>139</sup> For discussions about disability presented in the Old Testament, see Staffan Bengtsson, “On the Borderline – Representations of Disability in the Old Testament,” *Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research* 16:3 (2014): 280–292; Sarah J. Melcher, *Prophetic Disability: Divine Sovereignty and Human Bodies in the Hebrew Bible* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2022).

<sup>140</sup> I will discuss this idea in more detail in the section 2.2. of *Chapter 5*.

Individuals with differing social statuses, as evoked in Job's society, align well with how many biblical prophets of the monarchic period delineate ancient Israel, especially when they rail against the ruling class that oppressed others. They reveal this social reality in the form of denunciation that criticizes the flow of wealth and power into the ruling class at the expense of the poor and powerless subclass; "they [the powerful upper class in Israel] who trample the head of the poor in the dust of the earth...they drink wine bought with fines they imposed" (Amos 2:7–8); "For scoundrels are found among my people; they take over the goods of others...their house are full of treachery; therefore they become great and rich...they do not defend the rights of the needy" (Jer 5:26–28). Houston believes that such a stratified society arose as the kings facilitated "the administration and defense of their territories." He adds that "the dominant class consisted predominantly of the official cadres."<sup>141</sup> Gottwald similarly examines "the opposing social class perspectives" in the Deuteronomic History and the Prophets in the Hebrew Bible.<sup>142</sup> In so doing, he includes in the ruling class "political elites—native and/or foreign—and their administrative, religious, military retainers, together with the landholding, merchant, and small manufacturing elites" while including in the subclass "peasants, pastoralist, artisans, priests, slaves, and unskilled workers."<sup>143</sup>

Lastly, the book of Job offers a glimpse into the settlement type of Job's society. We can observe this in 29:7–10 where he recalls how others would revere him. Here he states: "When I went out to the gate of the city, when I took my seat in the square...the young men saw me and withdrew..." This statement presumes that Job's town had a public space near its gate where

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<sup>141</sup> Houston, *Contending for Justice*, 49.

<sup>142</sup> Norman K. Gottwald, "Social Class as an Analytic and Hermeneutical Category in Biblical Studies," *JBL* 112, no. 1 (1993): 10–17.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

revered individuals like Job received the people's attention, although his specific role in this context remains unclear. Moreover, the fact that his town has a gate implies that it is surrounded by a wall or some kind of fortification. Given that the basic economy of Job's society is agriculture, we can also assume that farming lands and farmsteads are adjacent or integral to his town.

The layout of Job's settlement and functions of areas in it are what many archeological studies deem as typical of many cities and villages in ancient Israel. Zertal notes in his discussion of settlement of Israelite cities during the Iron Age that many of these cities were fortified or enclosed by walls with towers and a city-gate complex.<sup>144</sup> Avraham Faust similarly points out that the walled settlement was also the case for villages in rural areas, stating that "almost all excavated Iron II villages were surrounded by a boundary wall."<sup>145</sup> According to his recent survey, the walled or fortified structure of settlement continued in Judah through the Persian period. He states: "The phenomenon in which many fortified or large public or administrative buildings dominate the architectural landscape is, therefore, not limited to part of the Persian period, and it covers this entire epoch."<sup>146</sup> Both Zertal and Faust note that farms were in the vicinity of the walled settlements in ancient Israel.<sup>147</sup> As with Job's town, these settlements in ancient Israel accommodated a public space near the city gate. Noting this fact, Daniel Frese

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<sup>144</sup> Adam Zertal, "The Heart of the Monarchy: Pattern of Settlement and Historical Considerations of the Israelite Kingdom of Samaria," *Studies in the Archaeology of the Iron Age in Israel and Jordan* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 49.

<sup>145</sup> Avraham Faust, "Cities, Villages, and Farmstead: The Landscape of Leviticus 25:29–31," *Exploring the Longue Durée: Essays in Honor of Lawrence E. Stager*, ed. J. David Schloen (Wino Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 106.

<sup>146</sup> Faust, "Forts or agricultural estates? Persian period settlement in the territories of the former kingdom of Judah," *PEQ* 150:1 (2018): 43.

<sup>147</sup> Zertal, "The Heart of the Monarchy: Pattern of Settlement and Historical Considerations of the Israelite Kingdom of Samaria," 49; Faust, "Cities, Villages, and Farmstead: The Landscape of Leviticus 25:29–31," 106.

states that “Iron II gates seem to have been specifically designed to create open space” and that they “represent the purposeful creation of public space.”<sup>148</sup> Many passages in the Hebrew Bible depict public activities in this space. For example, Frese helpfully brings attention to 2 Chronicles 32:6: “King Hezekiah gathered the people to himself in the square of the city gate, and he spoke encouragingly to them in preparation for Sennacherib’s invasion.”<sup>149</sup> Other cases include Jeremiah’s public speech at the town’s gate in Jeremiah 7:2, 17:19, and 19:2.

It is difficult to pinpoint the specific era of Israel’s history that corresponds to Job’s society since the societies evoked by the book’s images range from the patriarchal period through the Persian period. Still the general overlap between his society and ancient Israelite towns allows us to use the latter to imagine a more complete picture of his society and its social structure—details that are dispersed and relatively vague within the text. The following is the imagined depiction of Job’s society for this study:

The character Job is imagined as having dwelt in a walled or fortified town where people with different social statuses lived together. Except for some royal administrators and officials (29:9–10), a majority of these people, including Job, were involved in agricultural activities or business for producing both subsistence crops and strategic royal commodities (31:38–40). He was wealthy enough to run a farm(s), so he would hire peasants for his agricultural business. There was certain populace who needed proper aid for their survival in Job’s community, and people considered the wealthy and powerful personnel like Job as the ones who should take care of this populace (29:12–25). Noting

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<sup>148</sup> Daniel A. Frese, *The City Gate in Ancient Israel and Her Neighbors: The Form, Function, and Symbolism of the Civic Forum in the Southern Levant* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2020), 130.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.

that Job did perform this role well, many of his townspeople praised him in the public space near the town's gate (29:7–10). Such was the life of Job that continued until he experienced sudden calamities.

### 2.1.2. Collectivistic Cultural Traits of Job's Society

Our discussion regarding Job's society so far suggests that its representation within the book bears some noticeable traits of ancient Israel. If we consider that the book was finalized by an Israelite author (or redactor) sometime between the seventh and fifth centuries BCE, as historical critical scholars often suggest,<sup>150</sup> we may assume the author-redactor of the book infused these Israelite social traits in order to address issues of this epoch—whether to protest against post-exilic optimistic theologies (Penchansky),<sup>151</sup> to resolve an ideological conflict between the Wisdom traditions and the Prophets (Aimers),<sup>152</sup> or to deal with other theological or ideological issues. I consider this possibility of the author's intentional use of the Israelite traits for the direct application of Mediterranean notions of honor and shame to Job's society, assuming its presumed collectivistic traits, which characterize ancient Israel and are similarly found in various modern societies where these notions influence and shape people's perceptions and behaviors.

As we initially saw in our discussion of the image of Job's society, historical scholarship on ancient Israel highlights several cultural and economic traits, such as the centrality of kinship

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<sup>150</sup> Newsom, "Job," 4:325; For discussions about compositional issues of the book that arise from discrepancies or inconsistencies between parts of the book, see Nahum M. Sarna, "Epic Substratum in the Prose of Job," *JBL* 76, no. 1 (1957): 13; Crenshaw, "Job," *ABD* 3:863; Hartely, *The Book of Job*, 20; Pope, *Job*, XXIV.

<sup>151</sup> Penchansky, *The Betrayal of God*, 33–34.

<sup>152</sup> Aimers, "The Rhetoric of Social Conscience in the Book of Job," 107.

networks on individual identity, the agricultural practices, and the patron-client relationship, all of which are similarly found in the modern Mediterranean societies mentioned earlier. For instance, scholars agree more or less that the kinship network was accountable for the formation of individual identity and the sustenance of economy in ancient Israel. On one hand, they suggest that this network, structured within the ancestral household (בית אב), the lineage (משפחה), and the tribe (שבט),<sup>153</sup> played a central role in determining a person's identity. One's self was constituted by the person's social location, role, and origins in these kinship institutions. Joseph Blenkinsopp, for example, finds historical accounts in the Hebrew Bible that illustrate the central place of kin relations in ancient Israel. These accounts trace and identify the origins of certain historical figures, such as Achan (Josh 7:16–18), Gideon (Judg 6:15), Abimelech (9:1–6), and Saul (1 Sam 10:21), exclusively within the kinship network. He states: “the social existence and visibility of the individual are determined by his (less commonly, her) place within the kinship network.”<sup>154</sup> Similarly, Carol Meyers notes that ancient Israel had a group-oriented culture that prioritized family identity over individual identity. She states: “individualistic elements of human existence...were characteristically subordinate to person's role in the family unit...A person was not an autonomous entity but someone's father, mother, daughter, son, grandparent, and so forth.”<sup>155</sup>

On the other hand, scholars presume that kinship played a significant role in the agricultural life of ancient Israel as well. Hopkins addresses this point as follows: “the household

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<sup>153</sup> For the structure of this network, see Niels Peter Lemche, *Early Israel: Anthropological and Historical Studies on the Israelite Society before the Monarchy* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1985), 245–83.

<sup>154</sup> Joseph Blenkinsopp, “The Family in First Temple Israel,” *Families in Ancient Israel*, ed. Leo G. Perdue et. all (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 51.

<sup>155</sup> Carol Meyers, “The Family in Early Israel,” *Families in Ancient Israel*, ed. Leo G. Perdue et. all (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 22.

(בית אב) is the primary productive unit, using the village resources and contributing to the village sustenance by provisioning its own family members.”<sup>156</sup> Ancient agricultural life often required cooperative work, whether for irrigation, plowing, or harvest. The Samaria Ostraca<sup>157</sup> and ancient agricultural sites in the Judean Highlands<sup>158</sup> suggest that these occasions sometimes occurred in the context of institutionalized production of olive oil and wine<sup>159</sup> especially during the monarchic period of ancient Israel. Blenkinsopp suggests that different households would have worked together on these very tasks.<sup>160</sup> Hopkins argues that unpredictable production due to variable patterns of rainfall, labor sharing during busy season of the year, and construction of community infrastructures would have necessitated interdependence among households, even yielding “supra-household sodalities.”<sup>161</sup>

The culture of patronage may also have characterized ancient Israel. Found in numerous modern societies influenced by the ethos of honor and shame in both public and individual lives, this culture refers to a strong, ostensibly voluntary bond between the patron and his clients, who

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<sup>156</sup> David Hopkins, “The Dynamics of Agriculture in Monarchical Israel,” 177.

<sup>157</sup> Shmuel Ahituv, “Samaria Ostraca,” *Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics*, ed. Geoffrey Khan (Leiden: Brill, 2013), accessed June, 2020, DOI:10.1163/2212-4241\_ehl\_EHLL\_COM\_00000009; Matthew Suriano, “A Fresh Reading for ‘Aged Wine’ in the Samaria Ostraca,” *Palestine Exploration Quarterly*, 139, 1 (2007), 27-33; Houston, *Contending for Justice*, 40.

<sup>158</sup> Hopkins, “The Dynamics of Agriculture in Monarchical Israel,” 181, 184; Houston, *Contending for Justice*, 20; A recent archeological survey on Judean Highlands aptly points out difficulties in dating of terracing, rebutting the scholarly agreement on dating terracing to the Bronze and Iron Ages. Yet, this study still confirms an existence of an artificial irrigation system during this period. Yuval Gadot, Uri Davidovich, Yoav Avni, Gideon Avni, and Naomi Porat, “The Formation of Terraced Landscapes in the Judean Highlands in Israel, and its Implications for Biblical Agricultural History,” *Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel*, vol. 5 (2016), 451–52.

<sup>159</sup> Israel Finkelstein, “The Emergence of Early Israel: Anthropology, Environment and Archeology” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* vol. 110, no. 4 (1990): 680; Hopkins, “The Dynamics of Agriculture in Monarchical Israel,” 197; Cf., Carol Meyers, “The Family in Early Israel,” 10–11.

<sup>160</sup> Blenkinsopp, “The Family in First Temple Israel,” 56–57.

<sup>161</sup> Hopkins, “The Dynamics of Agriculture in Monarchical Israel,” 191–93.

may occupy different rungs on the social hierarchy due to “inequality or differences in power,” usually with the patron sitting on a higher position and his clients on a lower position. What enacts this bond in this vertical relationship is the reciprocal exchange of different assets between the two parties.<sup>162</sup> The patron provides his clients with resources (tangible assets), while his clients pay loyalty to him in return (intangible assets).<sup>163</sup> As Eric Wolf states, each party invests in the other,<sup>164</sup> and this reciprocal exchange of assets bind them as a group. Recent biblical scholarship notes the potential existence of patron-client relationship that may have affected the lives of people in ancient Israel. While, as Simkins correctly observes, the absence of direct references to “patrons” or “clients” in biblical literature makes this culture implicit in relation to ancient Israel,<sup>165</sup> some scholars nevertheless postulate that it likely influenced the political and economic aspects of ancient Israel. Simkins, for example, takes Saul’s conciliatory move toward his servants in 1 Sam 22:7–8 as important evidence of the culture of patronage permeating the political realm of ancient Israel. He describes how Saul, in a higher position, leverages tangible assets to acquire intangible assets from his servants in lower positions: “Saul, for example, uses his gifts of fields and vineyards and appointments to military rank [tangible assets] to secure the

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<sup>162</sup> S. N. Eisenstadt and Louis Roniger, “Patron-Client Relations as a Model of Structuring Social Exchange,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 22:1 (1980): 49–50.

<sup>163</sup> Eric R. Wolf, *Pathways of Power: Building an Anthropology of the Modern World* (Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 2001), 179–180; Eisenstadt and Roniger, “Patron-Client Relations as a Model of Structuring Social Exchange,” 50; Campbell, *Honour, Family, and Patronage*, 230; Houston, *Contending for Justice*, 44; Gerhard E. Lenski, *Power and Privilege: A Theory of Social Stratification* (New York; St. Louis; San Francisco; Toronto; London; Sydney: McCraw-Hill Book Company, 1966) 210–19; Pitt-Rivers, “Honor and Social Status,” 58; Raymond Westbrook, “Patronage in the Ancient near East,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 48:2 (2005): 211–12.

<sup>164</sup> Eric R. Wolf, *Pathways of Power: Building an Anthropology of the Modern World*, 180.

<sup>165</sup> Simkins, “Patronage and Monarchic Israel,” *Semeia*, 87 (1999), 128.



loyalty [intangible assets] of his troops in his conflict with David.”<sup>166</sup> A similar move is found in 1 Kings 4:7–19, where Solomon appoints the twelve officials to govern different regions of Israel. To two of these officials—Ben-abinadab and Ahimaz—Solomon not only granted the authority to rule over their assigned regions but also married his daughters, Taphath and Basemath, as tangible assets to secure their loyalty to him—i.e., the intangible assets. In 2 Kings 4:8–37, we observe a Shunammite woman acting as a patron, similar to the cases addressed above. Specifically, her hospitality—providing foods and shelter for Elisha (4:8–10)—effectuates his loyalty to her (“Say to her [Shunammite woman], Since you have taken all this trouble for us [Elisha and Gehazi], what may be done for you?”). He later proves his loyalty by reviving her deceased son (4:32–37).

For Houston, the culture of patronage provides an appropriate framework for analyzing the flow of resources into the ruling class during the monarchic period of ancient Israel. He regards some warnings against exploitation found across Deuteronomy, Leviticus, and Proverbs to allude to the danger of patronage that “may easily slip into oppression.”<sup>167</sup> Similarly, Matthews and Benjamin suggest that the culture of patronage may have influenced the economy of ancient Israel, particularly in the villages, during the monarchic period. They state: “Some [householders] were patrons who exercised power of their own, some were clients who benefited from the power of others.”<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Specific passages Houston examines for this claim include Deut 15:1–18 and Lev 24:35–43. Houston, *Contending for Justice*, 46–48.

<sup>168</sup> Victor H. Matthews and Don C. Benjamin, *Social World of Ancient Israel, 1250–587 BCE* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1993), 160.

There is thus ample warrant to assume in this study that the collectivistic cultural traits of ancient Israel, including the centrality of kinship, agricultural production, and patronage culture, form the socio-cultural and economic context of Job's society. Based on this assumption, I will apply the dynamics of honor and shame, which are found in modern societies with similar characteristics, to his society.

### 3. Scoping Honor and Shame Notions

Although the categories of honor and shame are inflected differently in a wide range of societies and culture, I primarily rely on ethnographic data and theories from Mediterranean scholarship due to its longstanding central position in honor and shame studies, and which provide rich resources for reference.<sup>169</sup> Most anthropological resources I draw on for my analysis come from early Mediterranean scholarship on honor and shame, beginning in the 1960s and offered by some of the pioneers in the field of Mediterranean anthropology, such as John Peristiany,<sup>170</sup> Julian Pitt-Rivers,<sup>171</sup> John Davis,<sup>172</sup> John Campbell,<sup>173</sup> David Gilmore,<sup>174</sup> and

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<sup>169</sup> I also acknowledge that relevant studies outside the Mediterranean scholarship have the potential to enrich my study. I will utilize some of those studies especially when they are informative for the issues at hand.

<sup>170</sup> John Peristiany, "Introduction," *Honour and Shame*, ed. J. G. Peristiany (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1966), 9–18.

<sup>171</sup> Julian Pitt-Rivers, "Honor and Social Status," 19–78; Pitt-Rivers, *The People of the Sierra* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961).

<sup>172</sup> John Davis, *People of the Mediterranean: An Essay in Comparative Social Anthropology*.

<sup>173</sup> John Campbell, *Honour, Family, and Patronage*.

<sup>174</sup> David D. Gilmore, "Introduction: The Shame of Dishonor," in *Honour and Shame and the Unity of The Mediterranean*, ed. David D. Gilmore, A Special Publication of the American Anthropological Association 22 (Arlington, VA: American Anthropological Association, 1987), 2–21.

Ahmed Abou-Zeid.<sup>175</sup> Though their studies have now become classic and undergone some major challenges, especially against their efforts to establish “a circum-Mediterranean perspective,”<sup>176</sup> their conceptualization of general operations of honor and shame and their ethnographic surveys based on field work can still provide useful insights into grasping dynamics of social relations in this study as they have done for many studies in recent decades. For example, in his survey of Mediterranean scholarship on honor and shame culture, Dionigi Albera contends that early scholarly research on this culture still offers viable insights into religious affiliations and historical studies of the Mediterranean world.<sup>177</sup> He further notes that some renewed approaches to the study of honor and shame, particularly in their interdisciplinary efforts—such as viewing these notions through a historical lens—demonstrate the value of early anthropological work.<sup>178</sup> Biblical scholarship has also seen growing attention to the analytic value of the notions of honor and shame. Biblicists’ use of these notions often mirrors the conceptualization and framing of honor and shame found in early Mediterranean anthropological works. For instance, the interpretations presented by Muenchow and Aimers, as discussed in the previous chapter, draw upon the early works’ concepts of honor and shame, including the agonistic nature of honor<sup>179</sup> and its social validation.<sup>180</sup> Others, whose studies note or utilize earlier anthropological

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<sup>175</sup> Ahmed Abou-Zeid “Honour and Shame Among the Bedouins of Egypt,” 243–59.

<sup>176</sup> These studies tend to “tribalize” and “generalize” vast and diffuse Mediterranean regions. Because of this tendency, these early works have been criticized as not appropriately conducting comparative analysis to discover particularities of anthropological phenomena in certain regions. Dionigi Albera, “Anthropology of the Mediterranean: Between Crisis and Renewal,” *History and Anthropology* 17, no. 2 (2006): 113; cf., Zeba Crook, “Honor, Shame, and Social Status Revisited,” *JBL* 128, no. 3 (2009), 594–95.

<sup>177</sup> Dionigi Albera, “Anthropology of the Mediterranean: Between Crisis and Renewal,” 122.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

<sup>179</sup> Muenchow, “Dust and Dirt in Job 42:6,” 599–604.

<sup>180</sup> Aimers, “The Rhetoric of Social Conscience in the Book of Job,” 100–101.

scholarship, include Hendrick Bosman,<sup>181</sup> David A. deSilva,<sup>182</sup> Bin Kang,<sup>183</sup> Jerry Hwang,<sup>184</sup> Johanna Siebert,<sup>185</sup> Timothy Laniak,<sup>186</sup> Saul Olyan,<sup>187</sup> Gary Stansell,<sup>188</sup> Jerome Neyrey,<sup>189</sup> and Halvor Moxnes.<sup>190</sup> Bruce Malina's highly influential work, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, also incorporate into his discussion numerous early studies on the Mediterranean honor and shame notions.<sup>191</sup>

While modern Mediterranean scholarship in anthropology offers several interpretive advantages for addressing our main inquiries, its usage is not without limitations. When directly applying extra-biblical notions to the biblical text, we inevitably run the risk of “overgeneralization” of concepts like honor and shame, as Michael Herzfeld has warned,

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<sup>181</sup> Hendrik L. Bosman, “Discerning the So-called Abomination in Lev 18:22 and 20:13 in Relation to Holiness, Honour and Shame,” *OTE* 36:1 (2023): 126–150.

<sup>182</sup> David A. deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship, & Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2022).

<sup>183</sup> Bin Kang, *Honor and Shame in 1 Samuel 1-7* (Carlisle: Langham Monographs, 2022).

<sup>184</sup> Jerry Hwang, “How long will my Glory be Reproach?” Honour and Shame in Old Testament Lament Traditions,” *OTE* 30:3 (2017): 684–706.

<sup>185</sup> Johanna Stiebert, *The Construction of Shame in the Hebrew Bible: The Prophetic Contribution*, JSOT Supplement Series 346 (New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002).

<sup>186</sup> Timothy S. Laniak, *Shame and Honor in the Book of Esther* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998).

<sup>187</sup> Saul M. Olyan, “Honor, Shame, and Covenant Relations in Ancient Israel and Its Environment,” *JBL* vol. 115, no. 2 (1996), 203–204.

<sup>188</sup> Gary Stansell, “Honor and Shame in the David Narratives,” *Semeia* 68 (1994): 55–56, 64.

<sup>189</sup> Jerome H. Neyrey, *Honor and Shame in the Gospel of Matthew* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 14–34.

<sup>190</sup> Halvor Moxnes, “Honor and Shame,” *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 23, no. 4 (1993), 167–76.

<sup>191</sup> Bruce J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 27–57.

potentially causing us to overlook their unique dynamics in different societies, such as Job's.<sup>192</sup> Herzfeld raises this warning to emphasize the significance of comparative studies, which he believes are essential for a proper understanding of the localized use of honor and shame. In order to minimize the risk of overgeneralization, I confine my anthropological reading within the context of the textual information and literary analysis that allows for the most comprehensive reconstruction of Job's perceptual and social world. Given the book of Job's primary focus on theological matters, this process will mostly involve decoding implicit social language within the prevailing theological discourse. Additional effort will be made to utilize universal and relevant notions or cases that can be applied to Job's specific context, which will be analyzed and compared. This approach should enable me to uncover the unique dynamics of honor and shame in Job's society without imposing an unrelated or irrelevant context.

#### **4. Honor and Shame as Public Phenomena**

In this section, I will provide an overview of discussions on honor and shame in Mediterranean anthropological scholarship, which help identify individuals' perceptual and behavioral spheres concerning personal worth. This will lay the foundation for exploring the nature of Job's public isolation, which I will discuss in the following chapter.

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<sup>192</sup> Michael Herzfeld, "Honor and Shame: Problems in the Comparative Analysis of Moral Systems," *Man*, New Series vol.1, no. 2 (1980), 348–49. In his later work, he elaborates this observation and explicitly rejects "the assumption of Mediterranean homogeneity" that seems to him to subvert "the dialectic between particularistic ethnography and comparative analysis." Herzfeld, "The Horns of the Mediterraneanist Dilemma," *American Ethnologist* vol. 1, no. 3 (1984): 439–40, 443.

#### 4.1. Estimating an Individual's Worth, Public Recognition, Honor and Shame

In honor and shame cultures, estimation of an individual's worth hinges on how the society evaluates this person. If people wish to prove their worth to themselves and others, this person must take heed to how others view him/her and take into consideration this social evaluation in their behaviors. It is commonly observed in these cultures that people desire positive recognition from the public, and this desire influences their actions and words to achieve this recognition-aiming goal. In other words, people's desire to gain positive public recognition acts as a behavioral control. For example, Zeid's ethnographical study on the Bedouin community from the Western Desert of Egypt in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century underscores the power of public opinion that controls the behavioral pattern of individuals. In particular, a tacit communal agreement over "shame" ('ar or عار in Arabic) that attaches to persons, especially those who fail to extend hospitality to the visitors of their tent, impels the members of "beit" (بيت, the smallest kinship unit in Arabic) to provide "immunity" (i.e., protection) to strangers, the fugitive, the neighbor, and even their enemies, who stay or want to stay in their tent.<sup>193</sup> Pitt-Rivers notices the similar impact of the public view of an individual's behavior in Andalusia in modern Spain. He points out that that Andalusian men do not wish to appear a "coward" to others and consequently this concern motivates them to defend themselves, even using physical violence, "when their rights are infringed."<sup>194</sup> The concern for proper public recognition functions as a control on the individual's behavior in regions outside the Mediterranean basin as well. Modern South Korea is one of these regions. South Koreans are conscious about culturally and traditionally constructed

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<sup>193</sup> Zeid, "Honour and Shame among the Bedouins of Egypt," 254–55.

<sup>194</sup> Julian Pitt-Rivers, "Honor and Social Status in Andalusia," *The Fate of Shechem, or the Politics of Sex: Essays in the Anthropology of the Mediterranean* (Cambridge; London; New York; Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 31.

norms and try not to violate them. This particular concern and the effort they put into observing the norms derive from their desire to avoid a sense of shame (changpae or 창피 in Korean; soochi or 수치 in Korean) that is typically meted out to violators and their family. For example, Rosenblatt and Yang introduce in their research on shame in South Korea a case about a drunken man, whose family shied away a security guard of their apartment out of shame that the security guard witnessed this man's dishonorable accident.<sup>195</sup>

These ethnographic cases show how a matter of earning positive public recognition affects many people living in or under the influence of honor and shame cultures. People attend carefully to the public eye observing their lives because they construe that a failure to elicit positive attention from the public would make them appear unworthy to themselves and others, while success in doing so would present them as worthy and valuable.

Acknowledging this noticeable interdependence and interplay between public recognition and estimating an individual's worth, many social anthropological scholars use the notions of honor and shame to explain and analyze this socio-cultural phenomenon. Indeed, these terms have already made an appearance in the descriptions above. In general, scholars view honor and shame as two contrasting indices for an individual's worth or value, which are determined by public recognition. Pitt-Rivers' often-cited definition of honor states that one's honor is "his estimation of his own worth, his claim to pride, but it is also the acknowledgement of that claim, his excellence recognized by society, his right to pride."<sup>196</sup> John G. Peristiany puts it similarly:

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<sup>195</sup> Sungeun Yang and Paul C. Rosenblatt, "Shame in Korean Families," *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, vol. 32, no. 3 (2001), 363–65.

<sup>196</sup> Pitt-Rivers, "Honor and Social Status," 21; Campbell similarly sees that "honor is always something imputed by others." Campbell, *Honour, Family, and Patronage*, 270; Gilmore defines that "Honor and shame are reciprocal moral values representing primordial integration of individual to group." Gilmore, "Introduction: The Shame of Dishonor," 3.

“Honor and shame are two poles of an evaluation,” which are “the reflection of the social personality in the mirror of social ideals.”<sup>197</sup> David D. Gilmore rephrases these definitions, saying “They [honor and shame] reflect, respectively, the conferral of public esteem upon the person and the sensitivity to public opinion upon which the former depends.”<sup>198</sup> In a social anthropological sense, therefore, when a person is called honored or has honor it means that his/her worth is confirmed by public recognition. In contrast, when one’s actions or words fail to draw (positive) public recognition, he/she is deemed to be without worth and called shamed or dishonored. Overall, in honor and shame cultures, public recognition has a power to validate individual’s worth and thus shapes the way one behaves and speaks; a person behaves and speaks in ways to prove his/her own honor (i.e., worthy condition) or to deny his/her own shame (i.e., unworthy condition) before the public.

#### **4.2. Defining Honor and Shame: Sentiment, Status, and Gender**

While the aforementioned socio-anthropological sense of honor and shame offers a useful paradigm for understanding an individual’s behavioral patterns developing around the public recognition, if we are to use it for analyzing specific cases as I will do in this study, it would be imperative to understand first how these notions are actually used and understood in the broader context of the honor and shame cultures. Scholars have identified largely two levels of human experiences with which these notions have frequently been associated. The first level pertains to intrinsic principles of an honorable state that motivate one to behave in ways to receive recognition from the public and subsequently establish a good reputation. Pitt-Rivers views

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<sup>197</sup> Peristiany, “Introduction,” *Honor and Shame*, 9.

<sup>198</sup> Gilmore, “Introduction: The Shame of Dishonor,” 3.



honor and shame at this level as “sentiments” toward an honorable state.<sup>199</sup> Malina rephrases this notion as “sensitivity about one’s own reputation, sensitivity to the opinion of others.”<sup>200</sup> Noting that honor and shame at this level correlate with a motivational force functioning as a starting point for acquiring good reputation, Pitt-Rivers calls them “a concern for repute” or “the basis of repute,” which carries ethical overtones; he thus calls them “the constituents of virtue.”<sup>201</sup> Similarly, Campbell defines them as “intrinsic principles” that relate to “the ideal moral characters of men and women.”<sup>202</sup> As intrinsic principles, honor and shame are synonymous, and they both refer to qualification for an honorable state; having either honor or shame means that this person is aware of conducts considered honorable and satisfies them. Pitt-Rivers states: “a person of good repute is taken to have both [honor and shame], one of evil repute is credited with neither.”<sup>203</sup>

The working of honor and shame at the level of intrinsic principles can in some societies be well observed in the realm of sex and gender difference and the expectations placed on individuals vis-à-vis these categories. Specifically, calling someone honorable via the terms honor or shame applies differently to each gender. For example, the term ‘honor’ usually goes with males considered ‘honorable,’ especially when they meet their gender specific expectations, such as defending their own honor and that of their family. On the other hand, the term ‘shame’ is often credited to females considered ‘honorable’ who have fulfilled their gender specific roles

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<sup>199</sup> Pitt-Rivers, “Honor,” *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, Vol. 6, ed. D. Sills (New York: Free Press, 1968–1979) 503; Pitt-Rivers, “Honor and Shame,” 22, 42.

<sup>200</sup> Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, 48–49.

<sup>201</sup> Pitt-Rivers, “Honor and Shame,” 42.

<sup>202</sup> Campbell, *Honour, Family, and Patronage*, 269.

<sup>203</sup> Pitt-Rivers, “Honor and Shame,” 42.

appropriately, particularly preserving their sexual purity. Hence, at this level, the honor of men and the shame of women each portray an honorable condition for their respective genders.

The second level of human experiences, frequently associated with honor and shame, related to the extrinsic principles of an honorable state that refer directly to one's social gain—most notably reputation that leads to status—rather than ethical conditions. At this level, honor and shame are no longer synonymous but refer to contrasting indices for status, which can be gained or lost by “external conditions,”<sup>204</sup> such as family and social functioning. For instance, honor indicates qualities or conduct that can establish a person's status, such as pride, precedence, prestige, or defending honor of family. In contrast, shame refers to qualities or conducts that restrain the acquiring of status, such as timidity, blushing, or shyness.<sup>205</sup> Furthermore, when honor and shame relate to social reputation, their meaning again becomes gender specific.<sup>206</sup> The qualities or conduct appropriate for honor are normally associated with men, and those appropriate for shame are associated with women.<sup>207</sup> When men and women preserve qualities or conduct that match their gender correctly, they are considered all honorable; if they do not, they are considered ashamed or dishonorable. The following statement of Pitt-Rivers aptly summarizes gendered meaning of honor and shame:

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<sup>204</sup> Campbell puts it, “But honor is not only to be considered in terms of the various external situations where it may be lost.” 269.

<sup>205</sup> Pitt-Rivers, “Honor and Shame,” 42–43; Campbell, *Honour, Family, and Patronage*, 268–69; Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, 49.

<sup>206</sup> Pitt-Rivers, “Honor and Shame,” 42–43; Campbell, *Honour, Family, and Patronage*, 269; Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, 49.

<sup>207</sup> I put “normally” in my description to indicate that honor in the sphere of social reputation sometimes applies to women as well. Zeba Crook brings attention to this issue concerning the gender implications of honor and shame. Zeba Crook, “Honor, Shame, and Social Status Revisited,” 594–95; Cf., Gilmore, “Introduction: The Shame of Dishonor,” 9.

At this point also these modes of conduct become dishonoring for the inappropriate sex: for a man, to show timidity or blush is likely to make him an object of ridicule, while a woman who takes to physical violence or attempts to usurp the male prerogative of authority, or very much more so, sexual freedom, forfeits her shame.<sup>208</sup>

### **4.3. Social Ideals**

Now that I have discussed the correlation between public recognition and individuals' worth, and how the language of honor and shame is used to identify their worth at different levels of human experience in honor and shame cultures, it is apt at this point to direct our attention to how the public validation of people's worth actually works.

The key role that public recognition plays in validating an individual's worth implies that the public has the power to determine a person's value in the eyes of both those being estimated and those estimating. Gilmore's definition of honor, as mentioned earlier, that highlighted "the sensitivity to public opinion upon which the former [the conferral of the public esteem] depends" aptly captures this power of the public with regard to determining one's worth.<sup>209</sup> The honor killing of women, often conducted by their male kin to avoid public criticism in some countries,<sup>210</sup> also proves the power the public holds when it comes to validating one's worth.

When the public evaluates an individual's worth, they often base their decision on his/her capacity to fulfill social ideals or expectations. It is when a person's actions or words satisfy a set of ideas or rules demanded of the members of his community that the public gives recognition to

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<sup>208</sup> Pitt-Rivers, "Honor and Shame," 42.

<sup>209</sup> Gilmore, "Introduction: The Shame of Dishonor," 3.

<sup>210</sup> This will be discussed in more detail in the section 4.5. Collective Honor.

him/her. Noting this basis of public evaluation, Peristiany thus calls honor and shame “the reflection of the social personality *in the mirror of social ideals*” [emphasis added].<sup>211</sup>

As societies vary, their ideals or expectations vary as well. While some social ideals and expectations are common to different honor-shame societies—notably, defending the honor of family and sexual purity of women—each society sets up ideals or expectations distinctive from other societies. For instance, while both Bedouins of the Western Desert of Egypt and Sarakatsani of Greece in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century consider protecting family and guarding the sexual purity of women from external assault as a principal condition for male honor, the way these groups expect men to achieve this condition differ from one another. On one hand, Bedouins highlight “good deeds and righteous actions” with which men can adequately expel injustice or maltreatment from their clan or lineage.<sup>212</sup> These kinds of deeds and actions sometimes entail physical violence, especially toward offenders,<sup>213</sup> but can expand to include generosity and hospitality. In fact, these latter two attitudes are pivotal for “fame and prestige” in Bedouin society. Men often attain public recognition “by lavish generosity” and “reckless hospitality,” as Zeid states.<sup>214</sup> On the other hand, ideal behaviors of Sarakatsani build on taking effective measures toward “mutual hostility” between unrelated families.<sup>215</sup> As attaining proper public recognition depends on “the inability of enemies effectively to denigrate a family’s

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<sup>211</sup> Peristiany, “Introduction,” *Honor and Shame*, 9. Cf., Davis describes honor as “deriving from the performance of certain roles.” Davis, *People of the Mediterranean: An Essay in Comparative Social Anthropology*, 77.

<sup>212</sup> Zeid, “Honour and Shame among the Bedouins of Egypt,” 251–52.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, 253–54.

<sup>214</sup> Zeid, “Honour and Shame among the Bedouins of Egypt,” 250

<sup>215</sup> Campbell, *Honour, Family, and Patronage*, 262.

reputation,”<sup>216</sup> Sarakatsani men have developed modes of conducts which can avert their enemies’ attack on the honor of his family. Unlike Bedouins, however, these modes of conducts do not allow critical harm on their opponents, such as killing. As Campbell reports, Sarakatsani set “a limit to the amount of openly expressed hostility.”<sup>217</sup> For example, the confrontational interaction among shepherds is “confined to areas from which there is a secure line of retreat, and they are “careful to fight with weapons which may cause unpleasant wounds but are unlikely to kill.”<sup>218</sup> The allowed modes of conducts for Sarakatsani in dealing with their opponents diverge from those of Bedouins also because they include “allusive gossip” and “criticism of conduct”<sup>219</sup> that do not have to do with generosity and hospitality, the core values leading to honor of Bedouin males. Men’s prestige in Sarakatsani community comes from effective defense of their family’s reputation rather than displaying certain moral qualities.

Despite varying constructions of ideals or expectations in different societies, however, performance of these ideals tends to relate to one’s economic capacity. As John Davis points out, this is because fulfilling social ideals often necessitates resources. He explains: “Successful performance of the roles [leading to honor] is related to economic resources because feeding a family, looking after women, maintaining a following, can be done more easily when the family is not poor.”<sup>220</sup> As Davis explains, economic resources indeed play an important role in demonstrating men’s prestige in both Bedouin and Sarakatsani communities mentioned above. In

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<sup>216</sup> Ibid., 265.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid., 264.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid., 272.

<sup>220</sup> Davis, *People of the Mediterranean: An Essay in Comparative Social Anthropology*, 77.

the case of the former, the number of livestock a person owns is integral to his honor since it enables him to offer generosity and hospitality to others.<sup>221</sup> For this reason, Zeid notes that for the Bedouin, “a man who does not own livestock is regarded as rootless and is not considered a real member of the community.”<sup>222</sup> The story is not very different for the Sarakatsani community. Economic standing affects the prestige of a man and his family as it can put him “in a position to insist upon an equality in honor.” Accordingly, families in poverty are considered to have “no prestige and are classed generally as lost families.”<sup>223</sup>

#### **4.4. Status, Competition, Criteria for Public Validation of Honor**

As we have seen so far, in honor-shame societies when the public confers recognition on a person based on his/her performance of certain ideals or expectations, the conferred public recognition can establish status.<sup>224</sup> This rule applies mostly to men. Men view their social standing embodied in their public recognition as a crucial indicator of their own worth, so that they seek to acquire proper public recognition and its corresponding honor by following the modes of conducts deemed ideal for their society. Their impulse to draw public recognition,

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<sup>221</sup> Zeid, “Honour and Shame among the Bedouins of Egypt,” 249–50.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, 249.

<sup>223</sup> These are the families who do not receive proper recognition from their community members. They are not in the position to claim honor because they “are denied the imputation of honor even though no positive accusation of dishonor can be pointed against them.” Campbell, *Honour, Family, and Patronage*, 273; cf., The correlation between poverty and shame is also the case for an Aragonese community called Belmonte. Carmelo Lison-Tolosana, *Anthropology and History in an Aragonese Community*, 320–21.

<sup>224</sup> Pitt-Rivers, “Honor and Social Status,” 22; Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, 50.

however, does not always end in success. Their claim to or effort to acquire honor can be denied by the public. In this case, they are shamed, and their status is denied.<sup>225</sup>

While public recognition establishes a person's status, an individual's status can affect public recognition as well. Scholars often explain the latter aspect of status using a notion of ascription: a person's public recognition sometimes draws on the status *ascribed* to the person by virtue of the individual's birth or membership in a certain group.<sup>226</sup> As Pitt-Rivers says, "where status is ascribed by birth, honor [as a consequence of public recognition] derives not only from individual reputation but from antecedent." For example, medieval European "society was ranked in terms of honor, from the aristocracy, who had the most—on account of their power, their valor, and their proximity to the king—to those who had none at all, the heretics and the outcasts..."<sup>227</sup>

In certain honor-shame societies, then, a man's status hinges not only on his performance of social ideals but on his family or group background. Men have varying degrees of status based on these two conditions. But more than this, status hierarchy is an inevitable phenomenon in honor and shame cultures. In order to occupy a higher position in this hierarchy, males concerned with status compete over the public validation of their worth (i.e., honor),<sup>228</sup> especially when they are equal in status.<sup>229</sup> It is one of the traits of honor that only the "victor" in

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<sup>225</sup> Pitt-Rivers, "Honor," 503–504.

<sup>226</sup> Pitt-Rivers, "Honor and Social Status," 23; Pitt-Rivers, "Honor," 507; Moxnes, "Honor and Shame," 20; Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, 32–33.

<sup>227</sup> Pitt-Rivers, "Honor," 507.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>229</sup> Pitt-Rivers, "Honor and Shame," 23–24, 61; Davis, *People of the Mediterranean: An Essay in Comparative Social Anthropology*, 94; James Nicholas Jumper, "Honor and Shame in the Deuteronomic Covenant and the Deuteromistic Presentation of the Davidic Covenant" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2013), 21–22.

this competition finds “his reputation enhanced by the humiliation of the vanquished”<sup>230</sup>; the loser gets shamed and loses his status.<sup>231</sup> Noting this agonistic quality of honor, Gilmore describes the competition over honor among equals as “a zero-sum contest.”<sup>232</sup> Pitt-Rivers explains how a tension between the equals develops around and escalates during their competition over honor as follows: “the person who submits to the precedence of others recognizes his inferior status”; this person feels that he “has disavowed his claim to the higher status to which he aspired.”<sup>233</sup>

In the competition over honor among equals, the public presides as the jury and gives a verdict as to who wins and acquires more honor and who loses and so has their status diminished. While a person’s performance of social ideals is important in the public’s evaluation of agonistic seekers of honor, the public also consider a person’s intentions in his actions and words to be a crucial criterion for conferring honor. Pitt-Rivers explains that intentions are important because “they demonstrate the sentiment and character from which honor qua conduct derives.” He adds that “to show dishonorable intentions is to be dishonored regardless of the result.”<sup>234</sup>

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<sup>230</sup> Pitt-Rivers, “Honor and Social Status,” 24; Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, 39.

<sup>231</sup> Malina frames this trait of honor in a “challenge and response” model. This model refers to a type of social interaction, in which a man challenges the other for the sake of channeling the public validation exclusively into himself while the other defends himself not to lose his public validation. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, 33.

<sup>232</sup> Gilmore, “Honor, Honesty, Shame: Male Status in Contemporary Andalusia,” in *Honor and Shame and the Unity of The Mediterranean*, ed. David D. Gilmore, A Special Publication of the American Anthropological Association 22 (Arlington, VA: American Anthropological Association, 1987), 90.

<sup>233</sup> *Ibid.*, 23–24.

<sup>234</sup> Pitt-Rivers, “Honor and Social Status,” 26.



Besides one's intentions, the public also consider his response to any given challenge or threat to his honor as a crucial criterion to confer honor. To offer no response negatively affects one's public validation, making him look incapable of defending or preserving his own honor.<sup>235</sup> For this reason, a successful response to a challenge or threat to honor usually entails "a display of scorn, disdain, and contempt,"<sup>236</sup> sometimes accompanied by physical violence.<sup>237</sup> The case of the Andalusian men taking the defensive at their infringed rights by others, mentioned in the section 4.1. of this chapter, represents one type of successful response in the competition over the public validation of honor; their strong response defends their honor by displaying their abilities to avert challenges to their honor before the public.

The competitiveness of the individuals or parties in acquiring public recognition, however, is not always the case, especially when they do not have equal status. On one hand, if an individual is considered inferior in status, his actions and words may not pose serious challenge to others with much higher status. Pitt-Rivers, for example, refers to a case in his study of Andalusia in modern Spain where a mentally deranged man cannot challenge others because "his lunacy places him outside the community of normal men and he is therefore unable to affront."<sup>238</sup>

On the other hand, the social superiority of an individual can secure the public validation of his honor. As previously mentioned, one's ascribed status can affect the public recognition of a person, and for the individuals with very high status, their social standing can guard their honor

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<sup>235</sup> Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, 35–36.

<sup>236</sup> Malina classifies counterchallenge as one type of response to the threat, which continues the exchange of response between the honor bearer and the challenger. Malina, *The New Testament World*, 35.

<sup>237</sup> Pitt-Rivers, "Honor and Social Status," 29; Campbell, *Honour, Family, and Patronage*, 269.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

regardless of their performance of social ideals. For these kinds of people, the rule of competition over honor does not come into effect well. For instance, Pitt-Rivers reports in his study of Andalusian men that the upper-class group, *señoritos*, places “their honor in a sheltered position.”<sup>239</sup> Moral obligations, such as proper sexual behavior, that affect the honor of plebeians, the underclass group, do not exert much influence on the public validation of honor of *señoritos*. The secured public recognition by one’s social superiority tends to be preserved in the memory of the people to the extent that his breach of, or inability to abide by, social ideals does not easily detract from his honor. Campbell likewise observes that the loss of sheep, which is normally considered dishonorable in the Sarakatsan community, does not immediately damage the reputation of a family of wealth and high lineage since “in the living memory of its past greatness, it will retain a position of some distinction.”<sup>240</sup>

#### **4.5. Collective Honor**

As mentioned in the previous section, societies influenced by the ethos of honor and shame view an individual strongly in relation with the group he/she belongs to by birth or membership, for example one’s family. Besides a person’s status and performance of social ideals, this collectivistic mentality is another element that comes into effect when the public determine one’s honor. One feature of this collectivistic approach to honor is that the honor of a group is shared and established by its members. An individual’s honor goes beyond simply being ascribed to the person by his/her group; it also has the ability to increase or decrease the honor of

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<sup>239</sup> Ibid., 37–38.

<sup>240</sup> Campbell, *Honour, Family, and Patronage*, 266–67; cf. For this reason, some plebeian families possess documents that prove their superior origins. Pitt-Rivers, “Honor and Social Status,” 54.

his/her group. The broader public that different groups constitute gives recognition to an individual in accordance with his/her group's reputation, while they assess the group's reputation based on the honor of its members. Because of the public's collective treatment of the group and its members, the identity of an individual is inseparable from his/her group.

Pitt-Rivers observes that in certain cultures a single male often "symbolizes" his group. The members of the group share the honor "vested" in him and are willing to defend it.<sup>241</sup> This observation implies that the members of a group feel obliged to protect its public reputation from any external or internal affront to one of its members. The family is regularly one notable group sustained by this kind of collectivistic working of honor.<sup>242</sup> All members of a family share in the honor of the family, and when there is an affront to the honor of one of its members, the male members of the family take actions to defend their family's public reputation.<sup>243</sup> Honor killing of women by the Bedouins of the West Desert of Egypt in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, and in some other Muslim-majority countries until today, is one good example of the collectivistic working of honor in the family. When a woman allegedly engages in what is regarded as sexual misconduct, her family may feel that her shameful or dishonorable behavior damages the honor of her entire family. Responsibility to restore the family's damaged honor usually falls on the shoulders of her kinsmen, who often solve this issue by killing the woman. In some instances, this happens even when the woman is raped, instead of actually breaching community's sexual codes.<sup>244</sup> Robert

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<sup>241</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>242</sup> Other groups include monarchy and other smaller social institutions or peer groups. Neyrey, *Honor and Shame in the Gospel of Matthew*, 27–28; Pitt-Rivers, "Honor and Social Status," 36.

<sup>243</sup> Pitt-Rivers, "Honor," 506.

<sup>244</sup> Abou Zeid, "Honour and Shame among the Bedouins of Egypt," 250, 253–54, 256; For more recent cases of honor killing, see Robert Paul Churchill, *Women in the Crossfire: Understanding and Ending Honor Killing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 2–8.

Churchill's study of honor killing explains how a concern for collective honor shapes the way a family treats its female members. He points out that promoters of this type of homicide often regard themselves "as having a vested interest in restoring a family's honor and, thereby, the purity of the community."<sup>245</sup> It is after all an impulse to shun or quell severe criticism of their community and thus to restore their family's honor that motivates removal of dishonorable individuals from the family.<sup>246</sup> Churchill accordingly reports that, in the claimed motivations for many honor killings, "there is a clear link between the intent to kill a female alleged to have behaved dishonorably and the perceived need to restore the family's honor."<sup>247</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> Robert Paul Churchill, *Women in the Crossfire: Understanding and Ending Honor Killing*, 5–6.

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>247</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

### **CHAPTER 3. The Painful Nature of Public Isolation: Job’s Worth Denied by People and God**

Job’s revered state in his town, which he describes in Job 29, came to an end with his experience of a series of catastrophes that stripped him of his servants, livestock, children, and health (Job 1–2). Events have humiliated Job, and people have treated him with ignorance and contempt. His distress over this particular collective behavior toward him encroaches upon his speech: “I am one before whom people spit” (17:6b); “I call to my servant, but he gives me no answer” (19:16a). Stirred by the bitterness of these public reactions to his misfortune, he reckons them as divinely sanctioned maltreatment. He believes that God designed and controlled their alienating behaviors: “He [God] has put my family far from me” (19:13); “Because God has loosed my bowstring and humbled me, they [the social outcasts] have cast off restraint in my presence” (30:11). From Job’s perspective, the pain of his public isolation apparently constitutes a key component of his suffering and can be imagined to be as acute as the ongoing physical and mental afflictions he experiences.

This chapter examines how part of Job’s suffering has taken shape through his experience of public isolation in his community. This process will probe into the damaging effect of public isolation on his personal worth in an attempt to reveal a strand of his suffering besides his physical pain and mental distress that derives from the initial surge of misfortune. As a first step in this process, I will explore how and why Job perceives his public isolation as a problem. Initially, I will investigate the theological-moral and social basis of his interpretation of his public isolation and how the impact of Job’s lost public recognition on his personal worth underlies his perception of divine violence and injustice. My subsequent analysis will focus on

the meaning of public recognition in the social world as evoked in Job 29 as well as its theological and moral meaning. At this stage, I will use the notions of honor and shame, as introduced in the previous chapter, to approach his lingering attention to positive public recognition. Specifically, by reading this attention in light of public validation of a person's worth, I will explore how Job constructs part of his identity in relation with the public response to him, as well as how the public comes to embody his perspective to see social and theological matters around him. In light of this analysis, I will conclude this chapter by providing several conceivable impacts of the loss of public recognition on Job that contemporary readers might imagine.

### **1. Seeking the Perceptual Basis of Job's Recognition of His Public Isolation as a Grave Problem**

As mentioned earlier, Job considers public isolation as more, or at least comparably, distressing to his other more severe and obvious forms of suffering, such as the deaths of his children and his debilitating skin condition. This raises a question about the perceptual basis of his interpretation of the severity of his public isolation. The two notable bases we can observe from Job's speech are his theological-moral interpretation of his public isolation and his perception of the clearly negative connotation of the people's present attitude towards him.

## 1.1. Theological and Moral Basis of Job’s Suffering from Public Isolation: Divine Violence Without Ground

As we discussed at the outset of this study, Job derives his sense of unjust treatment by the divine from his personal circumstances. From his perspective, God is both violent and unjust: “See he [God] will kill me; I have no hope...” (13:15); “For he [God] crushes me with a tempest, and multiplies my wounds *without cause* [חנם, emphasis added]” (9:17).<sup>248</sup>

Job’s theological-moral interpretation of his public isolation develops within this general take on his situation. At one level, he perceives divine violence from this public attitude toward him. As we discussed, he recognizes God as manipulating various entities into offending him: “God gives me up to the ungodly, and casts me into the hands of the wicked...he set me up as his target; his archers surround me...” (16:11–13). “He [God] has made me a byword of the peoples, and I am one before whom people spit,” (17:6).

At another level, Job feels the obvious injustice from the divine’s manipulation of the perpetrators of his isolation. One notable place we can observe this idea is the way Job structures his final speech in chapter 30. Specifically, he uses such divine images as a gateway to claim divine injustice. Job assigns the early part of his speech to asserting how God orchestrates the behavior of social outcasts to alienate and disdain him: “Because God has loosed my bowstring and humbled me, they [social outcasts] cast off restraint in my presence” (30:11). His search for the divine role in his suffering continues through his focus on the physical context (“That night racks my bone...he [God] grasps me by [lit. like] the collar of my tunic,” 30:17–18), culminating

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<sup>248</sup> As Hartley and Newsom note, the word חנם, once used by the Satan and God, the celestial beings, to evaluate the situation of Job, the terrestrial being (1:9; 2:3), is here being used by the latter to evaluate the former, especially the divine, and his justice: “Then the Satan answered the Lord, ‘Does Job fear God for nothing [חנם]?’” (1:9); “...although you [Satan] incited me [God] against him [Job], to destroy him for no reason [חנם]” (2:3). Hartley, *Book of Job*, 176; Newsom, “Job,” 4:411.

in the expression of his misery over what he perceives as divine violence: e.g., “You [God] lift me up on the wind, you make me ride on it, and you toss me about in the roar of the storm” (30:22). At this stage, his complaint about divine injustice constitutes one aspect of this expression: “But when I looked for good, evil came; and when I waited for light, darkness came” (30:26). Newsom states: “Job assumed, much as his friends did, that the principle of moral retribution was an essential part of the relationship between God and human beings. Upon this basis, he formed his expectations (cf. 29:18-20), and he is now outraged at God’s injustice.”<sup>249</sup>

Job’s moral inquiry into the unjust nature of God’s violent treatment towards him presumes that retribution is the ideal norm for upholding the cosmic moral order, as Newsom correctly points out in the statement above. In line with the act-consequence framework found in the wisdom literature mentioned earlier in this study,<sup>250</sup> within this moral framework, righteous persons like him are to receive divine favor that entails delightful and positive experiences. In Job’s social context, these moments would include attention and hospitality rather than the indifference and hostility Job presently receives from those around him. Job complains because his experience of calamities—entailing physical, material, psychological, and social harm—demonstrates that God has failed to correctly apply Job’s moral condition to the divine order.

Yet, in asserting divine injustice and thereby highlighting his innocence, Job does not mean that he retains a complete moral purity. His moral inquiry into divine justice presumes his own sins from youth (“you [God]...make me reap the inequities of my youth,” 13:26); he acknowledges his moral fallibility as a human being (“Who can bring a clean thing out of an

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<sup>249</sup> Newsom, “Job,” 4:547.

<sup>250</sup> “...a principle of worldly order that assigns particular results to particular human actions—namely, a link between good results and good actions and between bad results and bad actions.” In section 2.1.1. Theological, Existential Exploration of Human Suffering of Chapter 1.



unclean? No one can,” 14:4). Nevertheless, Job does not intend this concession of his moral imperfection as a justification for divine violence directed to him. We can see this from his conviction that he would eventually be vindicated in his imagined court: “I have indeed prepared my case; I know that I shall be vindicated” (13:18). As Clines comments: “he [Job] does not allow that he is guilty of any sin for which his present suffering can be a punishment.”<sup>251</sup>

Within Job’s theological-moral perspective, it becomes apparent that his public isolation demonstrates the divine responsibility for incorrectly assessing his moral condition in the cosmic moral order. Consequently, it amounts to groundless violence and therefore exacerbates his theological distress.

## **1.2. Social Basis of Job’s Suffering from Public Isolation: Job Wants Public Recognition**

Our discussion of the theological and moral aspects of Job’s interpretation of his public isolation has revealed an important presumption in his perceptual world that can enhance our understanding of the problematic nature of his public isolation. It is the fact that he categorizes this type of collective behavior as a negative human experience suitable only for sinners. He also considers it as equally or comparably intolerable to his other tragedies, such as his loss of children and own health. This leads us to question from where the robust sense of negativity regarding his public isolation originates in his social context.

One noticeable element of Job’s experience is the explicit insult he could sense from the reactions of the public to his situation. We can observe these reactions in Job 17 and 30. In 17:6, Job describes how the general public ridicules and insults him: “He [God] has made me a byword of the peoples, and I am one before whom people spit.” As previously mentioned,

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<sup>251</sup> Clines, *Job 1–20*, 326.

spitting displays a strong insult when done before “the despised person’s presence.”<sup>252</sup> What dramatizes the sense of insult that Job perceives from those around him is its shared nature; not one but many spit before him. This small but clear social collaboration against him disgraces him. In the first half of Job 30, Job gives another example of an explicit public insult he must endure. Elaborating on the disdain and mockery of him by a group of people he says: “And now they mock me in the song; I am a byword to them. They abhor me, they keep aloof from me, they do not hesitate to spit at the sight of me” (30:9–10). This public posture toward him accounts for the negativity he elicits from his public isolation, not only because of the disgraceful message it delivers, but also because of the status of the people who delivers this message. Job’s earlier comment points out that they were not even visible before his misfortune due to their insignificance in his community: “But now they make sport of me, those who are younger than I, whose fathers I would have disdained to set with the dogs of my flock” (30:1). Overall, from Job’s descriptions of public reactions to his suffering, which are clearly humiliating for him, one can start to glean something of the painful nature of such public isolation.

A closer look at Job’s own descriptions of public isolation, however, reveals that Job’s pain involves something deeper than the obvious discomfort he experiences from people’s explicit insults. Job’s complaint in 19:14–19 especially associates the painful nature of his public isolation to his loss of positive public recognition. As mentioned in section 1.2. of Chapter 1, he complains here that different members of his society have failed to properly recognize him. Namely, he has lost what he believes to be a due response of respect from close people, servants,

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<sup>252</sup> Newsom, “Job,” 4:546. See also 1.2. Job’s Public Isolation as a Basis of His Inquiry into Divine Violence in Chapter 1.

and some townspeople; instead they responded to him with indifference (19:14–16), aversion (19:17, 19), and disrespect (19:18).

Job’s lingering agitation over his loss of positive public recognition comes into a clearer view when his complaint is juxtaposed with his yearning for public recognition in Job 29. Here his longing for his glorious past pivots around the ways people used to acknowledge him. Job enjoyed public respect, praise, and attention. The youngsters, elders, community chiefs, and royal officials pay respect to him at the city gate (29:8–10): “the young men saw me and withdrew, and the aged rose up and stood; the chiefs (שרים) refrained from talking, and laid their hands on their mouths; the voices of royal officials (נגידים) were hushed, and their tongues stuck to the roof of their mouths.” Those whom Job helped praised him (29:13): “The blessing of the wretched came upon me, and I caused the widow’s heart to sing for joy.” People would take heed to his speech (29:21–23): “They listened to me, and waited, and kept silence for my counsel. After I spoke they did not speak again, and my word dropped upon them like dew. They waited for me as for the rain; they opened their mouths as for the spring rain.” Now that such recognition is no more, Job’s frustration seems inevitable. He has lost the very acknowledgement of his importance and status he wants from the people around him.

Our discussion so far has revealed the two negative elements of Job’s public isolation, which may have impelled him to view it as representing one salient aspect of his suffering. The negative force that the public’s explicit insults to him carry in his perceptual realm seems apparent. The overt disgrace that people, regardless of their social locations and status, collaboratively cast on one individual using verbal and nonverbal means is something that neither Job nor anyone can easily bear.

But what about the loss of the positive public recognition? As observed, Job allocates a substantial space in his speech to expressing how much he strives for what he believes to be the just amount of good recognition from those around him. This leads us to think that the negative force his loss of positive public recognition carries is equivalent to, or even exceeds, that from people's direct insults.

The negative force from the loss of public recognition felt by Job seems heavier than it may look to those who do not care much about others' attention, particularly when compared with other seemingly more distressing realities that befell him, especially the sudden loss of his children and own health as introduced in the Prologue. Many would feel sympathy for Job's agitation over the loss of his own children and health, since grieving over the deaths of loved ones and suffering from an incurable disease are almost universal across different cultures and societies. But why should one grieve so much over the reality that people do not recognize one's importance and status? Why is the loss of his public recognition unbearable to Job so much so that it provokes such a strong reaction in him—to the point that he begins to consider it as reflecting groundless divine violence directed toward him; and with such reflection he is willing to call into question, and so begin to undermine, a dominant ideological-theological construct that governed his, and many of his contemporaries' understanding of the nature of the moral cosmos that the divine was thought to sanction.

Locating Job in an honor and shame culture and in light of the dynamics that are typically at play in such culture can provide a vantage point to grapple these questions. Job's consideration of public recognition as a criterion to judge his present condition is in fact typical of how individuals, especially males like Job, construct and gauge their identities in societies where the ethos of honor and shame undergirds and infiltrates the lives of people. In order to better

understand the root of the negativity underlying Job's public isolation, I will explore in the following sections the possible meanings of public recognition for him, assuming that he views it as a critical foundation for constructing his identity.

## **2. Imagining the Meaning of Public Recognition in the Book of Job**

### **2.1. Job's Public Recognition at the Social Level**

The Mediterranean anthropological scholarship on how individuals construct their identities and estimate their worth within honor and shame cultures, which I introduced at the end of the previous chapter, can help us imagine how Job perceives public recognition at the social level. Reading Job's lingering attention to public recognition in light of these discussions suggests that he constructs his social identity based on public recognition, believing that how the public view and assess him is integral to who he is in his community, as would be typical for a male living within the influence of an honor and shame culture. In particular, he likely feels that his dignity as a human being is directly proportionate to the degree of positive recognition he receives from the public. Within this perspective, people's indifference, mockery, and hostility toward him become unequivocal signs of his worthless condition. This assumption may explain why he was impelled to embed his public isolation in his more foundational theological-moral inquiry into divine injustice, along with its other obvious markers—i.e., the deaths of his children and the acute physical pain. The negative impact of his public isolation is as intense as the other elements of his misfortune and cannot be endured, as it reflects his perceived worthlessness in society, depriving him of one of the crucial foundations upon which his identity is built. For Job,

who still believes in his righteousness, this should not have happened if the divine had correctly operated the cosmic moral order.

A closer look at Job's final speech in Job 29 may validate our assumption regarding the negativity involving his public isolation, as it preserves how he views the positive public recognition as a core index for his social worth. His use of certain language and descriptions of his social interactions can illumine this point, directing our attention to his translation of public recognition into two categories of personal value—status and existential validation. In what follows, I will discuss these categories in turn in more detail.

### **2.1.1. Public Recognition Represents Job's Status**

Job's perception of the negative sense of his public isolation may correlate with his status. As discussed in section 4.4. of the previous chapter, in honor and shame cultures, males tend to design their mode of conducts to gain positive public recognition, since they construe that their worth hinges directly on the status that positive public recognition brings to them. Job appears to share this status-driven impulse of the typical males in honor and shame cultures. His use of language and images in Job 29 alludes to this point. At this juncture, Job gives a detailed description of what appears to him an ideal society where he discloses his yearning for the public recognition he once enjoyed. A close look at several parts of this description reveals that his focus on the public recognition is not simply on people's positive attention to him. He also sees status in it.

Most explicitly, Job's use of the Hebrew term, כבוד, to assess his social life in 29:20a implies his attention to status reflected in public recognition. He states: "my כבוד was fresh with me." Most English versions of the Bible translate this term as "glory." That English term can too

fully evoke emanation of splendor, such as the one from God (e.g., Exod 29:43; Num 14:10),<sup>253</sup> to constitute an appropriate translation here. In the Hebrew Bible כבוד also denotes a sense of dignity or high respect, attained by ideal modes of conduct in the social arena. Weinfeld introduces two instances of the latter usage in his lexical study on כבוד, one from Proverbs 20:3 and the other from Psalms 112:9.<sup>254</sup> Proverbs 20:3 attributes high esteem to a person who maintains behavioral propriety in the context of disputes: “It is a man’s כבוד to refrain from strife, but every fool is quick to quarrel.” Psalms 112:9 praises the righteous for their provision for the needy, depicting their power or victory as being exalted: “They have distributed freely, they have given to the poor, their righteousness endures forever; their horn is exalted in כבוד.” Scholars note this social connotation of כבוד and class it among Hebrew roots that relate to honor or honoring, such as ברך (to bless), גדל (to become great), הדר (to honor), הלל (to praise), יקר (to be valued), ירא (to fear), רום (to be exalted), and נשם (reputation).<sup>255</sup> Albeit from a slightly different angle, Olyan also observes the social connotation of כבוד. He includes this term in the honor language of the Hebrew Bible that builds on and promotes a status hierarchy, such as the one that appears in Exodus 20:12: “Honor (כבוד) your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.” He comments: “Honor, generally speaking, is owed by an inferior to a superior.” He adds that “diminishment” of honor results in “a loss of social

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<sup>253</sup> Weinfeld, “כבוד,” *TDOT* VII, 27.

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>255</sup> Jumper, “Honor and Shame in the Deuteronomistic Covenant and the Deuteronomistic Presentation of the Davidic Covenant” 52–53; Olyan, “Honor, Shame, and Covenant Relations in Ancient Israel and Its Environment,” 203–204; Timothy S. Laniak, *Shame and Honor in the Book of Esther*,” 17–23; Newsom, “Job,” 4:613.

status,” referred to by shame language, which include קלל (to be diminished), כלם (to be ashamed), and בוש (to be ashamed).<sup>256</sup>

In the current Joban context, the social sense of כבוד, translatable as “honor” as a source of status, fits well since the progression of Job’s logic that brings him to the point where he uses this term in Job 29 follows through a public’s attitudes toward him, which displays their acknowledgment of his status. Specifically, his description of his past life traces the sense of כבוד back to how different groups of people interacted with him. In so doing, it places significant focus on their open expression of esteem to him, as inferiors do to their superiors. Some took submissive actions to present their esteem to Job: young men withdrew (29:8), the aged stood (29:8), and princes and nobles stayed silent (29:9-10; cf., 29:20-21) at his appearance. As Newsom points out, this portrayal of Job’s influence that “reorganizes social space” centering on him is “an expression of what is highly valued,” showing people’s recognition of his high status.<sup>257</sup> Some others present their esteem to Job through verbal praise: those who heard of his generous deeds, such as delivering the poor (29:12), commended him (29:11). Some direct recipients of his benevolence expressed their gratitude (“the blessing of the wretched” in 29:13a) or rejoiced greatly (the widow singing for joy in the heart in 29:13b), paying positive attention to him. All of these verbal and non-verbal reactions of the public, embedded in the structure and progression of Job’s description of his past life, suggest that Job finds a crucial source of his כבוד in his perception of the public attitudes toward him, which acknowledge his high status as being worthy of receiving positive attention. The allusion of Job’s כבוד to his status aligns well with how he concludes his speech in Job 29. He deems that his high social standing that suitably

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<sup>256</sup> Olyan, “Honor, Shame, and Covenant Relations in Ancient Israel and Its Environment,” 203–204.

<sup>257</sup> Newsom, “Job,” 4:538.



placed him at the top of social hierarchy represents what once looked to him an ideal society, to which he believes he still deserves to belong: “I chose their way, and sat as chief, and I lived like a king among his troops...” (29:25).

In addition to the social connotation of *כבוד*, Job’s use of language and social images that evoke qualities of power and strength signals that he sees his status through his public recognition. As discussed in section 2.2. of this chapter, when honor relates to a man’s social standing, it is associated with certain qualities or conduct relating to power and strength, such as pride and prestige; possession of these qualities confirms that a person successfully embodies (male) power and strength and so has honor and enjoys its corresponding status. In Job 29 Job incorporates into his assessment of his past social life the language and images that evoke precisely these kinds of qualities. In 29:20, for instance, Job deploys the lexeme *קשת*. Literally the term means “bow,” an instrument that is normally used in hunting or war—two stereotypically masculine pursuits regularly associated with strength and virility. Consequently, the term can figuratively connote power and might, as Kronholm suggests in his lexical study on *קשת*.<sup>258</sup> For instance, in Jeremiah 49:35, God uses *קשת* as a metaphor of power that belongs to Elam, a neighboring nation of Judah, which the divine plans to punish for her action against Jerusalem (Jer 25:25): “Thus says the Lord of hosts: I am going to break the bow (*קשת*) of Elam, the mainstay of their might” (Jer 49:35). As the present Joban context does not presume any military campaign or hunting context, Job here refers to the figurative sense of *קשת*, expressing his power and strength, to which he always had access, just like a bow that is “always pliable so

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<sup>258</sup> Kronholm, “*קשת*,” *TDOT* 13:207.

that he could continuously rely on it to shoot an arrow with force and accuracy,” as Hartley points out<sup>259</sup>: “my bow ever new in my hand” (29:20).

Besides a military or hunting image of bow, an image of wild animals, which Job uses to identify his ability to subdue the unrighteous in 29:17, connotes his power and strength: “I broke the fangs of the unrighteous, and made them drop their prey from their teeth.” Job here likens the unrighteous with the beasts of prey using an image of fangs and the holding of prey with teeth, symbolizing the lethal harm they could cause to the powerless. As Clines argues, this image evokes that of lions or lionesses as appeared in Joel 1:6 and Ps 58:6 (7): “...its teeth are lions’ teeth, and it has the fangs of a lioness” (Joel 1:6); “O God break the teeth in their mouths; tear out the fangs of the young lions, O Lord” (Ps 58:6 (7)).<sup>260</sup> What Job elicits from the way he currently interweaves this beast image into his interaction with the unrighteous is that his power and strength far exceed that of the unrighteous. His description identifies himself as the one who dominates and tramples the lion-like unrighteous people. His point appears clear: he used to have sufficient socio-political power with which he would constrain those who threatened the peace and well-being of his community members.<sup>261</sup>

In addition to the images of non-human entities, Job borrows two images from the human world that would unmistakably represent his power and strength: the chief and the king. In 29:25, Job self-identifies as the chief and king, stating: “I chose their way, and sat as chief (lit. head, “ראש”), I lived like a king among his troops, like one who comforts mourners.” While Job

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<sup>259</sup> Hartley thus interprets this term as “manly vigor.” Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 393; Clines considers it as “a symbol of strength.” Clines, *Job 21–37*, 992.

<sup>260</sup> As Clines also notes, the form of Hebrew term for fangs in Ps 58:6 (7) differs from that from Job 29:17 and Joel 1:6: מלתעות for the former and מלעיות for the latter. Clines, *Job 21–37*, 990.

<sup>261</sup> Similarly, Clines identifies these people as “the perpetrators of injustice.” Clines, *Job 21–37*, 990; Hartley call them “the oppressors.” Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 392.

develops this self-identification around his successful social functioning in the current verse, especially providing directions (i.e., choosing people's way) and non-material support (i.e., comforting mourners), it is also grounded in an overt status hierarchy in which he sits at the top with more strength and power than those below, thus being given the titles of chief and king. Newsom notes: "The first three [choosing people's way, chief, king] all have to do with leadership in terms of royal authority and the ability to make decisions on behalf of the entire community."<sup>262</sup> Job's self-identification as a king features a further element that highlights his power and strength. It is the military image that frames his position as a king. By locating his presence as a king among "troops (717ג)" who, by status and duty, are in the position of receiving orders from the king, he successfully discloses his dominance over these people. Noting the emphasis on power granted to Job in these images, Clines puts it: "in the army, there is much less room for debate and compromise; in the army, the king gives orders and his troops obey."<sup>263</sup>

Job's use of language and images that explicitly or implicitly ascribe power and strength to him is not likely to be coincidental. On one hand, this may relate to his socially conditioned interests. Especially, his ongoing attention to positive public recognition may have shaped how he recalls his past—the time when his honor and its corresponding status were intact. Language and images that evoke his power and strength are a perfect fit for his reconstructed past, since these qualities are unequivocal signs of honorable males with good social standings, with whom he desires to identify himself once again. On the other hand, the rhetorical necessity of supporting, in his diminished current state, his claim to high status would have motivated him to choose the above discussed status-laden language and images in reconstructing his past. In order

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<sup>262</sup> Newsom, "Job," 4:539.

<sup>263</sup> Ibid., 995; cf., Habel, *The Book of Job*, 412.

to maintain their honor and its corresponding status, males in honor and shame cultures are required to possess and demonstrate sufficient power and strength to defend their and their group's honor from any kind of attack.<sup>264</sup> Job needs decisive evidence for his possession of these required qualities if he is to argue that honor previously conferred to him be restored. As the language and images that evoke his power and strength aptly serve this goal, he integrates them into his final speech, which focuses on his past social interactions and is intentionally structured to highlight his centrality in his community. Consequently, he rhetorically “proves” that his positive public recognition in the past derived from essential sources of his honor and high status.

### **2.1.2. Public Recognition Represents Existential Validation of Job's Generous Lifestyle**

In addition to seeing the status required for honorable men through the positive public recognition given to him, Job perceives it as a token confirming the existential value of his generous lifestyle. This aspect of public recognition emerges in Job 29 as he reflects on and engages with the social values of his previous interactions with those around him.

As we said, Job fills this portion of his speech with recollections of his previous social relations that generated for him the positive recognition of others. In particular, he offers specific cases that show how his townspeople openly expressed their esteem to him (29:8–10, 21–24) and gave praise to him (29:11, 13).<sup>265</sup> Along with describing these public attitudes towards him, Job in this chapter also discloses how he personally evaluates his lifestyle that left him with positive memories. A sense of contentment evoked in 29:18 is one such place where we can observe this

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<sup>264</sup> The sections 4.2., 4.4., and 4.5. of previous chapter cover this trait of honor.

<sup>265</sup> See the section 1.2. of this chapter for more details about the specific groups that gave these reactions.

evaluation. After listing a series of his social interactions that show his centrality in his community and how he earned this state, Job at this point reveals how he personally appraised these interactions. The prevailing atmosphere in this evaluative remark is positivity, reflected in his contentment: “Then I thought, ‘I shall die in my nest, and I shall multiply my days like the sand (or phoenix, חול).” While we may soon recognize the general impression of this statement that elicits a sense of contentment from a good death [e.g., dying in nest] and a long life [e.g., multiplying my days], there are two possibilities to understand how Job exactly envisages this death and life in the current context. At the heart of these possibilities lies how to translate “חול.” It usually means “sand,” which is not at odds with the broader context of this verse. The sand elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible often refers to a large quantity of something (e.g., Gen 22:18, Josh 11:4), and it can properly express the long life when metaphorically used as an allusion to life as in Job 29:18. In fact, some English versions of Job follow this option, translating it as “the sand,” such as ESV, ASV, and KJV. Yet, it could suggestively mean “phoenix” as well because of the “nest (קן)” image in the first hemistich of this verse. Scholars who find validity in this option point out that the bird image represented by the phoenix would fit better with the nest image.<sup>266</sup> They also note that the long life evoked in this verse well matches the long-life span of this legendary bird. Concerning the appropriateness of translating חול as phoenix, Newsom states: the phoenix is “the mythic bird that lived for a vast number of years and then renewed its life by rising from the ashes of its burned nest.”<sup>267</sup> Whichever possibility one would take, it becomes apparent in this verse that Job was largely content with his previous social interactions.

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<sup>266</sup> Clines, *Job 21 – 37*, 991; Habel, *The Book of Job*, 412; Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 392-393; Newsom, “Job,” 4:539.

<sup>267</sup> Newsom, “Job,” 4:539.

In his perception, the positive public recognition given to him through people's open expressions of esteem and praise are unequivocal signs that prove to Job himself an existential value of his previous life with these people.

Job's description of his former interactions with people in his community in Job 29 retains some information that can advance our understanding of what constituted his previous lifestyle that brought him positive public recognition at which he was satisfied in 29:18. One prominent aspect of this lifestyle is its benevolent nature. The group of people and their reactions, which he decided to preserve in his memories, bring us to this point.

Within Job's recollections, the underclass populace emerges as the specific group of people who assured him of the value of his previous life. His interactions with them constitute the core of his memories (29:12–16), implying that he perceives this aspect of his life as particularly significant in establishing his high worth and status and confirming the existential value of his previous lifestyle. Among the various elements of these interactions, their identity and the core activities that constitute his interaction with them come down to his generous provision of necessary resources for these people, which may underlie his evaluation of worthiness of his previous lifestyle.

According to Job's recollections, those for whom Job provided consists of the poor (עני, 29:12a), the orphan (יתום, 29:12b), those in danger of destruction (אבד, 29:13a), the widow (אלמנה, 29:13b), the blind (עורר, 29:15a), the lame (פסח, 29:15b), the needy (אביון, 29:16a), and the stranger (לא-ידעתי, lit. "someone I did not know," 29:16b). In ancient Israel, the quality of life of these people was often conditioned by the communal support and care they might receive. As will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5, many of them needed economic and legal aid because they suffered poverty and infringement of their rights, which derived from their lack of

physical working capacity and legal supporters.<sup>268</sup> For instance, widows at the time could not properly deal with physically demanding works due to their lack of adult males who possessed what Gowan terms “human muscle power.”<sup>269</sup> This often left them exposed to economic vulnerability. These conditions would similarly apply to people with disabilities. The underclass populace were also vulnerable to issues involving exploitation or other type of violence due to their lack of powerful male patrons who could provide legal protection. For this reason, several stipulations in the Hebrew legal code include widows and strangers among those who need legal protection (e.g., levirate marriage in Deut 25:5–10; stranger’s residence right in Lev 19:33).

Job’s own descriptions with his interactions with these people offer glimpses into their harsh living conditions, which demanded proper and regular assistance—conditions that do not differ from those I addressed above. The poor, the widow, the orphan, and the stranger mentioned in Job 31 appear to have required various essential resources, such as the food (31:17), a guardian (31:18), clothing (31:19), and shelter (31:32). Considering these socio-economic and legal conditions of the underclass populace, the positive recognition Job would earn from them indicate that his former lifestyle served their needs and improved their lives. And his selection of this particular experience to portray his previously esteemed state and high status reflects that his recognition of the value of his service to this populace formed a significant portion of his identity, motivating him to maintain his benevolent lifestyle.

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<sup>268</sup> Mark Sneed, “Israelite Concern for the Alien, Orphan, and Widow: Altruism or Ideology?”, *ZAW* 111:4 (1999); Donald E. Gowan, “Wealth and Poverty in the Old Testament: The Case of the Widow, the Orphan, and the Sojourner,” *Interpretation* 41:4 (1987); Hector Avalos, *Illness and Health Care in the Ancient Near East: The Role of the Temple in Greece, Mesopotamia, and Israel*, Harvard Semitic Museum Monographs 54 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995).

<sup>269</sup> Donald E. Gowan, “Wealth and Poverty in the Old Testament: The Case of the Widow, the Orphan, and the Sojourner,” 343.

Job's perceived sense of the existential value of his generous lifestyle can be further glimpsed in how he describes his social interactions with the underclass populace. In addition to identifying his beneficiaries and the types of support he provided, he chose to preserve in his memory their specific reactions to his benevolence, most of which reflect their contentment and gratitude for his charitable actions. These reactions include blessing (29:11, 13), testifying to his good service (29:11), and rejoicing (29:13): "When the ear heard, it called me blessed [האשרני], and when the eye saw, it testified for me [העידני]" (29:11)<sup>270</sup>; "The blessing [ברכה] of the wretched came upon me, and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy [רנן]" (29:13). His preservation of these specific reactions in his recollections implies that what he valued in his positive public recognition went beyond the high status it conferred. He considers important how much his support satisfied the underclass populace, finding meaning in his generous lifestyle through their reactions. Regarding Job's benevolent lifestyle and its meaning to him, which he sees through his positive public recognition, Clines points out the similar: "Job's philanthropy was no doubt an end in itself for him, but the public recognition that flowed from it was indispensable for his well-being—so signifies his headlining of vv12–17 with this assertion of the approval of his neighbors."<sup>271</sup>

## **2.2. Job's Public Recognition at the Theological-Moral Level**

Besides his self-worth and the worth of his generous lifestyle, Job sees his theological worth through his public recognition. This is due to his concern for God. Our previous discussions about Job's profound inquiries about meanings of his suffering demonstrate how

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<sup>270</sup> I offered here my literal translation of 29:11.

<sup>271</sup> Clines, *Job 21–37*, 987.



central the task of comprehending the divine's role in his personal experiences has been for him. For example, I explored in the beginning of this section how his theological engagement with this experience has led him to feel divine violence and injustice from it.

To understand why public isolation agitates Job theologically to the point where he perceives it as divine violence and injustice, we must consider the theological implications he attributes to public recognition, beyond its social and existential connotations. The theological-moral discourses Job and his friends develop around the positive human experiences suggests that he deems ideal the acquisition of a state of honor and its corresponding status and also that his society considers this social condition as a tangible indicator for divine validation of a person's righteous moral state. Like many others in his community, such as his friends, Job appears to believe that God lets people give positive public recognition only to those who preserve a righteous moral condition. Thus, we can say that he estimates his theological worth—his value in God's eyes—based on the degree of recognition he receives from those surrounding him. To get at this point, it will be helpful to start with discussing the notion of a righteous moral condition in the Dialogue.

### **2.2.1. Correlation between a Righteous Moral Condition and Positive Human Experiences**

#### **Given as Divine Validation: The Desirability of Righteousness**

In general, Job and the friends argue one against the other throughout the Dialogue. Their biggest discordance comes from the issue of divine justice; as previously mentioned, while Job questions its operation (e.g., "He [God] destroys both the blameless and the wicked," 9:22b), the friends believe it operates well (e.g., "See, God will not reject a blameless person, nor take the

hand of evildoers,” 8:20).<sup>272</sup> Despite their differences over this issue of divine justice, however, they concur in at least one aspect of human morality, albeit with a slightly different point of view on how it applies to Job: a person must cultivate and maintain a righteous or a guiltless moral condition. While the friends argue that Job has not attained it and thus must do so, he asserts that he has already achieved it. Hebrew terms that they use in referring to this moral condition vary, but their use of these terms considers this condition more or less as a necessary and desired moral state, which is integral to an ideal type of a person’s identity. These terms include זך (pure), ישר (upright), being without און (iniquity) or עולה (injustice, iniquity), and צדק/צדקה (righteousness/to be righteous). For instance, as part of consolation for Job, Bildad exhorts him to be pure and upright in 8:6: “if you are pure (זך) and upright (ישר), surely then he [God] will rouse himself for you and restore to you your rightful place.” By the same token, Zophar and Eliphaz urge him to stay away from iniquity and unrighteousness: “If iniquity (און) is in your hand, put it far away” (11:14a); “If you remove unrighteousness (עולה) from your tent...then you will delight yourself in the Almighty, and lift up your face to God” (22:23b, 22:26). Likewise, Job considers his guiltless moral condition as integral to his identity in his persistent claim that he has been righteous through his life. As will be discussed in the following section, Job perceives this condition in two distinct contexts—legal and social. In either case, he regards it as his ingrained characteristic that ought to shield him from any kind of moral attack: “Though I am innocent (צדק), I cannot answer him” (9:15a; cf. 9:20a); “I am blameless (תם); I do not know

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<sup>272</sup> An exception may apply to Zophar when he points out in 11:6 that God has not sentenced Job to the full amount of punishment he deserves: “Know then that God exacts of you less than your guilt deserves.” Yet, despite Zophar’s understanding that divine lenience may sometimes mitigate one’s punishment, deviating from the exact scale of retribution, he still acknowledges the general operation of retributive divine justice that ultimately punishes the sinner.

myself” (9:21; cf., 9:20b) “I hold fast my righteousness (הַקְּדוּשָׁה) and will not let it go” (27:6; cf., 9:15, 20); “I put on righteousness, and it clothed me” (29:14).

The friends’ speeches glimpse into a reason for the need to cultivate a righteous moral condition. Specifically, their exhortation for Job to shun evil and remain upright promotes the belief that a person should maintain a righteous or guiltless moral condition, as it is the key to initiating divine intervention that could improve the quality of life. We can observe this kind of belief in the speeches of Bildad and Eliphaz in Job 8 and 22. Bildad supports his advice for Job to become righteous and shun evil in 8:6–7 drawing on a notion of a divine restoration. He believes that the restoration will be granted to those who maintain a righteous moral condition and that Job could receive it as long as he cultivates such a moral condition: “if you are pure and upright, he [God] will rouse himself for you and restore to you your rightful place. Though your beginning was small, your latter days will very great.” In a similar vein, Eliphaz intends his harsh denunciation of Job’s purported sins in 22:2–11 to direct Job’s attention to a prospective divine restoration that he believes will visit Job when he stands righteous before God (22:23–26): “If you return to the Almighty, you will be restored, if you remove unrighteousness from your tents...then you will delight yourself in the Almighty, and lift up your face to God.” Eliphaz is confident that the divine restoration will come to Job in the form of divine support that will serve his needs: “You will pray to him [God], and he will hear you, and you will pay your vows” (22:27). Regarding how the divine is involved in the flourishing of the life of the righteous via vows, Newsom states: “Vows (v. 27b) were often made in the course of petitionary prayer, so that the fulfillment of a vow is another indication that prayer has been answered.”<sup>273</sup> Zophar shares a similar view with the other two friends, albeit with a slightly more nuanced perspective

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<sup>273</sup> Newsom, “Job,” 4:502–503.

on divine initiative. As with Bildad and Eliphaz, Zophar believes that a righteous moral condition will result in positive experiences: “If iniquity is in your hand, put it far away, and do not let wickedness reside in your tent. Surely then you will lift up your face without blemish; you will be secure, and will not fear.” (11:14–15). While Zophar’s logic in this statement rests on exact retribution, he is elusive about how the divine initiative actually functions within the retributive administration of one’s moral condition. Zophar’s acknowledgement of the divine initiative becomes clearer in his later speech when he discusses the fate of the wicked. At this point, he discloses his belief that the divine is responsible for executing retributive justice, especially within the current context, by inflicting punishment on the sinner: “They [the wicked] swallow down riches and vomit them up again; God [לַאֱלֹהִים] will cast them out of their bellies” (20:15; cf. 20:23, 20:29).

Similar to the friends, Job seems to have found desirable cultivating a righteous moral condition because he believed that this condition invoked a divine support that enriched his life. The narrator’s description of his past life in Prologue and Job’s own interpretation of his realities in the Dialogue bring us to this point. After briefly identifying Job’s provenance (“a man in the land of Uz,” 1:1a) the narrator in 1:1b offers a moral evaluation of Job that presumes a correlation between his righteous disposition and his desire to avoid any harmful outcomes stemming from a displeased God. Especially, the alignment of Job’s fear of God with his avoidance of evil suggests that Job may have been motivated to maintain a righteous lifestyle in order to receive divine favor. 1:1b reads: “The man [Job] was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil.” In the following two verses, the narrator describes how wealthy Job once was. A large number of children was born to him (“seven sons and three daughters,” 1:2), and it appears that he was able to support his family due to the great number of

livestock and servants he possessed: “He [Job] had seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred donkeys, and very many servants” (1:3). The structure of the portrayal of Job’s past life in these early verses, which intertwines his moral evaluation with the grandeur of his wealth, evokes a causal relationship between the two: Job’s righteous lifestyle earned him divine favor, manifested in the form of wealth. In fact, this causality between Job’s moral condition and his wealth aligns well with the conventional act-consequence nexus found in the wisdom literatures. As previously mentioned, this nexus presumes “a link between good results with good actions and between bad results with bad actions,” “with God himself taking the initiatives to assign the right result to each action of an individual.”<sup>274</sup> By evoking the causality between Job’s moral condition and his wealth, the early part of the book suggests that Job’s pursuit of a righteous lifestyle may have been motivated, at least in part, by his intent to stay close to a divine support, which leads human lives to flourish.

It is uncertain, however, whether the current layout of Job’s morality and his previous life in the Prologue confirms Satan’s accusation of an impure motive behind Job’s cultivation of a righteous moral condition: “Does Job fear God for nothing?” (1:9). Without Job’s own disclosure of his inner thoughts, the layout, as it stands, appears to presume that wealth was a natural or automatic consequence of his righteousness, taking a neutral stance toward any personal desires in Job for acquiring certain gains that could potentially shape his life in maintaining such a moral condition. If there is any clear correlation between his morality and its divine reward, it would reside within his perceptual realm—how he understands the way matters should work in the universe—but not within the realm of his acquisitive desires. As discussed in previous sections, Job considers the retributive moral order to be the ideal norm, according to which the divine

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<sup>274</sup> The section 2.1.1. of Chapter 1.

should govern the universe. This theological-moral perspective highlights the clear desirability of maintaining righteousness, as it is the only option that leads one to secure divine sanction for maintaining the welfare of his or her life; the other option would result in destruction caused by the divine. As a person who once upheld this view, Job may have been naturally led to maintain righteousness. It is the correct answer that those who fear God (1:1) and believe in the divine's retributive justice, as he did, must choose. In this sense of his theological-moral perspective, we can say that Job's righteousness is motivated by his intent to receive divine favor.

Our assumption about Job's underlying theological motivation in his intent to maintain his righteousness aligns with how he interprets his own realities in the Dialogue. In particular, his constant impulse to put on trial divine justice and his own innocence allows us to glimpse his expectation for more positive experiences that would have made his life flourish—the expectation that likely underlaid his intent to cultivate a guiltless moral condition in the past. As mentioned earlier in this chapter and in the beginning of this study, the theme of divine violence permeates Job's speech. He feels that God launched both mental and physical attack on him: “See he [God] will kill me; I have no hope” (13:15); “That night racks my bones and the pain that gnaws me takes no rest. With violence he [God] seizes my garment; he grasps [lit. holds tight of me] by the neck of my tunic” (30:17–18). When reading the book as a coherent whole, we can narrow down at least two realities that may have contributed to Job's perception of God as a ruthless attacker: the large and dramatic scale of his misfortune and its groundless nature. Of these two, his engagement with the latter brings us particularly to his expectation of divinely granted prosperity as the appropriate consequence for his piety. Job considers divine violence as groundless, since he does not believe that the divine treatment of him through misfortune is just. For this reason, he utters at one point the inexplicability of such treatment: “For he [God] crushes

me with a tempest, and multiplies my wounds without cause” (9:17). Besides giving a direct statement, he also engages with the groundless divine violence by framing his distrust in divine justice in the legal metaphor through which he claims his innocence and the divine’s failure to reflect it in God’s treatment of him. For example, his cautious and perturbed invocation for the divine’s appearance to address his lawsuit in Job 9:13–20 (e.g., “If I summoned him [God] and he answered me, I do not believe that he would listen to my voice,” 9:16) evolves into a bolder protestation, asserting that God wrongly searched for a sin that Job did not commit: “that you seek out my iniquity and search for my sin, although you know that I am not guilty, and there is no one to deliver out of your hand?” (10:6–7). Hartley says: “This section [10:7] reveals that Job is so deeply troubled that he is led to doubt that God is true to justice. Such doubt stands at the core of his trial.”<sup>275</sup> Later in his speech, Job’s frustration over the groundless divine violence in his own life impels him to pay close attention to the similar situation happening in the larger society—namely, the wicked prosper: “Yet he [God] prolongs the life of the mighty by his power; they rise up when they despair of life. He gives them security, and they are supported; his eyes are upon their ways” (24:22–23). An underlying discomfort in Job’s struggle with groundless divine violence may relate closely to his former adherence to retributive divine justice: Job protests because, although “righteous persons like him are to receive divine favor that entails delightful and positive experiences,”<sup>276</sup> he did not. He instead received the treatment that would be more appropriate for sinners. As with the Prologue, in the Dialogue we are not given specific details about whether or not his acquisitive desires to receive “delightful and

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<sup>275</sup> Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 185

<sup>276</sup> The sentence quoted from *I.I. Theological and Moral Basis of Job’s Suffering from Public Isolation: Divine Violence Without Ground* of this Chapter.

positive experiences” from the divine contributed to Job’s inclination to stay righteous. Yet, it becomes clear within his theological exploration of divine violence and its nature in this stage that he expected the divine to grant upon him those kinds of positive experiences rather than the harsh ones befallen him when he persisted a righteous lifestyle.

### **2.2.2. Public Recognition: Positive Human Experience Granted by the Divine**

Within the theological discourse of the Prologue and the Dialogue concerning the desirability of maintaining a righteous moral condition, public recognition is one of the positive human experiences that the divine grants to those identified as righteous.

For Job, the positive sense of public recognition is clear because it attests both to his honor as a source of status, which proves his worth, and to the existential value of his generous lifestyle. We previously discussed his lingering attention to his former status, expressed in certain language (e.g., כבוד [honor], קשת [bow]) and images (e.g., wild beast, chief, king) in Job 29, which signals how much he yearns for it. We also discussed how Job elicits contentment from the public’s praise for his benevolence in the same chapter (“I shall die in my nest, and I shall multiply my days like the phoenix,” 29:18). Job’s attention and reaction to these outcomes that public recognition once brought to him in this way reveal its positive nature in his perceptual realm.

The structure of Job 29, which frames his description of his social life within the context of the divine administration, suggests that Job understands the public recognition he received as something sanctioned by God. We can infer this from his placement of God’s oversight at the beginning of his recollections. Job recalls his previous days as ones when “God watched over” him, when “his [God’s] lamp shone over” his head, when he [Job] “walked through life by his



[God's] light," when "the friendship of God was upon" his tent, and when "the Almighty was still with" him (29:2–5). This theological reflection implies that he presently understands his glorious days as those when God appropriately administered his entire life. As Habel points out regarding the lamp and the light Job mentions in 29:3, the divine administration operated in a way that brought him blessing and protection.<sup>277</sup> Job places divine administration before his reconstructed social world, likely because he assumes a kind of causality, or at least a close relationship, between them: namely, he believes that the divine sanctioned his former glorious life—marked by high status and wealth—provided he maintained a righteous moral condition.

Within Job's theological-moral framework, which he based in retributive divine justice before his sudden misfortune, divinely sanctioned public recognition like the one that Job received is an unequivocal sign for one's righteous moral condition. One salient aspect of Job's speech that sheds light on this theological-moral configuration of his public recognition is his complaint against divine mistreatment, as seen in 10:5–7, where he portrays his misfortune as conflicting with his moral condition: "Are your days like the days of mortals, or your years like human years, that you seek out my iniquity and search for my sin, although you know that I am not guilty, and there is no one to deliver out of your hand." As we said previously, Job here complains against God because he believes that righteousness never left him, but he somehow did not receive a due treatment from the divine. From Job's theological-moral perspective, it becomes apparent that he was wrongly subjected to the treatment of a sinner and that God should have granted him more positive experiences, such as public recognition, in accordance with his righteousness.

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<sup>277</sup> Habel, *The Book of Job*, 409; Newsom also finds "God's protective presence" in Job's theological reflection at this stage. Newsom, "Job," 4:537.

Job's use of קִדְּוָה (righteousness) in 29:14 ("I put on righteousness, and it clothed me") also suggests that he correlates his righteous moral condition with his public recognition given as a divine reward in the past. As mentioned previously, his use of this term in the earlier part of his speech comprises a forensic context.<sup>278</sup> Embedded and functioning within his broader effort to deploy a legal contention, his use of קִדְּוָה in his earlier speech, such as in 9:15 and 13:18, denotes his integrity or innocence in relation to the recent calamities that he believes God has wrongly brought upon him.<sup>279</sup>

Job 29 marks a shift in focus as Job reflects on his glorious past. With this change, the God he has been contending with is replaced by the God who used to administer the world as it should be, a theological viewpoint that persists until Job resumes his contention in the following chapter. Situated within this shift in his speech, Job's use of קִדְּוָה (righteousness) in 29:14 also takes on a connotation more fitting for his current focus on his past social world. The specific sense that the immediate context ascribes to קִדְּוָה is most likely social, not forensic, as his rationale for asserting this moral condition in this chapter is his past interactions with various members of his community. Job 29:12 clarifies the content of these interactions that Job claims ascribed to him righteousness. It is his generous provision for the underprivileged populace: "because I delivered the poor who cried, and the orphan who had no helper." He repeats this point after identifying his righteous condition: "I was eyes to the blind, and the feet to the lame. I was a father to the needy, and I championed the cause of the stranger" (29:15–16). Noting on the social context that frames Job's use of the term, קִדְּוָה, in 29:14, Clines states: "Job's righteousness

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<sup>278</sup> For previous discussions about the legal metaphor, see 1. Justification of This Study in Introduction and 1.1. Theological-Moral Basis of this chapter.

<sup>279</sup> "Though I am innocent (קִדְּוָה), I cannot answer him..." (9:15); "...I know that I shall be vindicated (13:18)"(קִדְּוָה).

(צדק) is not, as so often in the book, his own integrity, which is subject to perpetual challenge (as צדק or צדקה in 6:29; 27:6; 31:6), but rather his benevolent acts toward the underprivileged.”<sup>280</sup> Job’s derivation of his righteous moral condition from his benevolent social interactions in Job 29 does not digress from a broader moral perspective shared by his friends and himself in his earlier speech and reiterated by himself in his later speech in Job 31. All concur in a moral evaluation based on one’s treatment of the needy: if this person fails to properly respond to the needs of others, he/she is considered evil; the person is considered righteous when he/she properly responds to their needs. Zophar and Eliphaz allude to this moral perspective in 20:19 and 22:5. In these places, they use moral terms, רשע (the wicked, 20:5, 29), רע (the wickedness, 22:5a), עון (iniquity, 22:5b), to refer to the ones who fail to take care of the needy: “For they [the wicked] have crushed and abandoned the poor, they have seized a house that they did not build” (25:9); “Is not your wickedness great? There is no end to your iniquities. For you have exacted pledges from your family for no reason, and stripped the naked of their clothing” (22:5–6).

Job shares a similar view on evil with Zophar and Eliphaz. A lengthy catalogue of those considered sinful (אטא, 24:19) and wicked (עולה, 24:20) his lists in Job 24 finds the root of their moral conditions from their mistreatment of the underprivileged. Those fallen into this category include: the ones who “drive away the donkey of the orphan” (24:3a); the ones who “take the widow’s ox for a pledge” (24:3b); the ones “who thrust the needy off the road” (24:4a); the ones who “snatch the orphan child from the breast” (24:9a); the ones who “take as a pledge the infant of the poor” (24:9b); and the ones who “do not do good to the widow” (24:21). Unlike these people, Job in Job 31 self-identifies as guiltless and undeserving of the divine violence that he believes is reserved for the sinners (“Oh, that I had one to hear me. Here is my signature. Let

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<sup>280</sup> Clines, *Job 21–37*, 989.

Shaddai answer me,” 31:35). In arguing this, he resumes the rationale he used to derive his righteous moral condition in Job 29, basing it in his support and protection of the underprivileged, those who include slaves (31:13), the poor (31:16a, 19), the widow (31:16b), the orphan (31:17), and the stranger (31:32).

All these instances of moral evaluation based on social interactions among the human interlocutors bring us to at least two assumptions that Job has in mind when using צדק in 29:14—the assumptions that shed light on how he relates public recognition with divine validation of his righteous moral condition. On one hand, he views the socially derived righteousness, which he attributes to himself, as fitting for his depiction of his past life, during which divine administration brought him public recognition and established his status. Job’s articulation of this moral condition particularly aligns with his implied theological assertion that God should execute retributive justice in administering human lives. In particular, his moral emphasis serves in his theological rhetoric as a compelling reason for the divine to grant him pleasant experiences in accordance with his righteousness, such as the public recognition he once enjoyed. On the other hand, this idealized theological-moral world Job reconstructs in this chapter provides a vantage point for his ongoing contention with God. In specific, it reinforces his integrity by proving how righteous he was, questioning justness of the divine’s decision to let calamities befall him. Job’s choice to place his recollections of his past glorious days between his earlier complaint against divine violence (e.g., “As God lives, who has taken my right, and Shaddai, who has made my soul bitter,” 27:2) and his similar complaint later in his speech (e.g., “Because God has loosed my bowstring and humbled me, they have cast off restraint in my presence” 30:11) may reflect his intent to leverage the rhetorical advantage of presenting specific evidence of his righteous moral condition, gleaned from his past social interactions that affirmed his high

honor and status—the evidence that strengthens his standpoint that God should have not withdrawn his sanction of positive public recognition from him.

### **2.2.3. Three-Fold Chain between Righteousness, Divine Validation, and Positive Human Experiences: Public Recognition Represents Job’s Theological-Moral Worth**

My discussion has so far revealed a threefold chain between a person’s righteous moral state, its divine validation, and positive human experiences. These components are organically connected to one another; a person’s righteous moral condition that his/her benevolent acts toward the needy establish prompts to God to confer positive human experiences on that person. As discussed above, in the Dialogue all human characters consider an ideal type of human identity as consisting in the organic interrelations of these components. Job’s pursuance of benevolent acts toward the underclass populace reflects his consideration of these acts as the pivot of his life. They establish his righteous moral condition and trigger a divine response to cause him to flourish in life. The friends’ exhortation to Job and their theological-moral interpretation of his plight also presume that the righteous moral condition earned from benevolent acts is what a person must aim to achieve, because they construe that such a moral condition is the key to acquiring divinely granted flourishing or protection of their life.

The organic interrelations between a person’s righteous moral state, its divine validation, and positive human experiences presume that one component always comes along with others. And this means to both the friends and Job that they can predict which component will follow or diagnose which component is antecedent by looking at one or two of these components. Our earlier discussion about how the human interlocutors find desirability of a righteous moral condition from its effect of triggering divine favor brings us to this point. Assuming that Job’s

recent experience of calamities relates to his guilt, the three friends urge him to admit his sins, stay righteous, and turn to God in chapters 8, 11, and 22. Their exhortation is based on their belief in divine retributive justice, which operates within the neat relationship among the three components. In particular, they assume that righteousness always pairs with a divine support manifested through positive human experiences. This explains how they can predict and affirm a bright future guaranteed by the divine in their exhortation to stay righteous: “If you are pure and upright surely then he [God] will rouse himself for you and restore to your rightful place (8:8); “If iniquity is in your hand, put it far away... Surely then you will lift up your face without blemish you will be secure, and will not fear” (11:14–15); “If you return to the Almighty, you will be restored, if you remove unrighteousness from your tents... You will pray to him [God], and he will hear you, and you will pay your vows” (22:23–27).

Job’s theological interpretation of his past social world in Job 29 shares the similar viewpoint with his friends. As we said, he derives the divine administration that brought him divine blessing and protection (“lamp” and “light,” 29:3) in the form of high honor and status (“They [people] listened to me, and waited, and kept silence for my counsel,” 29:21) from his cultivation of a righteous moral state (“I put on righteousness, and it clothed me,” 29:14). His speech in Job 29 in this way diagnoses his past glorious days based on the correlation between the three components mentioned above. Although Job no longer views that God properly governs the human world by correctly applying these components, his persistent complaint against God’s failed execution of retributive justice (e.g., “though I am blameless, he [God] would prove me perverse,” 9:20) indicates that he still believes that the world order *should* be based on the ideal operation of these components.

The organic interrelations between a person's righteous moral state, its divine validation, and positive human experiences sheds light on what Job actually perceives from public recognition at the theological level. It is likely that the public attitudes toward him function to him as an index to estimate a divine evaluation of his moral condition as well as the worth of his life. If he receives a good degree of public recognition and thus attains high honor and status, it indicates that God validated his righteous moral condition. By contrast, if he loses public recognition and thus is put to shame and loses his status, it signals that God invalidated his righteous moral condition because the divine deems him evil or sinful. Moreover, the notion of divine validation interprets God as a supporter of the existential value of his life, since it presumes that God has acknowledged his intention to live righteously by supporting the needy and agreed with the value in such a lifestyle. While the people confirm the meaningfulness of his lifestyle by praising his generosity and testifying to his good service, God does so by letting people establish his honor and status by giving recognition to him. As an individual, whose perspective is under the constant influence of the notion of the threefold chain between righteousness, divine validation, and positive human experiences, Job must desire acquiring positive public recognition. It represents how worthy he is theologically and morally and provides a reason why he exists before the people and God.

### **3. Meaning of Public Isolation: Denial of Personal, Social, and Theological Worth**

The explored meanings of Job's public recognition shed light on the painful nature of his public isolation at social and theological levels. The social level relates to his worth and the value of his life as perceived by himself and others. As a man who considers how others view

him as integral to his identity—especially the part embodied by his social status, often believed to represent a man’s worth in honor and shame cultures—Job must have perceived the public’s withdrawal of recognition as a critical blow to his identity and status. This equates to dishonor or shame that disparages his personal and social values, making him feel as if it is very difficult to present his worth to himself and others. Moreover, his public isolation significantly debases all the effort he put into providing necessary aids for the underprivileged populace. He likely perceived this negative implication, since the positive public reaction to his function as their beneficiary and guardian would have been one of the main sources that made his generous lifestyle meaningful in his own eyes.

The theological level of the pain of Job’s public isolation relates to divine validation issues. His public isolation, with its obviously negative connotations at the social level, indicates that God has invalidated his righteous moral condition, which he worked hard to achieve by supporting the needy throughout his life. Job knows this based on his conceived moral order of cosmos that presumes such kind of human experience as the one that God grants upon the guilty or sinners who failed to respond to the needs of others. This theological-moral meaning of Job’s public isolation must have been painful to him, for it segregates his present identity from its ideal type established and sustained by a righteous moral condition. His loss of public recognition classes him among those whose presence is contemptible due to their failure to cultivate and preserve a righteous moral state. What makes this degradation of his value even more excruciating is the principal agent who makes a judgement about the matter. The agent is God, whose judgement is traditionally deemed infallible and indisputable. Although Job no longer considers the operation of divine governance in such a fashion, nevertheless, the weight and significance of God’s judgement still greatly affect his mental and intellectual sphere; as



discussed in the section 1.1. of this chapter, his public isolation provoked him into intellectually grappling with the divine judgement that did not consider his righteous moral state and subsequently that allowed unmerited plight to devastate his entire life.

There is an additional force that seems to have driven the pain of public isolation to its extreme for Job, both socially and theologically. It is its unmerited nature: Job cannot find any fault in himself in his experience of all the negative impacts his loss of public recognition imposes on his personal, social, and theological values. He believes in his intact righteous moral condition, considers his public isolation underserving, and senses pure injustice from his reality. In this respect, it is not surprising to see that Job incorporates this reality into his more central intellectual struggle with the issue of divine justice. For him, his public isolation represents the moral order of universe that does not work as it should. And now that he interprets God as being in charge of this moral order, he takes his ruined social relations as compelling evidence to support his view of divine injustice.

## CHAPTER 4. Job's Honor Defense

It is clear from Job's speech that he engages theologically with the idea that the moral order of the universe does not operate as he had expected. As discussed in the previous chapter, he perceives unjust divine violence in his reality, realizing that God failed to correctly administer the moral order by treating him as a sinner despite his righteousness. We have also discussed that Job resists this perceived divine injustice. His attempt to put both God and himself in a hypothetical trial, through which he asserts his innocence, demonstrates his strong will to confront the unjust treatment he believes is the responsibility of the divine. As such, Job's theological concern is dominant in his speech, functioning as a crucial driving force that develops and shapes his arguments.

Job's underlying concern with public recognition suggests that his desire for honor also underlies and influences his speech. In the previous chapter, we discussed how his status-driven impulse influenced the way he reconstructs an idealized social world of his past, shedding light on the painful nature of his public isolation.

While Job's concern for honor explains the way he perceives his present social reality, validating it as another driving force of his speech may require further investigation into his broader rhetoric, particularly whether it reflects a key characteristic of honor and shame cultures: the need to protect honor. In honor and shame cultures, a person, particularly a male, must continuously strive to protect and preserve his honor, as it is considered a "limited commodity"<sup>281</sup> that is gained at the expense of another's failure. Noting this characteristic,

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<sup>281</sup> I borrow this term from Nicholas' overview of the agonistic nature of honor, which numerous scholars consider distinct. Nicholas, "Honor and Shame in the Deuteronomic Covenant and the Deuteromistic Presentation of

Gilmore refers to the effort to protect honor as a “zero-sum contest,” as discussed in section 4 of chapter 2. We also explored how this agonistic aspect of honor places men in a constant test of their ability to preserve it: when their honor is challenged or threatened, their ability to respond effectively becomes a critical criterion for others to bestow honor upon them.<sup>282</sup> If Job truly cares about his honor and his worth it represents, he must defend it against anything that could confirm or perpetuate the shame or dishonor initiated by his public isolation, thereby avoiding the complete denial of his own worth.

Considering Job’s general attitude toward his friends provides an initial glimpse into whether and how his concern for honor affects and shapes his speech, leading it to take on a defensive or resistive tone. Two aspects of his speech confirm this impression. First, his response to the friends’ counsel, which involves strong resistance to them, resembles the typical way a man responds to the challenge to his honor in honor and shame cultures. Responses to the challenging of one’s honor regularly entail “a display of scorn, disdain, and contempt.”<sup>283</sup> When Job speaks to the friends he usually takes a posture of aggression, distrust, and rejection that impede him from finding any worth in their counsels. For instance, the friends’ exhortation to turn to God, which intends to emancipate Job from his deep grief in the first cycle (e.g., “I would seek God...He will deliver you from six troubles...” 5:8–27), never draws any positive response from him.<sup>284</sup> He merely responds with strong aversion: “my companions are treacherous...”

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the Davidic Covenant” 21–22; For more ideas about the agonistic nature of honor, see Muenchow, “Dust and Dirt in Job 42:6,” 599–604; Olyan, “Honor, Shame, and Covenant Relations in Ancient Israel and Its Environment,” 204.

<sup>282</sup> 4.4. Status, Competition, Criteria for Public Validation of Honor of Chapter 2.

<sup>283</sup> “A successful response [to honor challenge] usually entails a display of scorn, disdain, and contempt, sometimes accompanied by physical violence.” See the section 4.3 of Chapter 2.

<sup>284</sup> Lance Hawley, “The Rhetoric of Condemnation in the Book of Job,” *JBL* 139, no. 3 (2020): 466–67; W.A. Irwin, “An Examination of Progress of Thought in the Dialogue of Job,” *The Journal of Religion* 13, no.2

(6:15); “You would even cast lots over...your friend” (6:27). And his aversion toward the friends’ counsel continues through the second and the third cycles of his speech: “Have windy words no limit?” (16:3); “How then will you comfort me with empty nothings? There is nothing left of your answers but falsehood” (21:34).

Second, the friends’ counsel never relieves his agitation over his public isolation. Instead, Job’s complaint about public isolation continues to constitute his oppositional rhetoric against the friends’ counsel, as if their words are not helpful in dealing with, or even perpetuate, the dishonor his public isolation has brought upon him. For example, the friends’ well-intended exhortation to put hope in the future in the first cycle (“He [God] will deliver you from six troubles; in seven no harm shall touch you,” 5:19; cf., 5:20–26; 8:20–22; 11:15–19) backfires in the second cycle and provokes Job into deploring that he no longer has any hope: “where then is my hope? Who will see my hope?” (17:15). In complaining so, one of the images he draws on is the reality of his public isolation: “He [God] has made me a byword of the people and I am one before whom people spit” (17:6). He responds to the friends here as if their counsels continue to evoke the distress of his public isolation instead of resolving it. Moreover, he remains drawn to the painful reality of his loss of public recognition until the end of his speech: “They [the social outcasts] abhor me, they keep aloof from me” (30:10a); “...my nobility is pursued as by the wind” (30:15a).

If Job’s general attitude toward his friends is indeed influenced by his concern for honor, what ideas in their counsel have contributed to his resistive stance against them, particularly regarding the dishonor his public isolation initiated? If a perceived challenge to his honor has

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(Apr., 1933): 152–54; Clines, *Job 1–20*, 132; cf., For the use of retribution to proclaim God’s benevolence, see Jož Krašovec, “Is There a Doctrine of “Collective Retribution” in the Hebrew Bible?”, *Hebrew Union College Annual* 65 (1994): 49.

shaped Job’s speech, in what specific ways does this occur? My subsequent discussions in this chapter seek to answer these questions. Assuming that Job’s impulse to take proper action to restore his imperiled honor and status serves as a noticeable driving force of his hostile rhetoric against the friends’ speech, I will first look for the reason why their counsels challenge Job’s honor and status. This stage will discuss the friends’ theological-moral rhetoric in light of the threefold chain between a person’s righteous moral state, its divine validation, and positive human experiences. I will propose two key challenges their counsels pose to Job’s need to protect his honor and status. First, their rhetoric assumes his inevitable sin based on his situation and mode of speech. Second, his sin carries a social implication that he deserves dishonor/shame. The next stage of my discussion will examine how Job constructs his speech upon his need to deal with this challenge. I will suggest that Job’s use of legal metaphors and memory has been partly motivated by such a need due to their rhetorical benefits in repelling the two challenges from the friends’ counsel.

### **1. The Challenge of the Friends’ Rhetoric: Job Must be a Sinner and Deserves Shame**

Job’s friends offer him various ideas, which they wish would “console (נוד)” and “comfort (נחם)” their deeply grieved colleague (2:11). They intend these ideas to channel his internal turmoil (רגז, 3:26) into a hope for his future restoration (5:19–26; 8:20–22; 11:15–19; 22:21–30). Despite their good intentions, their counsel has a critical flaw in soothing Job’s distress caused and complicated by his public isolation. Their theological-moral viewpoint, embedded in their rhetoric, interprets his present situation and manner of speaking as evidence of his guilt, as will be discussed in the following section, and this perpetuates the dishonor caused

by his public isolation. Job recognizes the negative social implications of sin because, within his understanding of divine validation of one's moral condition, sin cannot resolve the dishonor he is currently experiencing. As discussed in the previous chapter, Job's theological-moral perception links a righteous moral condition with its divine validation and the divine reward of positive experiences. Within this threefold chain, righteousness aligns with honor, whereas sin does not find its place. Following the implied logic of this chain, sin rather opens the door to receiving negative experiences as divine punishment. As mentioned, although Job no longer believes in the seamless operation of this chain, he nevertheless considers it as a standard for how the divine should govern the universe. Job 24:18–25 is one good place where we can observe this perception of Job. After delineating the reality where divine justice does not exert its force as it should, especially against the wicked, Job at this stage provides a conventional depiction of the fate of the wicked, which seems to reflect his “optative” purpose to call for divine justice, as Newsom argues.<sup>285</sup> This depiction presumes that the sinners are destined to receive negative experiences as divine punishment, such as their portion being cursed in the land (24:18) or becoming insignificant (24:24). One image Job incorporates in this depiction particularly alludes to the sin that brings one to the threshold of dishonor. Using the metaphor of death framed in the images of the womb and the worm, Job portrays the fate of sinners as one that will be completely forgotten in the memories of people: “The womb forgets them; the worm finds them sweet; they are no longer remembered; so wickedness is broken like a tree” (24:20). Given that obtaining public recognition by impressing others with the ability to handle situations and tasks is a

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<sup>285</sup> By “optative,” I follow Newsom's point that Job at this stage demands that “his belief in God's justice not turn out to be a lie.” Newsom, “Job,” 4:512. Because its incongruity with Job's other speech, especially regarding divine justice, some interpreters attribute this portion to one of the friends (Clines) or to an independent speaker (Habel). Clines, *Job 21–37*, 667; Habel, *Book of Job*, 357.

significant element in preserving honor,<sup>286</sup> being forgotten by the public, as described in this verse, positions one in opposition to honor. This equates to one's worth being disapproved of by the public—namely, a dishonoring experience.

The perception that views sin as a door to receiving negative experiences is not merely Job's own imagination; his friends also affirm this, particularly in chapters 15, 18, and 20, where they elaborate on the fate of the wicked. Among the various examples they cite to argue for retributive divine justice that will bring punishment to sinners, the one Bildad offers in 18:17 features a similar theme that Job uses to demonstrate the proximity of the sinner to a dishonoring experience. As part of his continued claim about the bad consequences awaiting sinners, Bildad argues that their existence will be completely forgotten: "Their memory perishes from the earth, and they have no name in the street." The expression of the perished memory about the sinner evokes the type of dishonor Job alludes to in 24:20, as this forgotten condition equates to the loss of public recognition, leading to a loss of honor.

In the theological-moral viewpoint employed by the friends in their rhetoric, Job is labeled as sinful—a label he cannot accept, not only for the sake of his innocence but also for the sake of his honor. The label of sinner justifies the dishonor that his public isolation has brought upon him, and accepting their counsel could permanently inscribe this dishonorable state in him. This dilemma likely plays a role in Job's persistent resistance to his friends' counsel.

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<sup>286</sup> For the detailed discussion about this aspect of honor, see 2.4. Status, Competition, Criteria for Public Validation of Honor.

## 1.1. Theological-Moral Interpretation of Job’s Misfortune and Moral Fallibility of Human Beings Prove His Sins

As with Job, the friends believe that retributive justice should be the norm for divine governance of the universe. Unlike Job, who now distrusts the divine’s proper implementation of this norm, however, they remain convinced of it. In the previous section, we discussed how the friends adhere to the threefold chain around the sinner, which they construct based on the notion of retributive divine justice. This divergence is where the problem of Job’s honor begins: their rhetoric, based on retributive divine justice, interprets his plight as divine punishment for his presumed sin.<sup>287</sup> As mentioned, in the theological-moral perception of Job, the sinful condition is readily associated with shame and the loss of social status, and Job cannot accept this for the sake of his honor, as it would confirm and perpetuate the dishonor caused by his public isolation.

We can find in the Dialogue some specific instances where they directly or indirectly reveal their inference of Job’s moral error or guilt from his misfortunes. For example, in 5:17 Eliphaz views Job’s recent experience of calamities as divine reproof (יָכַח) for the purpose of discipline (מוֹסֵר): “How happy is the one whom God reproves; therefore do not despise the discipline of the Almighty.” Given that the pedagogical usage of יָכַח and מוֹסֵר often finds the

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<sup>287</sup> This divergence relates to what each party places more weight on—Job on his own experience and the friends on their theology. For the constant influence of Job’s experience on the way he perceives his reality, see Clines, *Job 21–37*, 1011–1012; Pechansky, *The Betrayal of God*, 47, 51; Habel, *The Book of Job*, 67–68; Leo G. Perdue, *Wisdom in Revolt* (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1991), 151; Newsom, “Job,” 4:397, 417; Seow, *Job 1–21: Interpretation and Commentary*, 88. For the centrality of theology in the friends’ speech, see Newsom, “Job,” 4:498–504; Clines, *Job 21–37*, 555–57; Norman Whybray, *Job* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 104; J. Gerald Janzen, *Job*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), 161–62; Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job*, 327; Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 325–26; Habel, *The Book of Job*, 334–35. As for more discussions about their opposite ways to handling realities, see Newsom, “Job,” 4:419; Newsom, *The Book of Job*, 116, 119, 131, 153; Gordis, *The Book of Job*, xxxii; Perdue, *Wisdom in Revolt*, 151; Pedersen, *Israel: Its Life and Culture*, 370–371; Von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, 210, 218–221; Janzen, *Job*, 118, 128; Whybray, *Job*, 81–83, 89–90; Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 242, 281; Habel, *The Book of Job*, 251; Edwin M. Good, *In Turns of Tempest: A Reading of Job* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990), 282; Edward Greenstein, *Job: A New Translation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2019), 76.



necessity of discipline in the moral transgressions of a learner, such as iniquity (עוֹה, 2 Sam 7:14; עוֹן, Ps 38:4, 18), apostasy (משֻׁבָּה, Jer 2:19), sin (חַטָּאָה, Ps 38:3, 18), forsaking the right way (לְעֹזֵב אֶרֶץ, Prov 15:10), and folly (אוֹלָה, Prov 22:15), Eliphaz in the present text renders Job's experience as God's benevolent correction to fix Job's moral error.<sup>288</sup> Eliphaz continues this view in Job 22. Here he directly links the notion of divine chastisement with Job's sins, exhorting him to submit to God: "For you have exacted pledges from your family...therefore snares are around you and sudden terror overwhelm you..." (22:6–11); "Agree with God and be at peace; in this way good will come to you... If you return to the Almighty, you will be restored..." (22:21–23). Zophar holds a similar view to Eliphaz. Responding to Job's complaint about God's obsession with his guilts (10:6), Zophar asserts in 11:6 that God in fact "exact[s] of you less than your guilt deserves." Similar to Eliphaz, Zophar in this statement elicits from Job's experience a notion of a divine punishment for his previous misdeeds that need to be corrected or judged.<sup>289</sup> As Newsom and Pope similarly observe, the friends' belief in the retributive divine justice makes them inevitably associate his miserable experience with God's punishment for Job's guilt. This explains their continuous persuasion of Job to submit to God, based on the idea of divine punishment. With regard to Zophar's attitude toward Job in 11:6,<sup>290</sup> Newsom thus puts it, "Because God governs wisely and with skill, Job's acute suffering can only be interpreted as

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<sup>288</sup> G. Mayer, "יָכַח," *TDOT* 6:69. The usage of מוֹסֵר is similar to that of יָכַח. Fox rightly points out in his analysis of מוֹסֵר that its use in Proverbs, Ben Sira and Job readily refers to "a lesson intended to correct a moral fault." Michael Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*, AB 18A (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2000), 34–35.

<sup>289</sup> Newsom, "Job," 4:420; Clines, *Job 1–20*, 261.

<sup>290</sup> Job 11:6 says: "And that he would tell you the secrets of wisdom. For wisdom is many-sided. Know then that God exacts of you less than your guilt deserves."

punishment for his guilt.”<sup>291</sup> Concerning Bildad’s concluding remarks in 18:21,<sup>292</sup> Pope similarly states, “what has happened to Job is irrefutable proof that he is an evil and godless man.”<sup>293</sup>

What makes the friends’ theological-moral interpretation of Job’s sinfulness impenetrable to his potential objection to it is the configuration of the divine-human relationship that Eliphaz and Bildad use in responding to his complaint about divine injustice. This configuration renders all human beings morally incomplete, and, when taken to diagnose Job’s own moral condition, it readily implicates him on the side of the sinner. Of three occasions for their use of this theological-moral framework, Eliphaz’s question, “Can mortals be righteous before God?” (4:17), aptly captures its radical construction of human beings’ moral inferiority (cf., 15:14; 25:4). If we follow the modern scholars’ general translation of the preposition “מִן (מִן)” in “מֵאֵלֹהִים” as referring to a contextual or rhetorical impossibility (thus translated “before,” “as against,” or “in the presence of”),<sup>294</sup> Eliphaz points to human beings’ insolvable problem about their moral impurity that emerges when they relate themselves to God. He furthers this point in the following verses by linking human beings’ moral inferiority with their mortality: “Between morning and evening they are destroyed; they perish forever without any regarding it” (4:20). A salient effect of this linkage is that it closes off from imagining the complete moral integrity on the part of human beings. As Newsom rightly points out, humanness as a source of their moral

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<sup>291</sup> Newsom, “Job,” 4:420; cf., Clines, *Job 1–20*, 261.

<sup>292</sup> 18:21 writes: “Surely such are the dwellings of the ungodly, such is the place of those who do not know God.”

<sup>293</sup> Pope, *Job*, 137.

<sup>294</sup> Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job*, 52; Gordis, *The Book of Job*, 50; Clines, *Job 1–20*, 132; Seow, *Job 1–21*, 403–404; Newsom, *The Book of Job*, 140. These scholars thus chose this translation over “more than,” which refers to a simple comparison to discover who’s superior in moral terms. Translations that take “more than” include Vulg, Targ, KJV, ASV, TNIV, and NEB.

impurity is something that they can never overcome. Newsom thus states: “in the speeches of Eliphaz and Bildad, the notion of divine disgust at human impurity and depravity becomes an almost philosophical teaching on anthropology.”<sup>295</sup> Eliphaz and Bildad reiterate the inevitable moral inferiority of human beings later in their speech. As with 4:20, they use the language of mortality to get at this point in 15:14, 16 and 25:4, 6: e.g., “What are mortals, that they can be clean? Or those born of woman, that they can be righteous?” (15:14).

The friends’ radical construction of human beings’ moral inferiority would not pose a serious challenge to Job’s need to protect his honor if it existed as a standalone argument. As mentioned in Section 1.1 of Chapter 3, Job agrees with its basic idea that humans cannot achieve complete moral integrity compared to the divine: “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? No one can” (14:4). What makes this argument a grave problem for Job’s honor is the broader context that frames it. The friends already presume that Job is sinful, and when this argument is laid out in that context, it confirms their verdict. Within the overall logic of the friends’ theological-moral rhetoric, Job must be a sinner, as it renders his present plight an unavoidable outcome of his inclination to sin, which provoked him into mistreating those around him and thereby triggered divine punishment.

## **1.2. Job’s Rebellious Mode of Speech Proves His Sins**

Besides its implicit theological-moral diagnosis of Job’s sins, the counsel of the friends finds fault in the way he speaks about the divine, posing another challenge to his need to protect

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<sup>295</sup> Newsom, *The Book of Job*, 142; Clines similarly comments on Eliphaz’s question in 4:17 that he has offered Job “an apparently unequivocal divine statement that denies both the possibility of human beings’ actual righteousness when judged from God’s perspective and the reasonableness of expecting from God a public certification of unqualified righteousness.” Clines, *Job 1–20*, 133.

his honor. This problem arises from the underlying logic of their counsel that emphasizes compliant submission to God. When viewed through this logic, Job's willful denial of divine justice places him close to the side of the wicked, who deserve divine punishment comparable to what he has actually experienced, subsequently confirming the dishonor caused by his public isolation.

The friends' emphasis on compliant submission stands out in the first speech cycle, especially when they exhort Job to seek help from God, as part of their original mission to console him ("they met together to go and console and comfort him," 2:11). For example, Eliphaz's belief in divine restoration, as laid out in 5:17–27 (e.g., "For he [God] wounds, but he binds up; he strikes, but his hands heal," 5:18), makes him trust that seeking God is worthwhile, as he appeals to Job in the earlier part of his speech: "As for me, I would seek God, and to God I would commit my cause" (5:8). As Newsom observes, Eliphaz at this stage concedes to Job's upright disposition, assuming that "Job knows he is a person of piety and integrity"<sup>296</sup>: "Is not your fear of God your confidence, and the integrity of your ways your hope?" (4:6). This concession does not mean, however, that Eliphaz believes in Job's moral integrity, which would absolve him of any responsibility for his recent misfortune. As mentioned previously, he presumes Job's moral error and its relevance to the misfortune, viewing it as divine chastisement: "How happy is the one whom God reproves; therefore do not despise the discipline of Shaddai" (5:17). This theological-moral interpretation of Job's plight as divine punishment sheds light on an implicit call for Job's repentance, jointly created by Eliphaz's appeal to Job's integrity and his exhortation to seek God. Throughout his first speech, Eliphaz is insinuating that, if Job is truly a man of piety and integrity, he must acknowledge the divine's decision to send

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<sup>296</sup> Newsom, "Job," 4:376.

punishment, repent for his sins, and implore God for restoration. Later, in Job 22, Eliphaz makes this point more explicit by listing Job's specific sins (e.g., mistreatment of family, the weary, the hungry, the widow, the orphans in 22:6–9) and urging him to turn away from evil (“if you remove unrighteousness from your tents,” 22:23) so that the divine may restore him (“you will be restored,” 22:23). The speeches of Bildad and Zophar in the first cycle similarly allude to compliant submission to God, as seen in Eliphaz's speech. They both demand that Job seek God, based on their belief that this would lead to his recovery. Bildad states: “If you will seek God, and make supplication to Shaddai... Though your beginning was small, your latter days will be very great” (8:5–7). By referring to gestures traditionally used to call for divine attention in prayer (“you will stretch out your hand towards him,” 11:13),<sup>297</sup> Zophar also urges Job to implore God for help, arguing that this would lead to divine restoration of his life (e.g., “you will be secure, and will not fear,” 11:15; c.f., 11:15–19). As with Eliphaz, Zophar's exhortation contains an implicit call for Job's repentance. In particular, his counsel to put aside sin (עוֹלָה, אֵוֶן) in 11:4 (“if iniquity [אֵוֶן] is in your hand, put it far away, and do not let wickedness [עוֹלָה] reside in your tents”) may be understood as this call, as he believes that Job's plight is the divine punishment for his guilt, as discussed in the previous section (“God exacts of you less than your guilt deserves,” 11:6).

The friends consider compliant submission to God important not only because, as discussed, they believe that it serves their original purpose of consoling their grieved friend by inspiring him with a hope for restoration but also because they consider such an attitude as the correct way for all human beings to relate themselves with God. Their latter view relates particularly to their trust in the unquestionable justice with which the divine governs the

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<sup>297</sup> Newsom, “Job,” 4:421.

universe. This trust justifies their emphasis on compliant submission to God, assuming that his decisions are always right and trustworthy. Unlike Job, who claims that the divine afflicts the righteous like him randomly and without reason (“For he [God]...multiplies my wounds without cause,” 9:14), they trust that there always is a reason for how matters turn out, as God seamlessly governs the universe according to retributive justice. As Newsom points out, the fate of the wicked presented by the friends in the second speech cycle exhibits “the nature of the world” that they consider represents the correct operation of divine governance and that effectively counters Job’s claim about divine’s destruction of “just governance” in Job 12 (e.g., “He [God] leads counselors away stripped, and makes fools of judges” 12:17).<sup>298</sup>

The friends’ view on compliant submission to God also relates to their perspective on the fundamental difference between humans and God. As discussed in the previous section, the friends believe that an unbridgeable gap exists between humans and God in terms of morality. The former can never overcome their moral inferiority compared to the latter, as reflected in the question, “What are mortals, that they can be clean?” (15:14), which finds human mortality as a source of moral impurity. Viewing this kind of difference as constituting the “radical otherness” of God, Newsom helpfully explains how this radical otherness illuminates the proper attitude of humans toward divine beings in Ancient Near Eastern literature, which features similar themes of suffering as the book of Job:

Recognition of inevitable human sinfulness is not incompatible with claims of piety and moral rectitude, since a distinction is maintained between willful wickedness and the unavoidable human propensity to offend the gods. The sufferer’s recognition of the innate limits of human moral capacity is itself a sign of humble and pious attitude and the

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<sup>298</sup> Newsom, *The Book of Job: A Contest of Moral Imaginations*, 116; Newsom, “Job,” 4:429.

grounds for appeal to the mercy of the gods. Humble submission is the only stance imaginable.<sup>299</sup>

Newsom's point on humble submission, which the otherness of God impels the sufferer to accept, applies to the friends' counsel. Their conception of the radical difference between God and humans sets the boundary for the proper attitude toward the divine, which the friends seem to define as repenting of sins and seeking divine help, as seen in the first speech cycle. Within their perceptual framework developed around the otherness of God, it is appropriate for Job to submit himself to the divine without resistance.

The friends' perspective on compliant submission to God may account for their significant disturbance over Job's manner of speaking. In several instances, their criticism is specifically directed at his words (e.g., "The words [אמר] of your mouth are a great wind," 8:2b; c.f., דבר in 11:2; מלה in 18:2). Part of the reason for this criticism appears to be Job's perceived stubbornness in not compliantly submitting to God in his speech. From the friends' perspective, Job's manner of relating to God is comparable to that of the ungodly, or even the wicked, who refuse to adhere to the path deemed acceptable in the sight of the divine. Indeed, their depiction of the behavior of the wicked in relation to the divine in the second speech cycle appropriately places Job among them, as many interpreters suggest<sup>300</sup>: as he is not hesitant to directly confront God denying his active justice, the wicked the friends construct "stretch out their hands against God," "bid defiance to the Almighty" (15:25), and "do not know God" (18:21). Eliphaz explicitly draws a parallel between the behavioral patterns of the wicked and Job's rebellious

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<sup>299</sup> Newsom, *The Book of Job: A Contest of Moral Imaginations*, 141.

<sup>300</sup> Some interpreters note the continuity between Job's misfortune and the fate of the wicked that looks to them too obvious to be considered coincidental. This leads them to conclude that friend's construction of the fate of the wicked intends to classify him among the wicked. Francis I. Andersen, *Job*, 189–90; Habel, *The Book of Job*, 282; Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 278–79; Hawley, "The Rhetoric of Condemnation in the Book of Job," 468

speech in 15:6. By stating, “Your own mouth condemns you, and not I; your own lips testify against you,” Eliphaz underscores his belief that Job’s own words undermine his claim to a righteous moral condition. As Hawley rightly observes, Eliphaz considers that the manner in which Job speaks of God places him within, or even shifts him into, the category of the wicked.<sup>301</sup>

The friends’ counsel in this regard calls into question Job’s moral condition. In their rhetoric, which promotes and endorses compliant submission to God as the normative way of relating to the divine, Job’s rebellious manner of speech is regarded as evidence of his sinful moral condition and serves as a basis for confirming the dishonor stemming from his public isolation.

## **2. Job’s Honor Defense**

The friends’ speeches test Job’s ability to protect his honor against both their implicit and explicit implications that he is a sinner and therefore deserves shaming experiences, such as public isolation—one of the distressing realities he faces. The tension caused by this test appears to underlie Job’s speech. As I suggested at the outset of this section, his strong resistance to his friends’ counsels and his continued focus on the painful reality of his public isolation can be viewed as evidence of the challenge these counsels pose to his honor, as well as the effort he exerts to protect it. This section will examine the latter aspect to validate our assumption that Job’s concern for honor influences and shapes his speech. Specifically, I will analyze Job’s

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<sup>301</sup> Hawley, “The Rhetoric of Condemnation in the Book of Job,” 465; cf., Newsom provides a similar observation, considering Job’s denial of Eliphaz’s worldview forces him to class Job among the wicked in 22:6–11. Newsom, *The Book of Job: A Contest of Moral Imaginations*, 125.



rhetoric to determine which elements contribute to his honor-driven quest to impress others by demonstrating his sensitivity to and ability to address any challenges to his honor. My investigation in this section is twofold: first, it examines Job's legal language, and second, it considers his final speech in chapters 29 and 31.

## **2.1. Job's Rhetoric of Moral Integrity: Hypothetical Litigation as an Arena to Reclaim Honor**

### **2.1.1. Judicial Fairness**

One of the elements that embody the challenge of his friends' counsels to Job's need to protect his honor is the otherness of God. As discussed in the previous section, this element, expressed in their rhetoric that presumes his guilt and casts him as morally inferior, undermines Job's intent to question divine justice and argue for his innocence, interpreting it as equivalent to sin. For the sake of his honor, Job needs a different rhetorical context that safeguards his contention with the divine from any preconditions that might discredit the justification of such an effort. His use of legal language seems to reflect this need, as it evokes a court setting that calls for a fair judgment regardless of any preconditions, allowing him a secure space to pursue his moral arguments concerning divine injustice and his innocence.

Job first introduces the metaphorical legal context in 9:3 when he says, "If one wishes to contend (רִיב) with him [God], one could not answer him once in a thousand." Using the legal term, רִיב, he hypothetically contrives his personal lawsuit against God. With the introduction of this motif, what he brings into his personal engagement with his divine adversary as well is a tacit demand for his audience to make fair adjudication for his case. Two notable instances where

this demand emerges are his use of the introductory שמע formula in 13:6–8 and his call for help from a witness in heaven (בשמים עדי, “my witness in heaven,” 16:19) and from a redeemer (גאלי, “my redeemer,” 19:25). To grasp how he imagines his hypothetical lawsuit in this way, it may be helpful first to consider other cases in the Hebrew Bible that shed light on ancient Israelite legal proceedings.

Elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, lawsuit oracles sometimes begin with a שמע formula directed at the legal assembly. Scholars note that Deut 32, Isa 1, Mic 6, Amos 3, and Jer 2 all deploy this kind of lawsuit oracle.<sup>302</sup> The formula in these places summons participants in the lawsuit, which include witnesses, judges, and defendants. In Deut 32:1, Isa 1:2, and Mic 6:2, natural elements, such as heaven, earth, and mountains, are summoned as witnesses or judges. In Jer 2:4 and Amos 3:1,<sup>303</sup> the people of Israel are summoned as defendants. What these places show in common is that in using a שמע formula they presume a presence of legal assembly in the lawsuit context, whose constituents collectively join legal proceedings. Implied duties for these participants include maintaining fairness or impartiality in the judicial process. Huffman points out that the participants in the legal assembly share a common duty to collaboratively ensure that the judicial process is fair, whether by observing or being observed. He states: “the witnesses [natural elements] to the covenant are summoned in accordance with the practice of having witnesses to the decree of a judge so that the judge cannot alter the decision at a later time.”<sup>304</sup>

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<sup>302</sup> Herbert B. Huffman, “The Covenant Lawsuit in the Prophets,” *JBL* vol. 78, no. 4 (1959): 285–95; Marjorie O’Rourke Boyle, “The Covenant Lawsuit of the Prophet Amos: III1 – IV 13,” *VT* 21, no. 3 (1971): 343; G. Ernest Wright, “The Lawsuit of God: A Form-Critical Study of Deuteronomy,” in *Israel’s Prophetic Heritage: Essays in Honor of James Muilenburg* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1962), 42-43.

<sup>303</sup> Boyle, “The Covenant Lawsuit of the Prophet Amos: III1 – IV 13,” 343.

<sup>304</sup> Huffman, “The Covenant Lawsuit in the Prophets,” 293.

Sylvia Scholnick's discussion of Hebrew Law in her study of legal language in the book of Job attests to the expected fairness or impartiality for the participants in the legal proceedings, expressed as "ריב".<sup>305</sup> She introduces this idea especially when she discusses the laws of legal disputations in Exodus and Deuteronomy. For instance, she finds that Exodus 23:2, 3, 6–8 proscribes partiality of the witness based on the ranks of the disputants: "when you bear witness in a lawsuit, you shall not side with the majority (or mighty)...nor shall you be partial to the poor in a lawsuit" (23:2–3). In another case, she observes that Deuteronomy 19:16–17 requires legal proceedings to be fair in treating a hostile witness. This requirement prescribes that the litigation be settled "through the intervention of judicial personnel,"<sup>306</sup> such as priests and judges: "both parties to the dispute (ריב) shall appear before the Lord, before the priests and the judges who are in office in those days" (19:17).<sup>307</sup>

Job's underlying presumption in his hypothetical lawsuit does not appear vastly different from what is understood in these other legal contexts. First of all, he sets his lawsuit in the imagined public court where he invites his friends as participants<sup>308</sup> rather than bystanders. In 13:6, he calls them to judge his case using the שמע formula, saying "Hear (שמע) now my reasoning and listen to the case (ריב) of my lips." He goes on to demand that they not be partial to God, but be fair in judging his case as one would expect a legal assembly to be in any legal proceeding: "Will you show partiality toward him, will you plead the case for God?" (13:8). This

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<sup>305</sup> Sylvia Scholnick, "Lawsuit Drama in the Book of Job," (PhD. Diss., Brandeis University, 1976), 116.

<sup>306</sup> Ibid., 114–15.

<sup>307</sup> For the similar observation, see also, Ringgren, "ריב," *TDOT* XIII, 475.

<sup>308</sup> Gemser observes that there is "no sharp distinction between judges and witnesses" in Job's calling them in 13:6. B. Gemser, "The *rib*- or controversy-pattern in Hebrew mentality," in *Wisdom in Israel and in the Ancient Near East* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1960), 124.

appeal to the friends echoes well God's similar appeal in Psalms 82:2 that the legal assembly make a fair and impartial judgment: "How long will you [gods] judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked?" Job's legal assembly, however, goes beyond his human interlocutors. He also imagines that he has a heavenly assistant who would intervene in his case and help make a fair legal judgement. He hopes that this figure will balance God's and God's minions' unilateral and partial execution of moral judgement by acting on his behalf in his case against God. This idea emerges when he appeals to his witness in heaven (בשמים עדי) in 16:19 and his redeemer (גאלי) in 19:25: "Even now, in fact, my witness is in heaven, and he that vouches for me is on high" (16:19); "For I know that my redeemer lives, and that at the last he will stand upon the earth" (19:25). Given the present legal context that ascribes the role of plaintiff to Job and the role of defendant to the divine, this figure appears to be a third party. However, their true identity could still fall somewhere between God, Job himself, and a third party as interpreters often point out.<sup>309</sup> At any rate, Job is relatively clear about the role of this figure; he will help Job better engage in his disputation with God by giving witness on his behalf or defending him. As opposed to his initial thoughts on this disputation, in which there is no umpire between him and God (מוכיה, 9:33), in his later and more developed perception of a hypothetical lawsuit that frames the disputation he expects this figure to join this lawsuit and help elicit a fair decision from the legal proceeding.

One salient benefit of converting a personal verbal confrontation against God into a public, official legal engagement as Job does would be that it gives him a right to speak

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<sup>309</sup> Clines, *Job 1–20*, 457–460; Habel, *The Book of Job*, 274 – 276; Newsom, "Job," 4:457; Ringgren, "גאלי," TDOT Vol. 2, 355 (350-355); Kim Jun, "Job's Go'el, a Heavenly Arbiter, and Imagination (Job 19:25)," *The Korean Journal of Old Testament Studies* 67 (2018): 63–68; Évode Beaucamp, "Le goël de Jb 19,25," *Laval Théologique et Philosophique* vol. 33, no 3 (1977): 309–310; Janzen, *Job*, 140–41.

regardless of his precondition. In his imagined court, his audiences exist in the scene not as moral judges, who take issue with his inferiority in relation to God, but as a legal assembly, who must first take heed to his argumentation. As such, he has a right to speak, and people have a duty to listen to him without bias. In defending his honor, this way of framing his verbal contention with God is certainly advantageous, as it provides him with an alternative context to his friends' rhetoric, safeguarding his theological-moral claims about his own innocence—an essential qualification for acquiring honor in his society.

There is one more benefit in converting the friends into a legal assembly. This conversion reframes his agonistic relationship with the friends into a more neutral relationship, so that his honor becomes less exposed to their challenges or verdicts. The friends' rhetoric puts Job's relationship with them in the context of challenge and response on account of the fact that its theological-moral orientation places their moral judgement of Job to the forefront. As discussed in the beginning of the section 2 of this chapter, Job's sense of a need to refuse their counsels reflects his perception of their threat to his honor, which ensues from their explicit and implicit moral judgment of his sinful condition. For the matter of honor, this moral judgment turns the friends into Job's contenders, whose challenge to his honor he must override or defeat because in honor and shame cultures honor goes to the victor in such agonistic encounters.<sup>310</sup> The duty of the legal assembly imposed on the friends in Job's hypothetical legal court makes them step down as his contenders, for it shifts their main task from moral judgement to careful listening. Perhaps, Job's anticipation of this benefit lies behind his urge for the friends to become listeners in 13:6, the urge that he links with another urge for them to become impartial, fair judges in the following verses: "Hear now my reasoning, and *listen* to the pleadings of my lips" (emphasis

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<sup>310</sup> See the section 4.4. of Chapter 2.

added, 13:6); “Will you speak falsely for God, and speak deceitfully for him? Will you show partiality toward him, will you plead the case for God?” (13:7–8).

### **2.1.2. Justifiable Intention**

In addition to Job’s precondition as morally inferior to God, his argumentative mode of speech toward the divine becomes the evidence of his guilt within the friends’ rhetoric that emphasizes compliant submission to God, posing another challenge to his honor. The friends implicitly and explicitly discern his sinfulness in his direct confrontation with God: “Your own mouth condemns you, and not I; your own lips testify against you” (15:6).

Job’s hypothetical litigation with God helps him fend off this challenge too and thus protect his honor by laying a justifiable ground for his argumentative mode of speech. Specifically, it counters the friends’ conflation of his direct confrontation with God with his sinful moral condition, clarifying that the intended rhetorical effect of his rebellious speech rests on its technical legal benefit rather than its blasphemous function.

As suggested in the previous section, the court setting aids him in engaging his human audience by enlisting them in the legal assembly with the role of careful listeners assigned. Within this alternative rhetorical context, as opposed to the friends’ traditional one, Job gains the right to speak rather than merely submitting himself to God. This approach also extends its benefits by justifying the specific mode of speech Job adopts to confront the divine, a mode of speech that is inadmissible within the friends’ rhetoric. Job could expect this advantage because such engagement aligns with the expected speech patterns in legal disputes. Israelite legal proceedings, evident in the Hebrew Bible, underscore this rhetorical advantage by considering verbal disputes between adversaries as customary. For instance, Exodus 23:1–8 presumes that a

fair adjudication rests on warranting the opposing parties the equal right to defend or charge regardless of their ranks: "...when you bear witness in a lawsuit, you shall not side with majority so as to pervert justice ... You shall not subvert the right of your needy in their suits.<sup>311</sup> Keep far from a false charge, and do not kill the innocent and those in the right..." Commenting on this Israelite law, Scholnick draws attention to the aspect of verbal exchange within the legal proceedings, stating: "the exchange is verbal so that one hear the words rather than see the rank of the speakers."<sup>312</sup> Proverbs 18:17 posits a similar situation in which two parties exchange their own claims. It exhorts to have one party cross-examine the other party's accusation, balancing the right of each participant to be involved in the dispute process: "The one who states a case seems right, until the other comes and cross-examines."

Job's manner of speaking does not digress from the anticipated mode of speech in legal proceedings. The kind of claim that Job makes to stress his innocence, which the friends perceive as the core problem in his rebellious speech, could in fact be made by any participant in a legal dispute during a litigation process. For this reason, when he constructs his rhetoric against God in a hypothetical litigation, the argumentative nature of his speech becomes admissible—and not blasphemous as it appeared to the friends. He seems to rely on this technical effect of legal metaphor when he juxtaposes a juridical sense of משפט ("case" as in Num 27:5)<sup>313</sup> with his mouth filled with arguments (תוכחה) in 23:4: "I would lay my case before him [God], and I would fill my mouth with arguments." His imagined contention with God here reflects his belief that the court setting provides a safe space for disputing with God: "There an upright person

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<sup>311</sup> I follow here Scholnick's translation of משפט אביוןך, rendering this phrase as "the right of your needy." "Lawsuit Drama in the Book of Job," 114.

<sup>312</sup> Ibid.

<sup>313</sup> Scholnick, "The Meaning of Mišpat in the Book of Job," *JBL* 101 (1982):524.

could reason with him” (23:7a). Newsom understands that this view derives from Job’s “fundamental belief” that considers God as “a god of justice,” as implied in his statement that “he [God] would give heed to me” (23:6).<sup>314</sup> While Newsom’s perspective illuminates a theological aspect of Job’s personal belief, the assumption that he could stand head-to-head with God may relate more closely to the technical advantages of legal proceedings. This approach allows for direct contention with the divine, enabling him to overcome the evident power disparity without incurring any disadvantages, such as those related to his honor.

Job directly discloses his intent to utilize the technical effect of legal metaphor in his speech in 23:5, 6. He states here: “I would learn what he [God] would answer me, and understand what he would say to me”; “Would he contend with me in the greatness of his power? No; but he would give heed to me.” According to these statements, the primary aim of his argumentative mode of speech is to draw a response or attention from God. In other words, he intends his challenge to God to eventually perceive the divine’s perspectives, or at least God’s general stance, whether it is negative or positive.<sup>315</sup> In the legal context as imagined by Job, this possibility is not inconceivable, for learning ideas or opinions is a due process of the legal proceedings. The above-mentioned cases of the lawsuit context in the Hebrew Bible (Ex 23:1–8; Prov 18:17) presume both parties’ learning of their opponent’s claim as a result of their legal disputations; it is only after these parties publicized their arguments and defend or accuse based on the learned claims of their legal opponent that the judge adjudicates the case.

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<sup>314</sup> Newsom, “Job,” 4:508.

<sup>315</sup> Muenchow observes further that Job again makes explicit his intention to draw and listen to God’s response in his present mode of speech when he states: “Here is my signature, let the Almighty answer me” (31:35). Muenchow, “Dust and Dirt in Job 42:6,” 606.



For the matter of protecting his honor, Job’s direct disclosure is certainly advantageous, as it can safeguard it from any attacks based on the manner of his speech toward the divine. However, the ultimate benefit of disclosing his intent lies elsewhere—its persuasive effect. Specifically, it can provide him with a vantage point for earning a positive impression from those who hear it, thanks to the weight one’s intention carries in the process of conferring honor. As discussed in Section 4.4 of Chapter 2, when the public evaluates a person’s worth and confers honor, they consider intentions behind actions and words as an important criterion for their judgment. This is because the public views intentions as demonstrating “the sentiment and character from which honor qua conduct derives.”<sup>316</sup> Job could imagine that disclosing his intent would protect, or even restore, his honor, as it aligns with the standards of common legal proceedings and thus opens the door for those responsible for granting honor to affirm his honor upon hearing his intentions.

## **2.2. Defending Honor from Direct Accusation of Sins: Honor and Collective Memory in Job’s Final Speech**

### **2.2.1. Revival of Collective Memory in Job 29**

According to the underlying theological-moral perspective in the friends’ counsels, Job is a sinner. Within their rhetoric, Job’s misfortune and his direct confrontation with God are unequivocal signs for such a condition. The obvious challenges to his honor require him to respond appropriately, if he truly cares about his honor. This is because, in honor and shame

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<sup>316</sup> Pitt-Rivers, “Honor and Social Status,” 26.

cultures, when a man faces a direct challenge to his honor, he must react to this challenge properly lest he appears incapable of preserving his honor and is thus labeled a coward.<sup>317</sup> Our discussions so far have revealed how his employment of the legal metaphor embodies his effective response to the challenges the friends' counsels pose to his honor. Especially, these discussions suggest that the strongest weight of this effort lies in its effect of protecting the way of his speaking.

Job's effort does not seem to stop here. In Job 29, he appears to tackle the friends' problematic presumption that his misfortune is a divine punishment for his sins, as Eliphaz articulates in 22:5–11: "For you have exacted pledges from your family for no reason...Therefore snares are around you, and sudden terror overwhelms you..." We may gain a glimpse into this extra effort in his use of the collective memory as a rhetorical framework of his righteous deeds. Although nostalgic touches on his recollections may conceal a dark side of Job's idealized version of the social world as Clines and Newsom rightly point out,<sup>318</sup> his use of memory, especially as it appears in Job 29, has a power to reclaim honor. Turning from his previous mode of speech that engages directly in his interlocutor's argument, Job in this chapter focuses on revealing his past righteous deeds framing them in recollections. He begins his speech with calling up old days (lit., "months of old (כִּירוּחֵי-קֶדֶם)," 29:2) and repetitively using a temporal preposition, "ב (when)," stressing the retrospective nature of what he is about to speak: "when his [God] lamp shone (בְּהִלּוֹ) over my head" (29:3a); "when I was (בִּימֵי) in my prime, when the friendship (בְּסוּד) of God was upon my tent" (29:4; cf., 29:5a). What comes after this initial

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<sup>317</sup> The section 4.4. of Chapter 2.

<sup>318</sup> His depiction of the past is "what Job wants to remember" and thus does not properly capture a more wholistic picture of his society which should include the reality of oppression. Clines, "Those Golden Days: Job and the Perils of Nostalgia," 3; Newsom, "Job," 4:540-41.

setting up of the nature of his speech is a concrete depiction of a social world. He unfolds this social world in ways that reveal how his righteous deeds were integral to his previous life: “because I delivered the poor who cried and the orphan who had no helper” (29:12); “I was eye to the blind and feet to the lame” (29:15; cf. 29:16–17). What’s important about his recall in this stage for his honor defense is the shared nature of the memory about his past deeds. The people share this memory because they were the recipients or observers of his deeds. Though many of them did not probably share the same sense of satisfaction with Job in remembering his actions (“Then I thought, ‘I shall die in my nest...’ 29:18), they certainly share the memory about the honor that those actions would establish for him because it was they who confirmed his honor in response to a benevolent, and thus righteous, quality of the actions. The people’s expressed reverence, gratitude, and praise that Job experienced on a regular basis prove that they all would join in granting him honor and status: “the young men saw me and withdrew, and the aged rose up and stood” (29:8); “When the ear heard, it commended me...” (29:11); “The blessing of the wretched came upon me...” (29:13). We can thus say that, speaking about his past deeds, he recalls of the moment which he and the public collaboratively created over his honor. In other words, he now appeals to the collective memory about his honor in the past, which people all share to a greater or lesser degree.

What Job could expect from this appeal is the revival of his honor in the eyes of the people. The dynamics between honor and memory suggests this expectation. Many social anthropological studies note that honor preserved in the collective memory is resilient and can shape the public attitude toward those who once held it.<sup>319</sup> I introduced in section 4.4. of Chapter

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<sup>319</sup> For general understanding about the correlation between the collective memory and the public behavior, see Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, ed., tr, and with an introduction by Lewis A. Coser (Chicago:

2 a case from the Sarakatsan community that the people's memory about the greatness of a prestigious family secures their honor even in times when this family breaches the community norms.<sup>320</sup> For another case, according to Barry Schwartz' survey, many Koreans consider the 1988 Olympic Games as what makes them still proud. The positive attention—i.e., honor—that they earned from the globe through this past event has a prolonged effect in their memory.<sup>321</sup> As these cases imply, Job's honor preserved in the memory of the public has the power to affect their impression on his present worth; when invoked, it can rekindle his worth in the minds of the public even if his ongoing situations do not befit his past honor.

Overall, Job's shift in focus from verbal contention with his friends to his robust recollection of his past social life, i.e. the direct challenge to his honor from the friends' presumption of Job's sins, and his appeal to the collective memory about his previously honored state, all suggest that he takes a new and more direct strategy to restore his imperiled honor in his final speech. Going beyond defending his own argument against his verbal contender's challenge, he in this stage more actively shapes the viewpoint of his present audience, as well as any potential audience sharing his socio-cultural context, striving to gain their agreement on his former and deserved honor. His speech revives the people's memory about his past honor, and this could alleviate, if not resolve, their hostility toward him, giving him a vantage point to regain his public recognition.

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University of Chicago Press, 1992), 128; Jan Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 26.

<sup>320</sup> Campbell, *Honour, Family, and Patronage*, 266–67.

<sup>321</sup> Barry Schwartz, "Culture and Collective Memory," in *Handbook of Cultural Sociology* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 624; Halbwachs similarly notes the collective memory of the medieval nobles on their honor, prestige, and titles that continued to affect their thoughts and lives. Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 128.

### **2.2.2. Affirmation through Collective Memory in Job 31**

After expressing his frustration over divine violence in Job 30, Job reiterates his claim of moral integrity in Job 31. The broader point of his speech at this stage remains consistent with his earlier one in Job 29: he has been righteous and does not deserve divine punishment. Within this broader framework of his final speech, it can be said that the same defensive mechanism used to protect his honor in Job 29 is carried over to Job 31. By recalling the collective memory of his past honor, he directly refutes the friends' rhetoric that presumes his sinfulness, justifies his intact honor, and lays the groundwork to reclaim it.

However, this last portion of Job's final speech seems to preserve a more advanced effort to protect honor. The way he unfolds the collective memory account for this observation. While he focuses on the external phenomenon of the social exchange between him and the underprivileged in Job 29, Job at this stage reveals specific contents of each social exchange, which he deems appropriate for demonstrating his righteous moral condition. One of the strongest emphases he places on recasting his previous social exchanges is his heightened sense of ethical awareness. We can observe this from the list of wrongdoings, all of which he claimed to have avoided. It catalogues various areas to which he claims his ethical awareness applies, those that include deceit (31:5), sexual and material covetousness (31:9, 24–25), maltreatment of the underprivileged (31:13, 16–21, 32, 39), impiety (31:26, 33). Fohrer observes during his comparison between the ethical view in Job 31 and the wisdom literatures' perspectives that Job's stress on his heightened sense of ethical awareness highlights his mastery of wisdom's

ethical principles.<sup>322</sup> For one instance of Job's mastery, Fohrer points out that his adherence to telling the truth (31:5) readily aligns with many proverbial warnings against telling a lie: "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord" (Prov 12:22; 17:7; 19:22; 29:12).<sup>323</sup>

Besides his ethical awareness, Job places a strong emphasis on his intention to live righteously. We can observe this from the fact that the areas in which Job claims ethical mastery are not subject to legal enforcement according to the Hebrew Bible laws. Clines' observation is particularly helpful for understanding this point. Comparing the areas of Job's ethical mastery with "the formal ethical norms of Israelites society" leads him to discover that: "adultery is the only sin that Job's list here has explicitly in common with the Ten Commandments (covetousness does not seem to be specifically referred to in vv 7–8), and even in that case Job's language suggests that he is referring rather to an act of deception rather to a physical act." Clines concludes: "In general, the sins he absolves himself of are not external acts but inner dispositions or intentions."<sup>324</sup> The enforcement for these areas of ethics is rather enacted by Job himself. He frames his social exchanges within "the legal oath of purity," comparable to those found in Exodus 22:7<sup>325</sup> and 9<sup>326</sup>, as Fohrer points out.<sup>327</sup> Through this, he ensures that any moral failures in these areas would justifiably forfeit his wellbeing: e.g., "If I raised my hand against

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<sup>322</sup> Fohrer, "The Righteous Man in Job 31," 12–19.

<sup>323</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>324</sup> Clines, *Job 21–37*, 1012.

<sup>325</sup> "When someone delivers to a neighbor money or goods for safekeeping, and they are stolen from the neighbor's house, then the thief, if caught, shall pay double" (NRSV).

<sup>326</sup> "In any case of disputed ownership involving ox, donkey, sheep, clothing, or any other loss, of which one party says, 'This is mine,' the case of both parties shall come before God; the one whom God condemns shall pay double to the other" (NRSV).

<sup>327</sup> Georg. Fohrer, "The Righteous Man in Job 31," in *Essays in Old Testament Ethics*, ed. James L. Crenshaw and John T. Willis (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1974) 10.

the orphan, because I saw I had supporters at the gate; then let my shoulder blade fall from my shoulder, and let my arm be broken from its socket” (31:21–22; cf., 31:8, 10, 11, 28, 40).

While Job’s claims of mastering ethical principles and his strong internal commitment to live accordingly in Job 31 seem to defend his honor on their own, this effect becomes even more apparent when viewed within the context of honor and shame cultures. I discussed in the section 4.4. of Chapter 2 that public recognition tends to follow one’s social status. High social power provides one with a secured place to maintain honor. For this reason, a breach of social norms often imposes less damage on the honor of the upper class than that of the lower class. The social world evoked in the book of Job, which I provided in the section 2 of Chapter 2, presumes that Job was likely to be conferred this status driven buffer against potential damages to honor; he is reasonably placed at the top of class stratification by his political, economic, and social influence as the head of the powerful local family. It appears that this kind of prerogative underlies the oath he makes using his wife as sexual security in 31:10: “then let my wife grind for another, and let other men kneel over her.”<sup>328</sup> Job believes that he could use his wife in the way that does not quite align with biblical regulations regarding marital relationships, such as Deuteronomy 22:22,<sup>329</sup> which prohibits any sexual intercourse between a married woman and a married man outside their marriage. The fact that he frames his oath this way implies that he perceives himself as having the right to bypass, or even surpass, the enforcement of those regulations. As Habel points out, this view seems to reflect “a society where the wife is the virtual possession of the husband and her fate is bound up in her husband’s behavior.”<sup>330</sup> Furthermore, Job assumes that

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<sup>328</sup> For the sexual connotations of the images evoked, see Newsom, “Job,” 4:553; Clines, *Job 21–37*, 1019.

<sup>329</sup> “If a man is caught lying with the wife of another man, both of them shall die, the man who lay with the woman as well as the woman. So you shall purge the evil from Israel” (NRSV).

<sup>330</sup> Habel, *Book of Job*, 434.

announcing this view to others would not bring him any disadvantages, including those related to his honor, given that one of his primary motivations for his speech is to protect his honor.

Despite his loss of honor and status, it seems that the prerogative he once enjoyed in the past remains deeply ingrained in him, continuing to constitute a part of his identity.

Although it is paradoxical that he is still under the influence of his former prerogative associated with his status, the claims Job makes in Job 31 regarding his righteous moral condition deny his abusive use of it. His emphasis on his mastery of various ethical principles and his strong inclination to live righteously is to claim that, instead of neglecting his anticipated duties, he diligently worked to provide social care for the underprivileged. In other words, regardless of his status, he had a strong sense of responsibility for what his community was required of its socially elite members. Such a strategy provides him a great advantage to protect, or even reclaim, his honor, for it clears out any doubts on his sins. In it, he is the last person to be accused of wickedness and to be dishonored.



## CHAPTER 5. Assessing Job's Honor Defense: The Economic Basis of Honor

In this chapter, I will examine the efficacy of Job's effort to protect his honor, especially whether this effort might realistically be expected to transform people's current pessimism over or indifference to his worth into more positive acknowledgement of it. This process will be twofold. First, I will examine the speeches of Job's human interlocutors to determine whether his strategies to protect his honor elicited any significant favorable responses from them. I will include Elihu among those to be examined because, although his words were presumably added later and may not be as integral to the progression and logic of the dialogues between Job and his friends,<sup>331</sup> he still shares a similar viewpoint with the friends, aligning his response with theirs ideologically. Specifically, as Pope argues, despite its intended differences from the friends' speeches by the final redactor, Elihu's speech appears to function in the final form of the book as complementary to the points raised by the friends, perhaps adding some extra "vindication of divine justice," something the friends also attempt.<sup>332</sup> Moreover, within the final form of the book, Elihu appears as the only one to respond to Job's honor defense comprehensively. While Elihu addresses all of Job's speech in the Dialogue and his defense, the friends respond only partially, as they do not specifically address Job's final speech. This process will conclude with an analysis of the possible reasons for the interlocutors' responses, suggesting that Job's current poverty creates the greatest dissuasive force against his honor defense.

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<sup>331</sup> For the previous discussions about compositional issues regarding Elihu's speech, see Pope, *Job*, XXVII–XXVIII, LXXIX–LXXX.

<sup>332</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVIII.

The following section will probe into Job's social interactions to validate the conclusion regarding how his economic standing played a crucial role in matters related to his honor. The three specific groups to be considered in this process are the most vulnerable populace (i.e., the widow, the orphan, the stranger, the blind, the lame, peasants facing economic hardships) and his household members.

## **1. Job's Honor Defense to his Human Interlocutors**

### **1.1. Friends**

Job's honor defense in the Dialogue develops around creating an alternative rhetoric to that of the friends drawing on legal metaphor, as I earlier suggested. This rhetoric safeguards his claim of divine injustice and his own innocence so that he may protect his honor from any moral attacks made based on the mode of his speech. If this strategy really worked, we would be able to discover some signs that they concede to his theological-moral claims. Within the honor and shame cultures, the efficacy of a man's honor defense is determined by how well one's claim repels that of his opponent. This is due to the agonistic quality of honor. It is conferred only to those who demonstrate their ascendancy over their opponents. Malina notes that man's honor is established and solidified when his opponent fails to respond to this man's affront, or when the opponent retracts his own argument and admits what the man claims.<sup>333</sup>

Job's honor defense, however well-structured it may seem, does not appear to have yielded its desired effect. Throughout the dialogue the friends do not show any signs of

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<sup>333</sup> Malina, *The New Testament World*, 35; Pitt-River puts it that only "the victor in any competition for honor" can retain his honor. Pitt-Rivers, "Honor and Social Status," 24, 28.

concession to Job’s theological-moral claims. The degeneration of dialogue is one noticeable piece of evidence for the inefficacy of Job’s honor defense. His forensic rhetoric that intends to justifiably present his “legal innocence” appears to exacerbate the tension between him and the friends—later, Elihu as well—and impels them to construct an even more forceful rhetoric that they believe points to Job’s moral inferiority, his sinfulness. Consequently, the dialogue deteriorates, literally and literarily, until it terminates completely. Some observable signs of the degeneration of the dialogue includes the change of tone from leniency in friends’ first speech cycle to accusation in their second speech cycle, Eliphaz’ rage against Job’s ungodly speech in 22:2–11, Bildad’s only five-verse long muttering in 25:2–6, and the reticence of Zophar in the third cycle. As Seow puts it, “carefully constructed arguments, measures, and responses to one another” in the first cycle gives way through “asseverations and ad hominem attacks” in the second cycle to “chaotic” responses in the third cycle.<sup>334</sup>

What’s notable in this degenerative movement is that Job’s use of legal language does not prevent it from worsening. Instead, his appealing to judicial fairness and his revelation of admissible intentions exacerbate the strife between him and the friends and propel the degenerative progression in their speeches. It appears that they perceive such an effort merely as his refusal to submit to the divine, something they cannot accept. For instance, Job’s speech in Job 13, where he calls his friends to join the legal assembly (“Hear [שמע]...listen to the lawsuits of my lips,” 13:6) and appeals to judicial fairness (“Will you show partiality toward him [God]?” 13:8), provokes Eliphaz into identifying Job’s sinfulness precisely in his “rebellious” speech: “For your [Job] iniquity teaches your mouth, and you choose the tongue of the crafty” (15:5). Similarly, Job’s speech in Job 19, where he expects the intervention of a Redeemer (לֹאֵל) in his

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<sup>334</sup> Seow, *Job 1–21*, 67; See also Newsom on degenerative dialogue. Newsom, *The Book of Job*, 19.

case with God (“For I know that my Redeemer lives,” 19:25), irritates Zophar into feeling insulted: “I hear censure that insults me” (20:3).

Job’s disclosure that his legal argument aims to draw a response from God in 23:4–6 does not elicit a positive response from the friends either. Job says, “I would lay my case (משפט) before him, and fill my mouth with arguments. I would learn what he would answer me and understand what he would say to me...” Rather than accepting these intentions as appropriate, as they would be in an authentic legal setting, Bildad responds to Job with one of the strongest denials of Job’s self-proclaimed righteousness: “How then can a mortal be righteous before God?...how much less a mortal, who is a maggot, and a human being, who is a worm! (25:4–6).” Zophar even disappears in this speech cycle as if he lost his words to respond to Job’s disclosure of his intention.

These reactions of the friends suggest that Job’s purposeful use of legal language to defend his honor neither restrains the tension between them from escalating nor draws a sympathetic response from them. The friends do not appear at all cognizant of his intent in deploying forensic rhetoric as they never pick up and employ in their speech one of the central legal terms for his hypothetical lawsuit, ריב (lit. v. to strive; n. dispute). As Scholnick points out, the legal usage of ריב come exclusively from Job “in all but two instances” (e.g., 9:3; 10:2; 13:6, 8; 13:19; 23:6).<sup>335</sup> Even in these two exceptions the speakers are Elihu (33:13) and God (40:2) but not the friends. As such, the friends do not cease to hold a view that he is a sinner, and, in their speech, dishonor continues to characterize him.

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<sup>335</sup> Job’s use of this term to raise an idea of his lawsuit against God permeates his speech from 9:3 and onward (e.g., 10:2; 13:6, 8; 13:19; 23:6). Scholnick, “Lawsuit Drama in the Book of Job,” 106.

## 1.2. Elihu

Unlike the friends, whose responses offer only a partial view of Job's honor defense—particularly his legal rhetoric—Elihu is presented in the book as one who listened to Job's entire speech. A narrator's voice that introduces Elihu's speech accounts for this point: "But when Elihu saw that there was no answer in the mouths of these three men, he became angry. Elihu son of Barachel the Buzite answered" (32:5–6). Elihu himself also notes his firsthand hearing of the dialogue between Job and the friends, saying that he has heard all that Job spoke: "Surely, you have spoken in my hearing, and I have heard the sound of your words" (33:8). Based on Elihu's state as presented in the book, we can presume that his response reflects a comprehensive understanding of Job's honor defense, encompassing not only its legal aspect but also its collective memory dimension. And this unique presence of Elihu requires examining two criteria to understand the validity of Job's honor defense: his reaction to Job's legal rhetoric, which aims to safeguard his theological-moral claims, and his response to Job's use of collective memory to reject the view that his misfortune is divine punishment for his sins.

A close reading of Elihu's speech leads us to a similar conclusion regarding the efficacy of Job's honor defense as we reached with the friends. Despite some noticeable differences between Elihu and the friends in their responses, the fundamental fact that Job did not persuade Elihu to concede to his claims remains unchanged. Elihu neither accepts Job's claim about divine injustice and his innocence nor changes his view that Job's sin triggered divine punishment.

As regards Job's legal rhetoric, Elihu clearly notices Job's purposeful use of them. For instance, in 33:13 Elihu picks up the forensic connotation of Job's complaint and asks, "Why do you contend (ריב) against him, saying 'He will answer (ענה) none of my charges (דבר)'?" (33:13). Elihu seems to notice Job's call for fair judgement as well. Scholnick's remarks on Elihu's

speech in 32:21–22, where he swears to be fair in speaking about Job’s situation (e.g., “I will not show partiality to any person,” 32:21a), aptly captures this point. She states: “Elihu plans to adhere to the recognized standards for witnesses and judges in court.”<sup>336</sup>She adds that in 33:1, Elihu begins his speech as if he is “formally introducing his testimony” in a court<sup>337</sup>: “But now hear (שמע) my speech, O Job.”

Despite his recognition of Job’s legal rhetoric, Elihu expresses his strong dissatisfaction over the way Job speaks about God via that rhetoric. For example, in order to criticize Job as speaking without knowledge in 35:16 (“Job opens his mouth in empty talk, he multiplies words without knowledge”), one of Job’s presumptions he problematizes in 35:14 is the lawsuit against the divine Job previously evoked in 10:2 and 23:4: “How much less when you [Job] say that you do not see him [God], that the case is before him, and you are not waiting for him” (35:14); “I [Job] will say to God, Do not condemn me; let me know why you [God] contend against me” (10:2): “I [Job] would lay my case before him [God]” (23:4). Elihu’s diatribe against Job’s legal rhetoric does not differ from the friends’ reaction to it. As mentioned in the previous section, in 25:4–6, Zophar offers one of the strongest condemnations of Job’s effort to directly confront the divine through hypothetical litigation in Job 23: “How then can a mortal be righteous before God...how much less a mortal, who is maggot, and a human being, who is a worm” (25:4–6). Much like the friends in the early stage of their speeches, Elihu believes that Job must abandon hubris in contending against God in his lawsuit and take a more submissive attitude, which involves pleading and repentance: “Then he [an upright person] prays to God, and is accepted by him...that person sings to others and says, ‘I sinned, and perverted what was right...’” (33:26–

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<sup>336</sup> Ibid., 154.

<sup>337</sup> Ibid.

27). Habel suggests further that Elihu considers Job's lawsuit "ludicrous" because of the innate power disparity between God and Job, which will never allow him to force God "to descend in person and vindicate his innocence"<sup>338</sup>: "Look at the heavens and see...which are higher than you...if you [Job] are righteous, what do you give to him [God]; or what does he receives from your hand?..." (35:5–8).

As with Job's legal rhetoric, his appealing to collective memory about his past honor does not seem to work for Elihu as he intended. He persists viewing his misfortune as divine punishment for his sins. This does not mean that Elihu takes the exact same stance with the friends in his theological-moral interpretation of Job's situation. While the friends stop mentioning a redemptive purpose for misfortune (e.g., 5:17; 8:7) soon after Job's effort to confront God becomes more explicit in the second speech cycle, Elihu continues to draw on this notion as part of his exhortation for Job to turn to the divine (e.g., "God indeed does all these things, twice, three times, with mortals, to bring back their souls from the Pit, so that they may see the light of life," 33:29–30; c.f., 36:7, 11, 15, 16). Newsom notes this point and says: "Elihu's preoccupation with the process of moral regeneration is distinct from the arguments of the friends."<sup>339</sup>

Despite this difference in emphasis on Job's misfortune, Elihu's interpretation of this reality essentially remains the same with the friends. In multiple places of his speech, Elihu takes for granted that Job's previous misdeeds triggered divine punishment. For example, a sufferer's confession, which Elihu hopes to inculcate in Job in 33:27, presumes an act of transgression that

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<sup>338</sup> Habel, *The Book of Job*, 491; Newsom comments on 33:8-18 that "Elihu does not point Job toward a solution by using legal categories but by showing how they have confused and misled." Newsom, "Job," 4:569.

<sup>339</sup> Newsom, "Job," 4:568.

readily applies to not only Job's rebellious speech but also his misdeeds: "I sinned, and perverted what was right, and it was not paid back to me."<sup>340</sup> Elihu's strong denunciation of Job's ungodly claim—"I am innocent, and God has taken away my right" (34:5)—at the end of Job 34 also refers to his sin stemming from his previous misdeeds: "For he adds rebellion to his sin" (34:37).

Assuming that Job's fault snowballs as he "multiplies (רבה)" his ungodly words, Elihu in this stage finds a parallel between Job's currently ungodly attitude ("rebellion") and his wrongdoings ("sin") that he believes must have caused his calamities.<sup>341</sup> As with these cases, Elihu's revelation of the meaning of Job's misfortune in 36:21 alludes to his sinful state that brought forth divine punishment: "Beware! Do not turn to iniquity; because of that you have been tried by affliction." Elihu's perspective here that Job's misfortune is given as a chance to turn away from evil ways of life presumes that he had been involved in such ways in one way or another and that God graciously disciplines him to correct his moral errors through afflictive experiences. As Clines states, "Job has before him two possibilities, either to learn from the divine displeasure and come to enjoy God's favor (as in v11), or to remain stubbornly in the guilt that has brought down upon him divine punishment and so come to an early end (as in v12)."<sup>342</sup>

In conclusion, Elihu is not willing to concede to Job's theological-moral claims. Particularly, Elihu's rejection of those claims indicates the ineffectiveness of Job's honor defense. Even after hearing Job's entire speech, Elihu continues to view him as a sinner. As with the friends, dishonor continues to characterize Job in Elihu's speech.

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<sup>340</sup> Clines, *Job 21–37*, 740.

<sup>341</sup> Hartely, *The Book of Job*, 461–62.

<sup>342</sup> Clines, *Job 21–37*, 864.



### 1.3. Assessing Job’s Human Interlocutors’ Reactions: Exploring the Inefficacy of Job’s Honor Defense

Our discussion thus far has revealed that Job’s defense of his honor did not lead to any significant change in his interlocutors’ perspectives concerning his honor. Although their responses are interwoven with his arguments and develop in response to them—as seen in the introductory criticisms of each speech<sup>343</sup> and certain recurring themes, such as the fate of the wicked<sup>344</sup>—they seem to disregard Job’s direct or indirect rhetoric that conveys his pain and his efforts to protect his honor. Their rhetoric continues to portray Job as someone who needs to restore his honor via divine validation of his righteousness through repentance for his previous sins and ongoing protestation, rather than as someone who currently retains his honor and thus has the right to claim it.

One conceivable reason why this is the case can be found in Job’s current status. He lacks the necessary status to create sufficient rhetorical force to direct his interlocutors’ attention toward his honor discourse. As discussed earlier in this study, his complaint about the mockery and disrespect from social outcasts in 30:1–15 reflects the low status he currently holds (e.g., “But now they make sport of me, those who are younger than I, whose fathers I could have disdained to set with the dogs of my flock,” 30:1). The practical problem of his low status to his honor defense is that the kind of verbal contention for the purpose of protecting or reclaiming

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<sup>343</sup> These criticisms retain their strong rejection of Job’s previous speech at each turn (e.g., “Your [Job’s] own mouth condemns you, and not I [Eliphaz]; your own lips testify against you,” 15:6). This literary technique can be found across the Dialogue, including Job’s speech, especially in the passages such as 8:1-2; 11:2-3; 12:2-3; 15:2-6; 16:2-3; 18:2-3; 19:2-3; 20:2-3; 21:2-3; 26:2-4. Cf., Newsom, “Job,” 4:400.

<sup>344</sup> Newsom states as follows regarding how the friends intend this theme to counter Job’s argument: “the poems about the fate of the wicked are the form in which the friends attempt to respond to this issue.” Newsom, *The Book of Job: A Contest of Moral Imaginations*, 116.

honor takes place only among equals in status. We have discussed in the 4.4 of Chapter 2 that a mentally deranged man in Andalusia in modern Spain cannot challenge others because of his low status. With little or no status remaining, Job perhaps looked to them a person whose words need to be silenced, but not in the position to persuade someone with social standing like themselves. For them, Job would have been merely a former peer now to be pitied, one obsessed with his former glory and pouring out blasphemous words that they do not acknowledge as uttered by a person with sufficient standing to call into question their notions.

Another reason for the inefficacy of Job's honor defense may relate to discordance created by the threefold chain against his claim in the perceptual realm of the interlocutors—a chain that links one's moral condition with his/her external circumstances. We discussed at the end of Chapter 3 how human characters relate righteousness to positive human experiences, considering the former as a gateway to receiving the latter as divine validation. The main problem this framework poses to Job's honor defense is that his moral claim and his current external state do not fit suitably within the framework, creating discordance and subsequently weakening the persuasive force of his rhetoric. One significant discordance arises from his skin disease. Since this external state is a negative human experience, it readily aligns with the sinful moral condition in the theological-moral framework of the interlocutors. For instance, Bildad and Elihu classify the skin disease among the external conditions assigned to sinners: "parts of his [the wicked] skin is consumed" (18:13)<sup>345</sup>; "Their [the wicked] flesh is so wasted away that it cannot be seen" (33:21). When Job argues for his righteousness despite skin disease, therefore, he would sound to others as if he does so without proper evidence. Basson's analysis of Job's

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<sup>345</sup> Identifying the subject of what consumes one's skin depends on how נָדָה is translated. Some modify it as נָדָהוּ and translates it as "by disease," while some translate as it is as "parts of his skin." For translating issues of this verse, see Clines, *Job 1–20*, 406.

public isolation based on purity culture, which I introduced in section 2.1.2. of Chapter 1, leads us to a similar conclusion regarding his honor defense. His point that people consider Job's impure body as dangerous and unfit for society<sup>346</sup> implies that, unless Job's skin disease is cured, his honor defense would hardly change their attitude toward him due to its continual negative socio-cultural implications.

Within the final form of the book of Job, we may speculate an additional condition in Job that weakens the persuasive force of his rhetoric. It is his loss of property. The Prologue introduces this reality as part of his misfortune ("the fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants, and consumed them," 1:16), which continues to characterize his external circumstances until God restores his property at the end of the book as described in Epilogue ("And the Lord restored the fortunes of Job when he had prayed for his friends; and the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before," 42:10). It is not hard to imagine that the loss of property would have a similar effect to his skin disease, since it is a negative experience and thus conflicts with his moral claim within the perceptual world of his interlocutors. In fact, one of the images Zophar uses to describe the ill fate of the wicked in Job 20 refers to this kind of materialistic loss. He expresses this idea through the image of poverty and the claim of the impossibility for their maintaining prosperity. The following literal translation captures this point well: "There was nothing left to eat for them—Therefore their prosperity shall not endure" (20:21).

The narrator in the Epilogue offers an interesting perspective on the decisive role that Job's material conditions would have played in his honor defense. After delineating how God restored Job's property in 42:10, the narrator points out that people no longer express disrespect,

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<sup>346</sup> Basson, "Just Skin and Bones: The Longing for Wholeness of the Body in the Book of Job," 296.

ignorance, mockery, and indifference toward him. Instead, they offer him “sympathy” and “comfort,” and even bring him gifts such as “money” and gold rings”: “Then there came to him all his brothers and sisters and all who had known him before, and they ate bread with him in his house: they showed him sympathy and comforted him for all the evil that the Lord had brought upon him: and each of them gave him a piece of money and a gold ring” (42:11). Within the overall progression of the story, the narrator appears to conclude that Job’s public isolation ends with the return of his fortunes. This conclusion further implies that his circumstances, shaped by his material conditions, play a crucial role in making him appear worthy of public recognition, aligning him with those of righteous moral standing. Moreover, the fact that the narrator does not mention any signs of healing for Job’s skin condition at this point in the story suggests that the material aspect of his external conditions likely played the most significant role in matters related to his honor. If this speculation is given any credence, we can argue that his defense of honor is not viable without resolving his economic problems, as these create the greatest discordance in his rhetoric.

The economic aspect of honor may help validate this speculation regarding Job’s materialistic condition. As discussed in section 4.3 of Chapter 2, in honor and shame cultures, one’s economic standing plays a crucial role in demonstrating one’s worth in the eyes of the public, as the successful fulfillment of social ideals often requires economic capability. This trait of honor supports the presumed correlation between the restoration of Job’s honor and the return of his wealth. Wealth functioned as significant evidence of his capability to fulfill social ideals, thereby proving his worth. This idea also supports the presumed discordance the interlocutors may have felt in response to Job’s defense of his honor. When he argues for his righteousness

while still affected by poverty, this may seem to them that he lacks the crucial tangible evidence to support such a claim.

The key role Job's economic capacity plays in protecting his honor can also be observed in his previous social interactions as portrayed in the book. Since exploring this in depth would require substantial investigation, I will discuss it separately in the following sections.

## **2. Job's Honor and Wealth**

Job's social interactions, as described in the book, demonstrate how his wealth was integral to his past honor and status. These interactions highlight the critical importance of Job's economic standing in validating his honor, not only to his immediate interlocutors but also to all others in his society who could potentially have heard his honor defense. Among those whose interactions with Job may reveal the correlation between his honor and wealth, the presence of the underprivileged populace is most prominent in the Dialogue. My previous discussions about his social interactions that earned him a righteous moral condition directly or indirectly identified them with the traditional triad of the powerless—the widow (אלמנה, 22:9; 29:13; 31:16), the orphan (יתום, 22:9; 29:12; 31:17), the stranger or resident alien (גר, 31:32)—and the people with disabilities—the blind (עורר, 29:15) and the lame (פסח, 29:15). Another group, whose need for support may place them in a similar category to the underprivileged populace, is the peasants facing economic hardships. Their presence can be inferred from the agricultural portrayal and the presumable historical background of his society, which I described in section 2. of Chapter 2. One noticeable place that offers a glimpse into his interaction with this group of people is 31:29, where he argues that he never embezzled the produce of his land without payment. Besides this

vulnerable populace, Job's performance of his paternalistic duties for his family may also offer a glimpse into the correlation between his honor and wealth. Their presence is presumed in the Prologue, Job's complaint about their alienation of him in Job 19:17, and Eliphaz's accusation of Job's mistreatment of his brothers (אָא) in 22:6.

Although we have discussed in previous chapters Job's past interactions with some of these aforementioned groups, whose economic nature was essential, it is imperative to examine, or revisit if necessary, these interactions within a fuller socio-cultural context if we aim to understand the specifics of the relationship between Job's honor and economic capability. My following discussions will focus on the practical needs of Job's beneficiaries, particularly the underprivileged populace and his own family, and how his wealth played a central role in fulfilling these needs, leading him to acquire and maintain his honor in the past.

## **2.1. Job Provided Economic and Legal Support for the Most Vulnerable Populace: The Traditional Triad of the Powerless and The Peasants Facing Economic Hardships**

The presence of the underprivileged populace and their interactions with Job are prominent in his final speech, particularly in chapters 29 and 31. Identifying himself as a benevolent patron to them, expressed as the "needy" ("I was a father [אב] to the needy [אבִינִים]," 29:16), Job claims at this stage that his service to and provision for this populace "clothed (לבש)" him in "righteousness (צדק)" ("I put on righteousness, and it clothed me," 29:14), bringing public recognition to him (e.g., "When the ear heard, it commended me, and when the eye saw, it approved," 29:11).

As mentioned in the previous section, those fittingly placed in the category of the needy include the traditional triad of the powerless, the people with disabilities, and the peasants suffering from economic hardships. The practical needs of these groups, which Job argues he successfully served in the past, consist mainly of economic support for their survival and legal protection. Scholars, who associate these needs with widows, orphans, strangers, and people with disabilities in ancient Israel, construe that the needs often correlate with their difficulties in securing basic resources for survival. For example, Donald Gowan argues that the widow and the orphan could easily fall victim to the shortage of basic resources, especially when they lack adult males in their household, since the “human muscle power”<sup>347</sup> these males could offer was essential for securing food resources in the typical agricultural society like ancient Israel. Some of this populace may have been relatively secure from this reality, such as widows with grown children who could offer them care and protection. However, this condition did not make these widows completely immune to survival problems, as their dependence on male muscle power could hardly be altered. Pnina Galpaz-Feller states: “For this reason the idea of the loss of a son was particularly dreadful for a widow, because it was a sign not only for the loss of a person but also of the loss of the protection she had received (2 Sam 14:6; Isa 51:18; Ruth 4:15).”<sup>348</sup>

A similar threat to survival would occur to strangers, especially those who have left their own place of origin. Sneed points out that this threat directly relates to their lack of “blood ties necessary for protection and support a native would have.”<sup>349</sup> Kellermann further suggests that, within this context, their “status and privileges are dependent on the hospitality that has played

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<sup>347</sup> Donald E. Gowan, “Wealth and Poverty in the Old Testament: The Case of the Widow, the Orphan, and the Sojourner,” 343.

<sup>348</sup> Pnina Galpaz-Feller, “The Widow in the Bible and in Ancient Egypt,” *ZAW* 120:2 (2008): 237.

<sup>349</sup> Sneed, “Israelite Concern for the Alien, Orphan, and Widow: Altruism or Ideology?” 500.

an important role in the ancient Near East ever since ancient time.”<sup>350</sup> Various legal protections regarding food resources, whose beneficiaries include strangers (e.g. “When you reap your harvest in your field and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be left for the alien, the orphan, and the widow,” Deut 24:19; cf., 24:20–21; 26:12) would reflect their vulnerability in survival situations.

The people with disabilities perhaps ran into the similar problems of survival with the triad, not only due to their physical conditions that prevented them from earning wages by doing normal labor but also due to biases and restrictions imposed on them, such as theological-moral rendering of their bodily dysfunction as reflecting their sins (e.g., blindness-divine punishment link in Deut 28:28).<sup>351</sup> Hector Avalos’ view on the exclusion of the people with disabilities from the religious space as reflected in Leviticus 21:18<sup>352</sup> sheds light on their survival problems. He argues that their exclusion may correlate to their inability “to provide an economic contribution to the temple or to the society,”<sup>353</sup> the inability that directly relates with their physical restrictions.

In light of the cultural and economic context of ancient Israelite towns, which I argued in section 2 of Chapter 2 comprised agricultural practices and became the primary background of

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<sup>350</sup> D. Kellermann, “גורר,” *TDOT*, vol. 2, 443.

<sup>351</sup> Hong explores this very view of the mechanical connection between illness and sin, pointing out that illness is “an indication of the interrupted relationship” between the human and God. Seong-Hyuk Hong, *Metaphor of Illness and Healing*, Studies in Biblical Literature 95 (New York: Peter Lang, 2006), 64–65.

<sup>352</sup> “For no one who has a blemish shall draw near, one who is blind or lame, or one who has a mutilated face or a limb too long.”

<sup>353</sup> He points out that the youth (נערים), similarly disadvantaged in terms of an economic condition like the people with disabilities, were not treated like them, especially because they “would provide an economic contribution in the form of labor.” Hector Avalos, *Illness and Health Care in the Ancient Near East: The Role of the Temple in Greece, Mesopotamia, and Israel*, Harvard Semitic Museum Monographs 54 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 388–89.



Job's society, we can assume that, much like the vulnerable populace mentioned above, the lives of peasants in Job's society faced similar survival challenges, necessitating proper economic support. Historical-critical scholars often point to these life-threatening situations faced by many peasants in ancient Israelite towns. One of the reasons that these scholars relate to these challenges is the burden of taxation. Houston argues that "from the eighth to the fifth century, the Israelite-Jewish lands were under the direct or indirect rule of powerful empires who sucked them dry with their constant demand for tribute or tax..."<sup>354</sup> Roland Boer includes taxes among the factors that caused many laborers in ancient Israel to become debtors to landlords or the state, which owned the land, forcibly binding them to their lenders as labor providers.<sup>355</sup> Some earlier scholarly voices, such as those of Gottwald and Lang, similarly find a correlation between taxation and what they call credit-debt system.<sup>356</sup> Although this terminology has been criticized by later scholars,<sup>357</sup> it retains a similar concept to the debtor situations Boer discusses. Another reason for the peasants' economic hardships relates to the increased demand of critical commodities by the ruling class that replaced staple crops for their survival. Marvin Chaney argues that this demand shifted the agricultural system from "freehold" to "plantations or latifundia," exposing peasants to various challenges to their survival. He states: "During lulls in the agricultural calendar, they were as unemployed as landless. Jobless or not, they were forced

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<sup>354</sup> Houston, *Contending for Justice*, 35.

<sup>355</sup> Other factors include a bad harvest and a wedding. Boer, *The Sacred Economy of Ancient Israel*, 162.

<sup>356</sup> Gottwald puts it: "a state tax-rent...spawned a credit-debt system that was formally outside the state administration, but that was necessitated by the peasant hardship that the state generated via tax-rent." Gottwald, *The Hebrew Bible in its Social World and in Ours* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993) 163; Lang, "The Social Organization of Peasant Poverty in Biblical Israel," *JSOT* 24 (1982): 56–58.

<sup>357</sup> Boer argues that, unlike credit that highlights reciprocal relationships, debt more adequately describes the addressed situation with its compulsive and extractive sense. Boer, *The Sacred Economy of Ancient Israel*, 157–58.

into marketplace of which they had little or no experience to buy wheat and barley, the staples of their diet.”<sup>358</sup>

Besides assistance in the economic support for their survival, the underprivileged populace also needed legal protections due to their low status. This need became particularly urgent when they faced the exploitation of their possessions and physical violence. The Hebrew Bible often ascribes this need to the triad (i.e. the widow, the orphan, the stranger), considering them as an easy target of exploitation or violence by those who hold higher status and who attempted to profit by mistreating them (Deut 27:19; Ps 94:6). Numerous biblical laws and prophecies presuppose this reality (Jer 7:6; 22:3; Ezek 22:7, Zech 7:10; Mal 3:5)<sup>359</sup> and enact special stipulations, customs, or concerns for the triad without male patrons, who could provide legal protection for their inheritance, wealth, or hard-earned properties.<sup>360</sup> Cases for offering legal protection for these people include levirate marriage (Deut 25:5-10), release of the widow to father’s house (Lev 22:13), and the call to warrant stranger’s residence right (Lev 19:33).

In his final speech, Job persistently argues that he successfully supported these groups of vulnerable people. While Job expresses this in Job 29 via somewhat abstract language (“I

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<sup>358</sup> According to Chaney’s definition, freehold system secured for the peasants “access to a modest but adequate and integrated living,” and plantations or latifundia was more suitable for meeting “the increasingly consumptive lifestyle of the local elites.” Marvin L. Chaney, “Systemic Study of the Israelite Monarchy,” *Semeia* 37 (1986), 73; Gottwald, *The Hebrew Bible in its Social World and in Ours*, 159; Marvin L. Chaney, “Bitter Bounty: The Dynamics of Political Economy Critiqued by the Eighth-Century Prophets,” *The Bible and Liberation: Political and Social Hermeneutics*, eds. Norman K. Gottwald and Richard Horsley (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 254; Cf., Hopkins, “Agriculture in Monarchical Israel,” 179.

<sup>359</sup> Prophetic warnings against oppression (עשק, חמט, ינה) presume these kinds of dangers that had threatened the lives of the marginalized people during the monarchic period. Gerstenberger, “עשק,” *TDOT*, vol. 11, 412–17; H. Haag, “חמט,” *TDOT*, vol. 4, 478–87; Ringgren, “ינה,” *TDOT*, vol. 6, 104–106.

<sup>360</sup> Some widows were able to gain possession and wealth as shown in the accounts of Micha’s mother (Judg 17:1-6), Abigail (1 Sam 25:42), the Shunammite (2 Kings 8:1-3), Naomi (Ruth 4:3-9), and a widow (Prov 15:25). Galpaz-Feller, “The Widow in the Bible and in Ancient Egypt,” 233; Lev 25:47 reveals that some strangers prospered materialistically, “possibly by business or trade.” D. Kellermann, “גור,” *TDOT*, vol. 2, 446.

delivered the poor who cried,” 29:12a; “I was eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame,” 29:15; “I was a father to the needy,” 29:16b), his strongest assertion, with specific details of his support, comes from Job 31. Job at this stage claims to have provided the vulnerable populace with basic resources for their survival, such as food, clothing, and shelter; he claims that he has not “eaten my morsel alone, and the orphan has not eaten from it” (31:17); “If I have seen anyone perish for lack of clothing, or a poor person without covering” (30:19); “the stranger has not lodged in the street; I have opened my doors to the traveler” (31:32). Particular to his description of provision is the image of what Newsom refers to as a “village patriarch” it evokes.<sup>361</sup> This image extends the boundaries of household to include in it the most vulnerable populace of a broader community. As any household member would naturally expect from their patriarchal head, the orphans were allowed to share his food (31:17), they grew up under his care (31:18), the widows were provided with his guidance (31:18), and the strangers were allowed to lodge in his house (31:32). In this respect, he plays a role of a father (אב) to the vulnerable people, and this is how he identifies himself: “I reared the orphan like a father” (31:18); “I was a father to the needy” (29:16). An implication of becoming a patriarch to these people is that his care and protection for them would go beyond the matter of subsistence. His role may have also covered legal protection as the responsibility of any patriarch for his household would normally involve legal support for its members.<sup>362</sup> Indeed, the legal connotations implied in his use of the term, ריב (dispute), in

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<sup>361</sup> Newsom’s observation of this image in chapter 29 fits with chapter 31 as well. Newsom, “Job,” 4:537.

<sup>362</sup> For instance, the father of household was responsible for solving any offense done toward its members (e.g., Num 35:19). Victor H. Matthews and Don C. Benjamin, *Social World of Ancient Israel, 1250–587 BCE*, 8, 10, 11; Bendor, *The Social Structure of Ancient Israel*, 75; cf., Newsom, “Job,” 4:537–38.

29:16<sup>363</sup> and the description of his fight against the unrighteous in 29:17<sup>364</sup> underscores the efficacy of the help he offered in the judicial context on behalf of vulnerable people: “I championed the dispute of the stranger” (29:16b); “I broke the fangs of the unrighteous” (29:17a).

Job’s speech in 31:39 offers a glimpse into his provision of necessary resources or aid for the survival of vulnerable peasants: “if I have eaten its [land’s] yield without payment, and caused the death of its workers [lit. owners].”<sup>365</sup> If we understand Job here to be concerned with the peasants who would work his land (אֲדָמָה, 31:38), he claims in this verse that he never abused his contractual relationship with them and that he supported their survival through such a relationship: not only did he provide them with a workplace but he also paid their wages punctually. This interpretation corresponds well with the social images that scholars believe are being evoked in the present context. For instance, Newsom and Clines observe that Job’s focus on his social relation with the peasants in 31:39 parallels the issue of justice concerning paying rightful and punctual wages for the poor and powerless laborers, addressed in Lev 19:13, Deut 24:14-15, and Mal 3:5<sup>366</sup> (e.g., “...you shall not keep yourself the wages of a laborer until morning,” Lev 19:13).

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<sup>363</sup> Clines, *Job 21–37*, 990; Habel, *The Book of Job*, 411.

<sup>364</sup> The oppression exerted by the unrighteous includes abuse of their power in the legal context. For instance, Ex 23:2 bans partiality toward the mighty in a lawsuit. Cf., Botterweck, “אֲבִיּוֹן,” 31.

<sup>365</sup> The literal translation of “its workers” is owners (בְּעָלִים), possibly of land. I follow Clines’ translation that emends בְּעָלִים to פָּעַל (to do or work) following his observation that Job already spoke of the land of his own in the previous verse. Clines, *Job 21–37*, 1032.

<sup>366</sup> These texts are the ones from which interpreters often draw a parallel. See Newsom, “Job,” 4:555; Clines, *Job 21–37*, 1032.

What all our discussions about the needs of the most vulnerable populace in Job's society and his engagement with them bring to light is a pivotal role of his wealth in his past successful social interactions that would earn him a righteous moral standing. This populace confirmed his righteousness in the form of gratitude and respect (29:11, 13)—i.e., honor—because he, as a wealthy landowner, offered them practical aids that improved the welfare of their lives, such as essential resources for survival and other resources for agricultural works—e.g., offering day-labor jobs from his farm. Importantly, this aid, particularly that related to survival, would have required Job to possess economic capability, since this condition was essential for any benefactor to distribute resources to the underprivileged populace. Furthermore, the economic capability was also crucial for addressing other matters, such as legal issues, as it allowed them to acquire the necessary power to handle these issues by demonstrating their ability to meet social ideals and subsequently enhancing their honor and status. Job was able to help the most vulnerable populace in these ways because he had enough wealth to provide for their essential needs related to survival and to establish his status by demonstrating his ability to serve the needs of his society.

## **2.2. Job Protected His Household Members**

Along with the most vulnerable populace and the economically vulnerable peasants, Job's household members can count towards those whose interrelation with him would have contributed to his past honor. Their existence appears across the book, from the very beginning where we find affairs between him and his family (1:2–5, 13–19; 2:9), through Job's complaint about his alienation by his household members (19:13, 16–17) to the Epilogue where he reunites with some of these members and had more children (42:11, 13–16). We can assume that his

honor relates closely to his household members, considering his male gender and his position as their head. As mentioned in section 4.5 of Chapter 2, in which I introduced an idea of collective honor, in honor and shame cultures, males with authority and power, such as a patriarch, are usually responsible for protecting and supporting people close to them, including family, relatives, and even guests in some societies. Their success in doing so results in the maintenance of their own status and that of those people close to them; a failure to do so results in dishonor or shame falling upon both groups. This happens because the public treats their honor collectively. Pitt-River states: “Honor pertains to social groups of any size, from the nuclear family whose head is responsible for the honor of all its members to the nation whose members’ honor is bound up with their fidelity to their sovereign.”<sup>367</sup> This trait of collective honor suggests an additional source of Job’s honor. Part of his honor may have originated from his successful performance of a protective and supporting role for his household members as their male head.

The correlation between Job’s honor and his patriarchal responsibility can be found in Eliphaz’s accusation against Job in 22:6a—“For you have exacted pledges from your brothers (אָחֵיֶיךָ) for no reason...” Eliphaz presents this accusation as part of his attempt to identify clear evidence of Job’s sins, which he believes are sufficient to justify the divine punishment (“Therefore snares around you, and sudden terror overwhelms you,” 22:10). Eliphaz’s rhetorical emphasis on the grave nature of Job’s sins seems to underlie his choice of victims that differ from those typically associated with such actions elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. In other texts, the victims are generally the vulnerable, such as the widow (Deut 24:17; Job 24:3b), the poor (Ex 22:25; Job 24:9), or unspecified vulnerable neighbors (e.g. “If you take your neighbor’s cloak as a pledge,” Ex 22:6). However, Eliphaz uses אָחֵיֶיךָ, whose literal sense, “your brothers,” adds

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<sup>367</sup> Pitt-Rivers, “Honor and Social Status,” 35-36.

“special obligation” to him, making this action “heinous” and unacceptable, as Newsom and Clines similarly point out,<sup>368</sup> thereby serving as the critical evidence for his presumption of Job’s guilt. In other words, Eliphaz argues that Job’s failure to fulfill his patriarchal duties to protect his kinsfolk leaves no doubt about his wickedness, to which the divine responded with misfortunes.

However, contrary to Eliphaz’s presumption, the final form of the book, particularly the Prologue, affirms Job’s guiltless state: “That man [Job] was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil” (1:1). This statement frames the thematic structure of the subsequent parts, including the Dialogue. When viewed in the context of Job’s implied patriarchal duties in Eliphaz’s accusation (22:6), Job’s blameless and upright condition indicates that he did not neglect these duties and thus remained worthy of honor.

Besides protecting vulnerable kinsfolk, Job appears to have performed other duty according to the Prologue. It is his regular sacrifice for his children’s inadvertent sins as seen in 1:5: “...he would rise up early in the morning and offer burnt offerings according to the number of them [children] all...” The literary structure of the Prologue and the religious and social context of Job’s community suggests the possible correlation between his successful performance of this cultic duty and his past honor. This early phase of the Prologue raises an issue of innocent suffering by introducing the nature of misfortune that Job is about to encounter: although he is blameless (תם, 1:1, 8; 2:3) and upright (ישר, 1:1, 8; 2:3), he suffers because of the Satan’s scheme (1:9–11; 2:4–5). What’s notable at this stage regarding the correlation between Job’s patriarchal duties and his honor is the author’s choice of a proof for his righteousness, a moral condition that would enable him to acquire honor. The author counts toward Job’s

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<sup>368</sup> Newsom, “Job,” 4:500; Clines, Job 21–37, 555–56.

righteousness his parental care, which he would perform by offering burnt offerings for his children on a regular basis. This ritual action carries protective and supportive effects in the current context, since it keeps the children morally clean before God so that they may avoid potential divine punishment for the sinner—“...it may be that my children have sinned, and cursed<sup>369</sup> God in their hearts...” (1:5). Scholars note that the ritual allusions in this action do not invoke a specific cultic ritual as prescribed in the priestly laws. Clines states: “No special technical term is used for sin offering (like the *חטאת* of the priestly legislation, e.g., Lev 4), but a general term *עלה* “(ascending) sacrifice” (again not in the technical sense of “whole burnt offering,” e.g., Lev 1).”<sup>370</sup> Pope points out that Job’s sacrifice does not follow the formal cultic procedures as in the priestly laws: “The cult depicted here is primitive, without priesthood. The patriarch himself perform the sacrifices, as in the case of Balaam, Num xxiii1, 14, 29.”<sup>371</sup> This relative inattention to identifying the specifics of rituals performed in the present context rhetorically highlights Job’s strong motivation to remain upright through ritual actions. It appears in the context that he intended their theological effect to extend beyond merely protecting himself to safeguard his children as well. Clines makes a similar point about the gains of Job’s ritual actions in a theological sense: “Job’s concern for the “holiness” of his family—by which is meant their ritual purity and their security within *the sphere of the divine protection*—leads him to “send” and “hallow” his children” [emphasis added].”<sup>372</sup> The Prologue’s emphasis on Job’s

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<sup>369</sup> Job uses *ברך* (lit. to bless) perhaps to euphemistically describe his children’s potential guilt as Newsom points out. Later his wife uses the same term to condemn him in 2:9, saying “curse (*ברך*) God and die.” Newsom, “Job,” 4:346.

<sup>370</sup> Clines, *Job 1–20*, 16.

<sup>371</sup> Pope, *Job*, 8.

<sup>372</sup> Clines, *Job 1–20*, 16.



righteous inclination and his children as its beneficiaries indicates that he would successfully perform protective and supportive roles typically imposed on responsible males in societies like his. In specific, his theological-moral care through ritual actions served to fulfill those roles, helping him protect, or even acquire, honor.

After the dialogues among different characters in the poetic center, which reveal the shame ascribed to Job in relation to his incapacity to perform various duties required of males like him, the Epilogue reintroduces paternalistic duties that correlate with the honor restored to him, especially in regard to protecting the welfare of his new children. As the outcome of Job's restoration, which brought an end to his public isolation and thus returned his honor and status, the Epilogue describes how he became able to support his children again, particularly through inheritance. The narrator reports that Job could give an inheritance to his three daughters—Jamimah, Keziah, and Keren-happuch—along with their brothers, so that they might continue to be functional in and out of their household and thus contribute to their family's honor, which affected not only themselves but also their father, Job (42:14–15).

As with other groups mentioned in the previous section, wealth was integral to Job's previous honor pertaining to his interactions with his household members, since it enabled him to secure at least two critical resources to make these interactions a proper route to acquire honor. The first of these resources secured by his previous wealth include some basic survival resources, such as food, clothing, and shelter, those that he would also offer to the most vulnerable populace and the economically vulnerable peasants. As opposed to Eliphaz's accusation that Job jeopardized the survival of his brothers (22:6a) by exacting pledges, Job would have actually supported them as well as other household members, given his righteousness before his fall that the Prologue confirms (1:1, 8; 2:3). As for the children he begot

later in life, the resources he provided to his household members extended to a sufficient inheritance to his direct descendants (42:10, 12), which may have enabled them not only to survive but also to remain socially functional and thus protect their own and their family's honor. Supporting his own family was possible for Job because he had enough wealth to secure and provide the basic survival resources and the inheritance for his direct descendants. The second type of resources, which Job's previous wealth enabled him to secure, relates to his ritual practice of offering sacrifice. He needed sufficient sacrificial animals for theological-moral care of his family. Doing so was of course possible for him due to the abundant flocks he owned (1:3–5).

### **3. Final Verdict: Job's Honor Defense Not Viable to His Audience**

My analysis of Job's former social interactions with various groups of people in his community suggests that his honor defense was never likely to persuade his audience into conferring honor to him due to a lack of observable wealth and actions by which he might "prove" his righteous and honored state. For both direct and indirect recipients of his benevolence and many witnesses to it, his social functionality that came from his economic ability to secure and provide critical resources for serving the needs of those surrounding him had been the decisive evidence for his righteous moral condition. When they conferred honor to him, they acknowledged a socio-economically capable Job. Job argues something that could not be proved without his wealth.

## CONCLUSION

### 1. The Social Dimensions of Job's Suffering

Job's suffering from his public isolation involves at least three realities. The first reality is a collapsed social foundation where his perceived worth lies—i.e., the ruined social basis of his identity. His inclusion of public recognition in how he perceives his past and present conditions suggests that his social relationships are an important foundation upon which he constructs his identity. This means that, as with typical males from honor and shame cultures, he considers how others view him a critical determinant of his own worth. As implied in his final speech, this way of constructing an identity undergirds his past life and still affects his present life; he longs for the time when he felt worthy and satisfied over the positive attention and high status he received from the public. For this reason, when people withdraw their attention from him, he experiences himself as worthless. A more atrocious aspect of his public isolation is its widespread nature; even those who were once close to him, such as his household members, no longer want to recognize him. Having lost a critical index for his worth, he literally became nothing in his community. Suffering appears to be an unavoidable result for him, as the social changes and challenges he faced compounded the distress caused by other trials, such as the loss of his children and his own health, pushing him to the point where he could no longer manage his circumstances.

The second reality is a collapsed theological foundation of Job's identity. His constant concern and search for theological meanings of his past and present situations suggest that part of his identity consist in what he believes is divine approval of his way of life. His theological-

moral worldview attributes the right functioning of the moral order of universe to the work of retributive divine justice. This implies that he estimates his divinely approved worth by looking at matters that happen to him in his real life. When positive experiences come to him, it means that God approved his worth; when he faces negative experiences, it reflects his worth is rejected by God. His public isolation is readily classed among the latter experiences because it wreaks havoc on the socially conditioned domain of his identity. He reads this divine refusal of his worth from his public isolation; he interprets God as the main author of such a hostile experience. This reality is certainly painful to Job because his life has been oriented toward receiving divine approval, but not losing it. Together with the loss of his sense of worth on the social plain, the divine disapproval of his worth may have totally shattered the meaning of his existence. His identity lost all its foundation.

The third reality is the impossibility of the restoration of Job's bruised identity through a reversal of the current public impression of him. He resists his public isolation and attempts to shift the public's present negative opinions into more positive ones using several rhetorical strategies. As it turns out, however, these strategies proved ineffective in persuading his present audience as well as his potential audience who share his socio-cultural context. His claim is not persuasive to them largely because he lacks sufficient status to confront them and some tangible evidence to prove his worth, such as his health and, more importantly, his ability to act in particular ways via a high socio-economic status. This reality closes off chances to fix his damaged worth, perhaps afflicting him all the more.

What makes these realities even more bitter for Job is his belief in the unjust nature of his suffering. Along with his public isolation, all other negative human experiences befallen him should have not happened according to the right moral order of the cosmos, which through his

direct confrontation with God he still believes the divine should have implemented properly. He is so sure that he does not deserve the sorts of hostile realities like those that came upon him, but instead deserves a better existence. Though, as many interpreters say, this resoluteness sustains his protest and helps him not give up on his own life,<sup>373</sup> it does not mean that it reduces the degree of suffering he currently experiences. Rather, in circumstances when this kind of resoluteness does not elicit any sympathy or agreement from others, it would only make a person feel utterly miserable and abandoned. A solution to this reality could only be thought in one's imagination, which is what Job does when he imagines a heavenly mediator for his case. It seems natural that Job's inner turmoil is never calmed despite all his efforts to handle his hostile realities. Job may have felt consciously or unconsciously that he engages in a battle he could never win.

## **2. Contributions to Joban Scholarship**

The current study, with its focus on the phenomenon of public isolation, has provided several socio-anthropological insights that may help advance previous scholarly discussions on characters and the theme of suffering in the book of Job. First, it helps explain the rhetorical impasse between Job and the friends in the dialogue, bringing attention to a social force that may have fostered the former's rigid stance toward the latter. Adding to previous ways to explore Job's rigidity and ever-growing antipathy toward his friends, such as those looking into his

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<sup>373</sup> Underwood, "Battered Love": Exposing Abuse in the Book of Job," 178; Newsom, *The Book of Job*, 157, 160; Newsom, "Job," 4:442; Habel, *The Book of Job*, 55.

psychological state,<sup>374</sup> my study brings Job's social relations to the foreground and takes his obvious attachment to positive public attention as a main interpretive lens to examine his hostile attitude toward his human interlocutors. This approach identifies his concern for honor as a sometimes overlooked but important contributing factor to his current attitude. Impelled by the pressure from his public isolation, Job may have considered his dialogue with his friends as a verbal dual, in which he must attain a victor's position. Because a failure to do so would mean for him letting his already bruised identity completely shatter, he likely felt desperate to contend against any ideas in his friends' speeches that undermine his moral claim to innocence and, consequently, deny his honor and the status it represents. His rigidity and antipathy toward his friends are inevitable corollaries of his effort to protect his worth, for those speeches teem with objections to his moral claim and thus need to be refused.

Second, the current study draws attention to a theological-moral foundation of the group mentality behind Job's public isolation that may have contributed to its unanimous and rapid progression. In addition to an impulse to quell a social disorder by sacrificing a single victim<sup>375</sup> and a purity culture that disallows a physically and ritually unclean body of Job,<sup>376</sup> it suggests that people's perspective, based on the threefold chain between one's moral standing, its divine (in)validation, and external circumstances, shapes how they perceive his worthless state, thereby justifying his public isolation. This perceptual framework renders adequate to receive positive

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<sup>374</sup> Kahn finds Job's descriptions of feelings and experience suitably matching the psychotic process of mentally ill patients, viewing Job's hysteric response to God and his friends as a sign for depression and paranoid. Kahn, *Job's Illness*, 24–50.

<sup>375</sup> Girard argues that Job's society achieved a moment of harmony by collectively persecuting him. Girard, *Job*, 71.

<sup>376</sup> For the relationship between his skin condition and the purity culture or theological interpretation, see Basson, "Just Skin and Bones: The Longing for Wholeness of the Body in the Book of Job," 294; Dell, "What Was Job's Malady?" 72–73; Newsom, "Job," 4:355.

public attention only those whose moral conditions are deemed righteous. It is perhaps in this framework that people found Job socially inadequate, for his presently miserable situations all signal his sinfulness.

Third, the current study illuminates the material basis of Job's socially oriented suffering, drawing attention to the impact of his loss of property on the foundation of his perceived self-worth. This impact has not been discussed much compared to other elements of his loss, such as the decimation of his children and health.<sup>377</sup> Specifically, demonstrating the pivotal role his wealth plays in his acquiring of honor in the past, my study suggests that his current economic incapacity would perpetuate his shame. The public would continue to ignore his social presence not only because his ongoing poverty makes him not socially functional and thus unable to achieve a righteous moral condition but also because it contradicts his moral claim that his righteousness is intact. In a socio-economic sense, his suffering is about the impossibility of restoring his bruised identity and about the immense gulf between his worth in his own eyes and that in the eyes of the public, both of which is due to his lack of practical means to publicly prove his worthy state.

### **3. Possible Responses to Job's Socially Oriented Suffering Today**

As mentioned at the very outset of this study, a primary aim of my study has been to arrive at some practical benefit for general, and not only academic, Bible readers—to enable them to use “the biblical text as a self-reflective tool to better deal with certain real-life issues.”

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<sup>377</sup> Dell, “What Was Job's Malady?” 71–73; Basson, “Just Skin and Bones: The Longing for Wholeness of the Body in the Book of Job,” 289–94; Newsom, “Job,” 4:355; Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job*, 280; Ball, *The Book of Job*, 272–73.

Now that my discussions have focused on ideas that emerge almost exclusively from the textual world of the book of Job, it would be a fitting conclusion to this study to offer some practical insights into Job's socially oriented suffering, which readers may appropriate or develop further for their own use. In what follows, I will offer several appraisals of the characters involved in this particular type of suffering. These appraisals carry ethical and didactic undertones, which may benefit readers in navigating similar experiences alongside these characters.

### **3.1. For Job and His Companions**

#### **3.1.1. Honor and Shame Ethos Speaks to Suffering from Public Isolation**

This study identifies Job's public isolation as one salient contributing factor of his suffering. People's collective behavior spurred him on to struggle painfully over the loss of his honor and status, and the implications this loss had on the social and theological-moral foundations where his perceived worth lies. Any direct solutions for his suffering from the public isolation would come to him externally through materialistic means. As discussed in the last chapter, his economic ability lies at the heart of this social dimension of his suffering. The frame narrative of the book supports this idea, describing that positive public recognition returned to him as his wealth was restored to him (42:10–11). Be that as it may, might we imagine other solutions for his suffering from his public isolation than restoration of wealth—the solutions that help reduce his distress, perhaps internally, so that he may no longer feel disturbed by people's withdrawal of their attention from him even if he does not retain enough wealth?

We may consider as a potential solution Job's enlightenment about the true mechanism of how the public actually give attention to certain individuals. This study suggests that an



important cause for his socially oriented suffering is his perspective that presumes a firm link between a social phenomenon and its theological-moral representation—i.e., public isolation reflects a sinful state and symbolizes divine disapproval of the worth of those being isolated. It further suggests that the link might not always be tight, as the view of the public, who functions as divine agents within Job’s perspective, does not necessarily mirror the genuine divine standpoint in reality: for instance, the public confirmed Job sinful through their collective behavior while he was in fact confirmed righteous by God according to the heavenly council in the Prologue (1:8; 2:3). Instead, they seem to consider more practical reasons in their role as agents, conferring honor upon certain individuals—one of which clearly relates to their socio-economic functionality. Had Job been given the opportunity to reflect on the dynamics between his honor and his economic capacity, which may have conflicted with his theologically and morally assessed worth, this might have prevented his bitter emotions from eroding his ego and, though not resolving his affliction entirely, could have alleviated it from within.

At any rate, the book of Job as it stands promotes the view that Job was unable to fully comprehend the critical role the public’s interest in socio-economic gains from benefactors like him played in their conferring honor upon them. Within this constructed view, we may explore further what underlies Job’s oblivion regarding honor dynamics. On one level, we might attribute this to his personal limitations—specifically, his intellectual inability to process the multi-dimensional aspects of certain experiences. On another level, his oblivion may point to a systematic limitation that hinders a person from correctly perceiving others when that person is situated in an unequal, vertical relationship, holding a higher position than others. Having been a wealthy patron to many others and a pursuer of a righteous life, what Job surely strove to see in his social interactions was their gratitude and respect, the pivotal indices for his worthiness in

both theological-moral and social senses. In so doing, what he inadvertently missed out was perhaps the people's socio-economic and political motivations that lay behind those responses to him. For these people, their response to Job's provision of their practical needs appears to be based more on their desire to maintain their beneficial relationship with him for their survival than on any tacit demand to evaluate his true theological, moral, or social worth. After all, it was their needs that tightly bound them to him: they withdrew when Job lost his wealth and could no longer serve their needs, even though he remained righteous and therefore theologically and morally worthy throughout. Instead of identifying Job's true value, as typical in patron-client relationships, their main effort was perhaps to successfully exhibit their supply of "intangible assets," such as honor that their benefactor strived to acquire, rather than revealing their underlying material motivations.<sup>378</sup> In this respect, Job's obliviousness to the socio-economic underpinnings of his honor can be seen to have resulted from a combination of his zeal for being righteous and a social hierarchy that obscures the deeper motivations behind a "mechanical reciprocity" between benefactors and their beneficiaries.

These observations on Job's obliviousness to deeper social dynamics may provide insight for those in similar socio-cultural situations—those who view public recognition as a critical indicator of their personal worth and who, as a result, suffer from public isolation. Job's case suggests that using public recognition as a key index for estimating one's worth, whether morally or theologically, is inadequate, as honor in some honor and shame cultures—such as the one represented in Job—can be economically volatile. It is worth considering that what their honor

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<sup>378</sup> Section 2 of Chapter 2. See also Wolf, *Pathways of Power*, 180; S. N. Eisenstadt and Louis Roniger, "Patron-Client Relations as a Model of Structuring Social Exchange," 49–50; Campbell, *Honour, Family, and Patronage*, 230; Houston, *Contending for Justice*, 44; Honor and power go hand in hand in the stratified agricultural society. Gerhard E. Lenski, *Power and Privilege: A Theory of Social Stratification*, 210–19; Pitt-Rivers, "Honor and Social Status," 58.

represents may relate more to their social functionality, proportional to their economic abilities, than to their true selves.

### **3.1.2. God Speaks to Job's Suffering from His Public Isolation**

This study has suggested that, as much as Job suffers from the collapsed social foundation of his perceived worth as reflected in his public isolation, he is also afflicted by his theological engagement with this collective behavior. More broadly speaking, he agonizes since all his tormenting realities—familial, physical, social, and economical—lead him to conclude he is a victim of divine mistreatment or injustice. His human interlocutors attempt to answer his intellectual struggle over theological issues with their counsels that he give himself over to God's authority and beseech him for mercy and restoration. Plausible as these counsels may seem to the interlocutors themselves, Job rejects them because he does not agree with the theological-moral presumptions underlying the counsels—namely, the assumption that he is a sinner and deserves divine punishment like the one that took away his children, wealth, and health. Perhaps it is almost impossible for him to do so, as accepting them would mean denying all the efforts he put into remaining righteous, as well as lying to himself about what he did not actually do. Essentially, he cannot accept a false narrative about himself because it contradicts both his moral efforts and his understanding of what actually happened. Hence, the counsels aggravate and perpetuate his bitterness, as shown in the ever-growing tension between Job and the friends throughout their dialogues.

The book of Job as it stands provides at least two additional answers to Job's theologically oriented suffering, especially through the mouth of God—namely, God's reply to Job from the whirlwind in 38:1–41:34 and God's final remarks on the speeches of Job and his

friends in 42:7–8. One noteworthy observation regarding these sections of the book of Job is that Job no longer argues about divine injustice once he hears the divine responses. Potential reasons for Job’s silence can be understood through discussions among interpreters regarding his understanding of the divine reply from the whirlwind, which culminates in his concluding remarks in 42:2–6. These discussions center on 42:6 where Job concludes his standpoint using ambiguous wordings, the two core terms of which are מֵאֵשׁ and נִחַם: “therefore I despise (מֵאֵשׁ) myself, and repent (נִחַם) in dust and ashes” (NRSV). As for the מֵאֵשׁ, the ambiguity arises because it misses a direct object, requiring readers to fill it in (e.g., Job’s words, God, Job’s legal case). In regard to נִחַם, the ambiguity relates to its variable meaning and its relationship with the object, dust and ashes (e.g., repent, find consolation in, to change one’s mind). Habel helpfully summarizes four possible reasons behind Job’s silence after the divine response from the whirlwind based on potential interpretations of the two ambiguous core terms: 1. Job repented and abased himself; 2. Job found new understanding from the divine speech; 3. Job pretended to repent still trusting his own innocence; 4. Job defied God for the last time.<sup>379</sup> Additionally, Muenchow’s understanding of the divine speech as a honor discourse that aims to highlight the divine’s precedence leads him to view Job’s silence as his complete submission to his authority—i.e., shame. He states: “In these verses [42:5–6], especially, Job recognizes Yahweh’s honor by giving graphic expression to his own awareness of having been ashamed.”<sup>380</sup>

Job’s silence is not unthinkable given how contention over honor is typically enacted in honor and shame cultures; such contention usually occurs between equals. With the appearance of God, whose status, as the divine claims, far exceeds that of Job, he is no longer in a position to

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<sup>379</sup> Habel, *Book of Job*, 579; Newsom, “Job,” 4:628–29; Clines, *Job 38–42*, 1218–1223; Pope, *Job*, 348–49.

<sup>380</sup> Muenchow, “Dust and Dirt in Job 42:6,” 610.

make claims regarding his honor. As Job himself anticipated in 23:6, the significant power disparity between him and the divine prevents their encounter from evolving into a form of contention between equals: “Would he contend with me in the greatness of his power? No, but he would give heed to me.” What he can do without the status necessary to confront God is to listen to the divine’s argument and carefully measure its validity. Job also anticipated this in his earlier speech: “I would learn what he [God] would answer me, and understand what he would say to me” (23:5).

Despite its seemingly involuntary nature within the context of the obvious power disparity, Job’s less argumentative or non-argumentative response to the Divine speech (40:4–5; 42:2–6), the cessation of his intellectual struggle over the nature of his suffering, and the restoration that follows in the Epilogue, make it possible to assume the efficacy of God’s words in preventing his theologically oriented suffering from evolving further. My following discussions focus on this efficacy, with the primary objective of offering Bible readers helpful insights into managing distress caused by their theological engagement with public isolation. The specific question I aim to answer through this process is: “If the divine speeches can have positive effects in helping Job cope with his suffering, particularly in relation to his public isolation, what might those effects be?”

### **3.1.2.1. Alternative Frame of Reference (38:1–41:34): Disorder as Integral to Divinely Governed World**

We discussed that Job perceives at least two distressing aspects of his public isolation, both rooted in theological foundations—one about his divinely disapproved worth and the other about divine injustice. Job’s theologically oriented distress concerning his public isolation relates

closely to the way he evaluates matters based on his understanding that the moral order of the cosmos functions in retributive terms. This perspective interprets his public isolation as divine punishment that disapproves his worth. Subsequently, this interpretation leads him to reach divine injustice, since it indicates that the divine did not govern his matters in what he believes to be a right way that reflected his righteousness by granting him positive experiences rather than negative ones, such as his public isolation.

In Job 38–41 God offers Job an alternative frame of reference to perceive matters, a frame that can help Job manage his theologically oriented pain. It is a divinely controlled disorder, which can provide a more neutral theological take on his situations and thus help him become less distressed by his theological interpretation of his suffering. This perspective emerges when God claims to have created and controlled wild animals (e.g., the lion, the raven, the wild goats, deer, ass, and ox, the ostrich in 38:39–39:18; the hawk, the eagle in 39:26–30) as well as mythical creatures (e.g., Behemoth in 40: 15–24; Leviathan in 41:1–34). Instead of relegating them to the outside of his governed world due to their menacing and destructive power,<sup>381</sup> God gives them providential care and lets them exist in the world as rightful creatures. For instance, he claims to take care of animals that are hostile to humans and impossible to domesticate: “Can you hunt the prey for the lion...Who provides for the raven its prey...” (38:39–41). He furthers that mythical creatures with chaotic and violent power are also part of his created world, having a right to exist in it. “He [Behemoth] ranks first among the works of God” (40:19a); “Nothing on earth is his [Leviathan] equal—a creature without fear” (41:33).<sup>382</sup>

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<sup>381</sup> They are traditionally understood to live in inhabited areas because of this power. Perdue, *Wisdom in Revolt*, 214–15, 262; Newsom, “Job,” 609, 610–11.

<sup>382</sup> *Ibid.*, 618, 623–25.

God's inclusive attitude toward these animals and creatures implies that he considers what looks disruptive to an ordered world (i.e., disorder) as a regular part of his governed world.

This alternative frame of reference vis-à-vis the "order" of the cosmos calls for an expansion of Job's somewhat narrowly constructed understanding of the orderliness of the universe to include negative human experiences like public isolation. It challenges his perspective, which views divergence from the retributive order of things as antithetical or irreconcilable with an ordered world—a divergence that brings negative experiences to righteous people. Instead, it suggests that such divergence still falls within the variations of human experience, justly conferred by the ordered world, encouraging a view of divine governance as not necessarily restricted to retributive measures.

This new perception would mean to Job, and his modern contemporaries, that public isolation does not necessarily refer to a direct result of the divine punishment for a person's guilt. Any human beings can run into such a situation even if they are morally sound, for it still falls under regularities of the God-governed world. Of course, this alternative perception of public isolation would not entirely eliminate a person's negative emotions, which the social outcasts like Job may feel. Neither does it provide any immediate "answers" to explain the actual motivation or cause behind the divine decision to allow such a hostile experience to befall certain individuals. Nevertheless, we can say that accepting what appears irregular as a regular part of divine governance carries some positive effects. For example, this acceptance can redirect one's efforts to matters within their own abilities, ideally facilitating their recovery from the impact of public isolation. Essentially, this realigned focus has the potential to serve as a healthy bridge until some unnoticed theological foundations of one's suffering are finally revealed and understood.

### **3.1.2.2. Positive Divine Appraisal of Job's Speech (42:7–8): It is Worth Speaking About God**

Job's theological take on his own situations engenders in him bitterness, resulting from his divine rejection. His recurrent complaint over divine violence and alienation indicates how afflictive this sense of rejection is to him: "See he [God] will kill me; I have no hope" (13:15; cf., 17:6; 19:13; 30:11).

A divine response in 42:7–8 turns the tables around with its obvious message of support. God's positive appraisal offered in this response that "you [Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar] have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has" delivers this message. A sense of isolation in Job would be gone with this response, at least partly, as he has now gained a trustful supporter with whom he can find solidarity. Another consoling fact is that that this supporter's opinion on his speech could lead to a meaningful change in his public isolation. As mentioned in the section 1 of Chapter 4, this collective behavior is grounded in friends' theological-moral evaluation of his misfortune and his rebellious mode of speech; these two factors prove his sinfulness, the moral condition which in their frame of reference renders him unworthy of public recognition. The positive appraisal of Job's speech by God in 42:7 questions the latter conclusion, undermining the justifiable ground of his public isolation. Namely, the appraisal unravels that the divine does not consider Job's speech as demonstrating a sinful moral state, thereby invalidating the friends' moral evaluation of Job based on the rebellious mode of his speech.

God's disagreement with the friends that he does not consider Job's speech as evidence of a sinful moral state, however, would not mean that the divine agrees with all Job speaks about him. He once disagreed with Job in his previous speech (38:2; 40:8), and this objection nuances



his support. Knowing exactly what part of Job’s speech God agrees with is impossible to know because the book as it stands does not provide any direct clues as to how or if the two contrasting reactions to Job’s speech can be reconciled. We may need to leave those reactions as “dissonance,” intended to provoke readers in exploring “different dimensions of the complex question of the moral basis for divine-human relations,” as Newsom proposes.<sup>383</sup> Or, the two contrasting reactions can be harmonized by assuming God as partially agreeing with Job’s point—e.g., consent only with Job’s rejection of retributive divine governance.<sup>384</sup> Whatever the original purpose of those reactions and the issue of harmonization surrounding them, the inclusion of the positive appraisal of Job’s speech in the final form of the book implies that his speech is not to be discarded simply due to its rash and unrefined nature; it houses some truths about God, which God himself validates. This conclusion validates the value of various efforts to theologically engage with human suffering, as seen in our earlier discussion of interpretations that resonate or conflict with Job’s suffering. It is worth speaking about God in times of trouble, as such discussions may contain some truths about the divine, as in Job’s case.

### **3.2. Job’s Socially Oriented Suffering Speaks to the Public**

An important outcome of the socio-anthropological analysis of collective behavior, as offered in this study, is the potential discrepancy between the people’s evaluation of one’s worth and the actual worth that must be attributed to this person. In Job’s society, this discrepancy is deeply rooted in people’s common interpretation of one’s external conditions or matters, such as physical health, socio-economic functionality, behaviors, and the phenomenon of misfortune

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<sup>383</sup> Newsom, “Job,” 634.

<sup>384</sup> Clines, *Job 38–42*, WBC 18b (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2011), 1231; cf., Pope, *Job*, 350.

itself. Applied to Job's current situations, this interpretation renders him sinful and unworthy of social life, or even detrimental to society. Holding onto this way of evaluating Job's worth, what the public completely fails to consider is the fact that his inner state has not been changed at all. A past Job, whom they confirmed to possess a high degree of virtue in their interacting with him, is the same Job, who now stands before them.

The observed discrepancy in Job's case would alert anyone who appraises one's worth based primarily on what he/she has or presents externally. It turns us to the reality that such types of evaluation, even if traditionally or commonly accepted, does not necessarily reflect the true value of an individual. One must critically reflect on possible pitfalls in judging others to avoid situations similar to Job's in our society.

Another important outcome of the analysis of Job's public isolation in this study would be his vulnerability. As Girard aptly terms it, Job is a "scapegoat" of the public, for whose isolation they unanimously work together.<sup>385</sup> This is due to their belief that his sin is "clearly demonstrated"<sup>386</sup> within their conceived theological-moral framework. A salient challenge he encounters during this process of scapegoating is his powerlessness and inability to make his voice heard to others. Even if he argues a right claim about his innocence, no people surrounding him, including his close people, are willing to take heed to it. This public attitude is certainly violent and unjust as it crushes his just objection and destroys his honor. This reality may not be only of his. It continues to happen in various majority versus minority conflicts today, such as those concerning race, gender, ethnicity, class, and other public or individual issues. We see that those who take the position of majority tend to predominate in exerting influence regardless of

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<sup>385</sup> For more details about Girard's concept of scapegoat, see the section 2.1.2. of Chapter 1.

<sup>386</sup> Girard, *Job*, 15.

whether or not their opinions are right. What Job's problem speaks to us would be that to avoid unjust, unnecessary oppression of the just opinions from the minority or those with less power in those conflicts we may need to remind ourselves of the potential violence that any type of collective behavior can pose to the powerless minority.

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