The Fate of Undesirables (Job 24:5-12)

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ABSTRACT

Job 24:5-12 present a metaphor that is based on the life of the onager (wild ass) in the desert. Verses 5-12 have been viewed as addressing various entities (robbers, victims, oppressors, vagrants, outcasts and city-dwellers) and evoked a considerable range of interpretations. These diverse interpretations also garnered a fair amount of acceptance, reflecting the ambiguity of the metaphor, its linguistic articulation, and referential framework. In this study a new perspective is adopted regarding the individuals that are the subjects of vv. 5-12. It suggests that Job points to the fate of the undesirables in a community of humans. This perspective fully corresponds to the metaphor of the free, independent, solitary, untamable, food searching, onagers in the desert, and has considerable support in the text (vv. 5-12 and 30:2-8). It also enables a uniform thematic treatment of vv. 5-12. Job charges that God is oblivious to the obviously miserable fate of the undesirables. In this charge one can sense Job’s personal accusation that God is not concerned with the fate of the suffering just.¹

Key words: Job, metaphor, onagers, undesirables, suffering

A INTRODUCTION

Gordis observed that: “Chapter 24 is extremely difficult, both with regard to interpretation of individual verses and to the appropriateness of the chapter as a whole to Job’s outlook.”² Verses 24:5-12, part of Job’s response to the third speech of Eliphaz, are no exception. Duhm simply says: “Der Text ist in einem heillosen Zustande.”³

1 Article submitted: 2014/05/15; accepted: 2014/09/22.
3 D. Bernhard Duhm, Das Buch Hiob erklärt (KHC 16; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1897), 122.
Verses 5-12 presented considerable challenges to commentators. Among the difficulties encountered are:

(i) Identification of the individual/individuals or situation/situations that are being referred to;
(ii) Definition of the inter-verse contextual coherence;
(iii) Resolution of intra-verse textual ambiguities; and,
(iv) Deduction of the thematic relevance.

There seems to be considerable thematic similarity between vv. 5-12 and 30:2-8. Both units talk about people who were expelled from the city/village (v. 12a and 30:5, 8); living in the desert (v. 5a and 30:3); foraging for food (vv. 5b-6 and 30:4); meager accommodations (vv. 7-9 and 30:6-7); and labor (vv. 10-11, 30:2). The unit consisting of vv. 5-12 is usually assumed to be switching to various referents. On the other hand vv. 30:2-8 seem to be addressing a single group. Thus the question arises whether a single referent can be identified also for vv. 5-12.

The purpose of this article is to show that the difficulties encountered can be resolved if it is assumed that the entire unit refers to the undesirables of a community; where, the term “undesirables” defines those individuals who cannot conform with the mores of a typical ancient organized social group. Such individuals were likened by the conforming collective as being “wild asses” (קַזָּנִים). The community’s attitude of intolerance forced on the undesirables a miserable life on the fringe. Job calls attention to God’s continued lack of concern with the fate of the undesirables as an illustration of injustice in the world.

Relatively few text-critical emendations result in the following cogent translation:

*Behold, onagers in the desert, // They go out as usual looking early for food, // the steppe has no bread for the undesirables (lit. shaken out). // In a field that all despise they harvest, // And in a dilapidated vineyard they glean.// Naked they sleep without clothing, // And have no cover in the cold. // From the mountain flow they are drenched, // For absence of shelter they hug the rocks. // Rain would rob (that is, kill) a lonely one, // And would ruin what is on the poor.// Naked they go without clothing, // Hungry they carry the sheaves. // Stepping they press oil, // Wine-presses they tread, // but are thirsty. // From an inhabited city they are cleaned, // And the throat of the defiled cries out, // But God would not mark it unseemly.*
B ANALYSIS

1 The Sub-unit 5-12 and its Referents

Most commentators agree that v. 5 begins a new thematic unit but there is much disagreement on where it ends. Some consider vv. 5-12 being only a partial list of deplorable acts that extends to the end of the chapter. However, v. 12 stands out as a tri-colon and the only verse addressing God. Moreover, the phrases “Behold!” (וַיהי) at the beginning (v. 5) and “not behold” (יִרְאָה) at the end (v. 12) apparently form an inclusio, which delineates the sub-unit. Thus it is reasonable to assume that v. 12 is the concluding verse for the sub-unit 5-12.

Whybray notes that: “The interpretation of this chapter [24] is particularly difficult in that persons referred to are not named, and their identity can only be surmised from the ways in which they are pictured.” The unit has consequently divided into subunits depending on the interpretative approaches that were adopted and the entities that exegetes assumed have been referred to. For instance, Qara (11th – 12th century) takes almost all the indefinite verbs (יָצָא, יָרָא, הָיָה, נִשְׁתָּה, זָדוּר, נַחַם, נַפְלָה) in our unit as referring to the wicked. The exclusion of יָצָא and רָא in v. 11b, however, renders this approach untenable. Moreover, the inclusion of יָפֵש reveals the artificiality of this interpretation. Gordis rightly concluded that the effort of classical Jewish

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5 See for instance Hacham, בִּיוֹב וְעֵר, 180 and Clines, Job 21-37, 591.


7 See Clines, Job 21-37, 590-591, for a sample of subdivisions.

8 Moshe M. Ahrend, Rabbi Joseph Kara’s Commentary on Job (Jerusalem: Mossad HaRav Kook, 1988), 69.
exegesis to refer vv. 5-12 to the activity of the wicked “leads to far-fetched interpretations of many of the verses.”

Many commentators consider vv. 5-8 referring to the poor, who became poor by the wicked acts of the powerful rich, which were described in vv. 2-4. For instance, Ehrlich says: “Von hier [V. 5] an bis zum Schluse von V. 8 werden die Leiden der Armen, der Opfer der mächtigen Reichen, geschildert.” Clines found this reference problematic. He says that vv. 5-8 present a powerful picture, but it does not seem to sit well with what follows. How can those foraging for provisions in the desert be at the same time reapers in the fields and gleaners in the vineyard (v 6) and be engaged in various agricultural processes (vv 10-11)? Obviously they cannot.

He resolves this difficulty by suggesting that the text does not refer to a “literal foraging in the wilderness, but a metaphorical depiction of the hard work required to earn an inadequate living as a farm laborer; it is no better, the poet says, than scavenging for roots in the steppe.” Clines’ difficulty and solution are artificial. It is easy to imagine some engaged in one activity and others in another. Of greater significance is the question “why are the poor in the desert as the onager?” Typically the poor stayed within the community. Thus it would seem that the text does not refer to standard poor folks, but to people who are poor because they have been forced to live on the fringe of the community.

In Ehrlich’s view vv. 9-12 switch back to acts of violence against the children of the poor. He suggests that “Hier [9] und in den zwei folgenden Versen wird beschrieben, wie es den Mutterbrust entrissenen Waisenkindern und sonst gewaltsam geknechteten Kindern der Armen ergeht, wenn sie herangwachsen sind.” More recently, Gordis identified vv. 5-8 as dealing with the suffering of the weak; v. 9 as dealing with the robbery perpetrated by the rich; and, vv.10-12 as dealing with the misery of the poor. However, there is no indication in the text that vv. 5-8 refer to the “weak,” v. 9 describes the acts of the “rich,” or vv. 10-12 speak about the grown up orphans taken into slavery.

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9 Gordis, Job, 265.
10 So do Ehrlich, Randglossen 6, 277; Pope, Job, 174; Edwin M. Good, In Turns of Tempest: A Reading of Job with a Translation (Stanford: Stanford University, 1990), 279; and, Clines, Job 21-37, 590-591.
11 Ehrlich, Randglossen 6, 277.
12 Clines, Job 21-37, 605.
13 Clines, Job 21-37, 605.
14 Ehrlich, Randglossen 6, 278. He reads נפ instead of מְת נפ.
15 Gordis, Job, 253.
Good notes that: “The text swings back and forth from tyrannizers to tyrannized without clear signals.”

Such switches of referents would be difficult for the reader to discern and to follow in a meaningful manner. It is doubtful that our masterful author would have meandered between referents in such a manner. In particular, the noted thematic similarity between vv. 5-12 and 30:2-8 suggests that in vv. 5-12 too he had in mind a single group of people and refers to them.

2 Contextual Coherence

Commentators tried to reveal a logical flow in vv. 5-12. For instance, an anonymous exegete considers vv. 5-12 reflecting the retribution principle of “measure for measure” (מְאֹרֶשׁ בְּמַעֲשִׁי). The wicked, adapted to desert conditions (v. 5a), rob the poor of the meager sustenance that they collect in a long day (v. 5b-c). In turn, marauders would rob the fodder from the field and ripe grapes from the vineyard of the wicked (v. 6). Similarly, v. 7 refers to what the wicked do to the poor, and v. 8 describes what the marauders would do to the wicked; vv. 9-10 describe the cruelty toward the orphan (robbing him of his possessions) and v. 11 describes the retribution (the wicked cannot enjoy the oil and wine that they produce). Verse 12 describes God’s reaction to the way the wicked treat the poor: when the poor groan under the oppression, God delivers them (reading שָׁוָה instead of שָׁוָה), but he God does not ruin the wicked (reading בִּשְׁלָחֵל instead of בָּשָׁלָח). This anonymous exegete introduces extraneous actors and makes some daring emendations to obtain a semblance of contextual coherence. The lengthy quid pro quo list, however, weakens Job’s argument.

Malbim (1809-1879) assumes that v. 5 introduces a new type of evil people; who reside only in the desert and obtain their sustenance by hunting and robbery. However, somehow these wicked have cultivated fields and vineyards in vv. 6-8, in which they exploit forced labor. This work force consists of orphans, robbed originally from their mothers’ breast, and indebted poor (v. 9). Verses 10-11 describe the inhumane treatment of these slaves. Malbim believes that the wicked from the desert exercise their trade also in the city, robbing and killing the weak and unprotected (v. 12). The image perceived by Malbim is incoherent and unrealistic.

Ehrlich considers the logical flow in vv. 5-12 being: the poor ➔ children robbed from the poor ➔ fate of the robbed children when they grow up. It is difficult to anchor this understanding in the text, and it seems that Ehrlich admits this. In particular, one would be hard pressed to find a logical place in

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this scheme for v. 11, which seems to be speaking about dead and wounded in a city.

Most commentators believe that vv. 5-12 describe several unconnected cases in which an obvious injustice is committed. For instance, Clines identifies two cases: (a) the poor (vv. 5-8); and, (b) day-laborer (9-12). Good has the following cases: (a) the poor (vv. 5-8); (b) oppressive evil (v. 9); (c) oppressed poor (v. 10-11); and, (d) a closing tri-colon about human behavior in the absence of divine guidance (v. 12). Hacham thinks that almost each line is a specific case. Thus, Job talks about: (a) desert robbers (v. 5); (b) forced labor (vv. 6-8); (c) enslavement of infants (v. 9); (d) fate of the enslaved children (vv. 10-11); and, (e) extermination of a captured city (v. 12). Pope feels that coherence can be achieved by deleting v. 9 and considering vv. 12a and 12b as referring to “earthly suffering.” However, “earthly suffering” is too broad a concept to fit the apparent theme of “lot of the poor” in the preceding verses (sans v. 9). Obviously, by deleting inconvenient verses a coherent text can always be derived.

The exegetical literature on vv. 5-12 leaves one with the impression that this text is in particular disorganized. Several commentators were uncomfortable by the inner-verse empty echo of 7b and the textual similarity between v. 7a and 10a. This compelled Duhm to delete v. 7. However, Dhorme says that “The resemblance between v. 7a and v. 10a is not sufficient reason for eliminating v. 7.” Larcher places vv. 10-11 before v. 7 because of the similarity between v. 7a and 10a. This too does not seem sufficient cause for the reorganization. Moreover, one would also expect a plausible explanation for the verses having been placed in their MT position, which presumably differs from their original position. However, such explanations are not provided, making the reordering of verses rather arbitrary.

Many commentators felt that v. 9 is in the wrong place. Driver and Gray say: “The verse coheres badly with the context: vv. 6-8 and vv. 10-11 both describe the sufferings of the helpless, v. 9 describes the inhumanity of the heartless.”

20 Clines, Job 21-37, 604-608.
21 Good, Turn, 279.
22 Hacham, יא כ, 186-188.
23 Pope, Job, 177.
25 Dhorme, Job, 359.
26 Apud Clines, Job 21-37, 584.
Some place v. 9 after v. 3,²⁸ Kissane puts it after v. 12;²⁹ others consider it a marginal gloss.³⁰ Here too one wonders why was v. 9 supposedly misplaced in the MT.

Driver and Gray find vv. 10-11 repetitious and corrupt. They say:

Lines ¹⁰b. ¹¹b are such exact parallels that in all probability they originally formed two stichoi of the same distich. The simplest theory is, perhaps, that ¹⁰b originally followed ¹¹b; and that ¹⁰a. ¹¹a, which seem in a somewhat corrupt form, constituted another distich. The alternative is to regard ¹⁰a as a variant of ⁷a, and ¹¹a as a variant of ⁶a (?).³¹

The rationale for this reorganization of the text is the better parallelism between the pair hunger–thirst and nakedness–darkness; assuming that in v. 11a “dark walls” is implied.³² However, it is difficult to see the significance of “dark walls” in an oil-press.

Clines provides an extensive list of alternations of order and deletions that have been proposed for ch. 24. This partial list contains 15 shifts in placement of verses belonging to the unit 5-12.³³ The exegetical literature contains many more. Almost every modern scholar felt that the text of unit 5-12 is incoherent.

²⁹ Edward J. Kissane, The Book of Job (Dublin: Browne & Nolan, 1939), 153. However, he puts 12c, followed by v. 13, at the beginning of vv. 17-25.
³⁰ So do for instance, Bickel and Budde apud Beer, Hiob, 160; Duhm, Hiob, 123; Fohrer, Hiob, 368, etc. For instance, Duhm, Hiob, 123, says: “In 8-10a ist v. 9 ein Citat zu v. 2ff.”
³¹ Driver and Gray, Job II, 167.
³² Driver and Gray, Job II, 167. Driver and Gray point to Isa 11:6-7 being a similar case. However, this could only indicate that biblical authors had a less constrictive notion of parallelism.
³³ Clines, Job 21-37, 589-590.
3 Textual Ambiguities

The drastic variations in the interpretations of the following textual elements in vv. 5-12 clearly demonstrate the challenges that they posed to commentators. For instance, exegetes suggested with respect to:

ונ – read instead ונה “as”;

י – read instead ינה, ינה or ינה, ינה, ינה, ינה;

לו – read instead לנה, לנה “like,”

ית – read ינה with the meaning “like,”

ית – read ינה or ינה;

ם – read ינה “behold”;

ם – read ינה or ינה;

ם – read ינה “wild ass, or onager” (Equus hemionus hemihippus), robbers who live in the desert like the onagers,” read ינה, ינה.

34 Adalbert Merx, Das Gedicht von Hiob (Jena: Mauke’s Verlag, 1871), 126. However, ינה does not occur in the Tanach. In the Talmud ינה means “this, that,” (b. B. Bat. 58a).

35 Pope, Job, 176.

36 Driver and Gray, Job II, 165. They state: “Vulgate again alii [‘others’]; hence Budde’s ס or יש (as v. 2) is very plausible.”


38 Dhorme, Job, 356-357. This reading is suggested by the Septuagint, Targum (א), Peshitta (א), and Vulgate (alii quasi). It is also adopted by Dhorme, Job, 356; Kissane, Job, 150; De Wilde, Hiob, 306; Hartley, Job, 344, etc. ידה occurs only in the late 1 Chr 13:12 and Dan 10:17.

39 So render for instance, Le Hir and Renan apud Dhorme, Job, 357; Pope, Job, 176; and, Clines, Job 21-37, 174.

parison strengthens the likeness (as in Zeph 3:3).

and, most modern exegetes. In Kaplan’s view (Mossad HaRav Kook, 1988), 69; Sforno, p. 156, etc. However, the text does not contain any hint of malevolence.

in Israel Schwartz, (Jerusalem: Makor, 1969), 160; Ralbag, Rabbinic Bibles, ad loc; Berachia ben Natronai, in S.A. Hirsch, (trans.), A Commentary on the Book of Job by Berechiah ben Natronai (London: Williams and Norgate, 1905), 161; Isaiah Mitrani (the last), in Israel Schwartz, (Jerusalem: Makor, 1969), 55; Arnheim, Job, p. 156, etc. However, the text does not contain any hint of malevolence.


So for instance render David Qimchi, in Schwartz, חכמת, 137; Joseph Qimchi, in Schwartz, חכמת, 160; Zarchiah ben Isaac (from Barcelona), in Schwartz, חכמת, 249; Qara, in Moshe M. Ahrend, Rabbi Joseph Kara’s Commentary on Job (Jerusalem: Mossad HaRav Kook, 1988), 69; Sforno, Rabbinic Bibles (Miqraot Gedolot), ad loc; and, most modern exegetes. In Kaplan’s view (183), the absence of the כ of comparison strengthens the likeness (as in Zeph 3:3).

Clines, Job 21–37, 583. Clines does not believe that תָּמוּנָה should be emended.

Ehrlich, Randglossen Band VI, 277.

Pope, Job, 176. So do also some of the Versions (Symmachus, Targum, Vulgate [many MSS]) and many modern commentators. Cf. Ps 104:23.

See Habel, Job, 352.

The words מִשְׂרָה לְעֹֽודָה are missing in the Peshitta.

Hacham, סַפְרַי אֵוֵית, 186.

So render multiple ancient MSS.

So suggests BHK (frr), and it connects מִשְׂרָה לְעֹֽודָה with מִשְׂרָה לְעֹֽודָה (which is missing in Septuagint and Peshitta and the construct form with a ט occurs in Job 18:2).

Kissane, Job, 153.

Hacham, סַפְרַי אֵוֵית, 186. That the people referred to sustained themselves from robbery is assumed also by Rashi, Rabbinic Bibles, ad loc; Joseph Qimchi, in Israel Schwartz, חכמת (Jerusalem: Makor, 1969), 160; Ralbag, Rabbinic Bibles, ad loc; Berachia ben Natronai, in S.A. Hirsch, (trans.), A Commentary on the Book of Job by Berechiah ben Natronai (London: Williams and Norgate, 1905), 161; Isaiah Mitrani (the last), in Israel Schwartz, חכמת (Jerusalem: Makor, 1969), 55; Arnheim, Job, p. 156, etc. However, the text does not contain any hint of malevolence.

Clines, Job 21–37, 583. Cf. for more on מִשְׂרָה Ps 111:5, Prov 31:15, Mal 3:10.

So suggests BHK (frr), and it connects מִשְׂרָה (which is missing in Sephita. The Vulgate reads מִשְׂרָה (praeparant).

Hacham, סַפְרַי אֵוֵית, 186. Such an implication is equivalent to a textual rewrite.
Dhorme unconvincingly transferred by Qara. Cf. Ahrend, Rabbinic Bibles, ad loc; Joseph Qimchi, הַיָּדָהּ, 160; Rabbag, Rabbinic Bibles, ad loc; Zarchiah ben Isaac (from Barcelona), in Schwartz, תַּהְלָלָה, 249; Isaiah Mitrani (the last), in Schwartz, תַּהְלָלָה, 54; Noyes, Job, 159; Kaplan, ¤, 184; A.Z. Rabinovitz, and A. Abronin, קִנֵּה, 1916), 59, etc. Rashbam (c. 1085-1174) assumes that the wicked harvest the fodder and produce of the poor. Some stress that the produce has not yet dried sufficiently (e.g. Zarchiah ben Isaac from Barcelona, תַּהְלָלָה, 249). Joseph Qimchi, הַיָּדָהּ, 160, suggests that v. 6 describes legitimate purchases of produce and wine with money obtained illegitimately through robbery in the desert.

Ehrlich, Randglossen 6, 278. This interpretation relies on Merx’s understanding of the Septuagint (Merx, Gedicht, 126), but it is also attested in the Targum and Vulgate. The Septuagint seems to have the duplicate לַיָּדָהּ דַּלְיָדָהּ פָּרָהָ עָלָי פָּרָהָ עָלָי. The reading לַיָּדָהּ דַּלְיָדָהּ פָּרָהָ is also adopted, for instance, by Ibn Ezra and Ramban (see Rabbinic Bibles, ad loc); Moses Qimchi, הַיָּדָהּ, 108; Hitzig, Hiob, 181; Kissane, Job, 153; Gordis, Job, 265-266; Hacham, תַּהְלָלָה, 186; and, Clines, Job 21-37, 584.

So read, for instance, Merx, Gedicht, 126; Duhm, Hiob, 122; Beer, Hiob, 159, etc. The ℓאחלור confusion is well attested in the Tanach. Guillaume suggested the reading ℓ instead of ℓ, rendering “they go early to the steppe for meat, (To see) if there be food for the (Ir) children.” Cf. Alfred Guillaume, “The Arabic Background of the Book of Job,” in Promise and Fulfilment: Essays Presented to Professor S.H. Hooke in Celebration of his Ninetieth Birthday, 21st January 1964 (ed. Frederick F. Bruce; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1963), 116. Guillaume is followed by Hartley, Job, 344.

Merx, Gedicht, 126. Merx notes: “לַיָּדָהּ דַּלְיָדָהּ sicher zu streichen, wie P. und V.” So do also Driver and Gray, Job II, 165; Gordis, Job, 265; Pope, Job, 174; Habel, Job, 354, etc. However, Dillmann, Hiob, 215, takes ℓ in the sense ist ihm (oder: gibt ihm). Hirzel, Hiob, 150, suggests that the singular ℓ has been used to avoid the orthographically confusing תַּהְלָלָה לַיָּדָהּ כִּיּוֹם.

So render Rashi, in Rabbinic Bibles, ad loc; Joseph Qimchi, הַיָּדָהּ, 160; Rabbag, Rabbinic Bibles, ad loc; Zarchiah ben Isaac (from Barcelona), in Schwartz, תַּהְלָלָה, 249; Isaiah Mitrani (the last), in Schwartz, תַּהְלָלָה, 54; Noyes, Job, 159; Kaplan, °, 184; A.Z. Rabinovitz, and A. Abronin, קִנֵּה, 1916), 59, etc. Rashbam (c. 1085-1174) assumes that the wicked harvest the fodder and produce of the poor. Some stress that the produce has not yet dried sufficiently (e.g. Zarchiah ben Isaac from Barcelona, תַּהְלָלָה, 249). Joseph Qimchi, הַיָּדָהּ, 160, suggests that v. 6 describes legitimate purchases of produce and wine with money obtained illegitimately through robbery in the desert.
the *hip'il* of *קצרה, קצרה* is not attested elsewhere, and the *Qere* of *קצרה* (gal imperfect 3rd masculine plural) occurs in many accurate ancient MSS, most commentators prefer the *Qere*;\(^70\)

- read *ךרשׁ* „rich,"\(^71\) read *ךרשׁ* „wickedness,"\(^72\) means „wicked";\(^73\)

- read *ךלישה* „they will glean,"\(^74\) means „gather late fruit,"\(^75\) „they will pilfer,"\(^76\) “take away the late-ripe fruit,”\(^77\) “they cut,”\(^78\) “they toil late”;\(^79\)

\(^206\); and, Good, *Turns*, 115. Dhorme, *Job*, 358, notes: “It is a fairly common custom in Palestine to reap the harvest during the nights of May or June. Likewise the grape harvest may be gathered at night.” Dhorme thinks that the verse refers to a nightshift following a day of work. During ripening time farmers practically lived in the fields or vineyards, protecting their crop from being stolen. Rawley notes: “That night prowling had to be guarded against at harvest times is clear from Isa. 1.8.” Cf. Rowley, *Job*, 207.

\(^67\) Pope, *Job*, 176. *BHK* notes this emendation. In Clines’ opinion (*Job 21-37*, 584), the emendation *ךלישה* “makes a neat but rather tame parallelism” with the following colon.


\(^70\) Hitzig, *Hiob*, 181. Hitzig says: “Dieses Hiphil, in der Bedeutung des Aktiven Qal nur hier, an der gleichen Stelle im V. wie יָכָר in V. 11., mag richtig sein.” Some feel that the *Qere* is a unjustified replacement of a rare form.


\(^72\) Ehrlich, *Randglossen 6*, 278. He says: “„heiss ein durch Frevel erworbener Weinberg." This reading occurs in one of de Rossi’s manuscripts. Delitzsch, *Hiob*, 69 and 134, seems to be reading *ץיבאَا* (rauben sie freventlich aus).


the verb is a *hapax legomenon* and the adjective occurs only in Job 8:16, cognate languages suggest the meanings “be moist” and “moist,” respectively;

– vocalize *ˇaˇsˇeˇt* “breast,”80 read *mˇaˇsˇeˇr †aˇmˇeˇt* “from the field of a righteous,”81 read *mˇaˇsˇeˇr †aˇmˇeˇt* “from the field,”82 take *ˇaˇsˇeˇt* = “breast, milk of the breast”;83

– read *ˇaˇsˇeˇt* “and the infant,”84 means “that which is upon a poor,”85 “upon the poor”;86

75 So render, for instance, Qara, in Ahrend, *Commentary*, 69; Berachia ben Natronai, in Hirsch, *Commentary*, 161; Delitzsch, *Hiob*, 69; and, Driver and Gray, *Job II*, 162. The verb *kˇiˇsˇeˇs* does not occur anywhere else in the Tanach.
81 Merx, *Gedicht*, 130. Merx finds *Sie bringen von den Feldern des Gerechten an sich* fitting the following בכלל. This is debatable. בכלל ≠ bringen and an sich is not in the text.
is usually rendered “sheaves,” “ears of grain cut off,”\(^\text{87}\)

- Septuagint has ένθισμα ("narrow places") for מַעֲרָת, Peshitta connects with Aramaic מַעֲרָת "meal, banquet," means “between their walls” (Targum: מַעֲרָת מַעֲרָת),\(^\text{88}\) "walls that support the terraces,"\(^\text{89}\) “between rows (שורות) of olive trees,"\(^\text{90}\) "deceptive palm-trees,"\(^\text{91}\) “in prison,” read שְׁרֹשֵׁים "two millstones,"\(^\text{92}\) "two rows’”\(^\text{93}\)

- Targum has "they press the oil" (עשויות מששה). Peshitta renders: “they lie

\(^{85}\) So render, for instance, Ralbag (\textit{Rabbinic Bibles, ad hoc}); Berachia ben Natronai, in Hirsch, \textit{Commentary}, 161; Arneheim, \textit{Job}, 157; Ewald, \textit{Job}, 243; Hirzel, \textit{Hiob}, 150; Noyes, \textit{Job}, 46; Barton, \textit{Job}, 207. This interpretation assumes 

\(^{86}\) So render, for instance, Targum; Vulgate; Hahn, \textit{Hiob}, 200; Hitzig, \textit{Hiob}, 181.


\(^{89}\) So render, for instance, Moses Qimchi, in Schwartz, \textit{🐰}, 108; Fohrer, \textit{Hiob}, 368; and, \textit{HALOT} 4:1453b.


\(^{91}\) Tur-Sinai, \textit{Job}, 365, takes שְׁרֹשֵׁים = שִׁירָרָת.

\(^{92}\) Dhorme, \textit{Job}, 360-361. Dhorme assigns the meaning “millstone” relying on the Arabic حَوْل “wall” and the Akkadian dûru “wall.” He is followed by Pope, \textit{Job}, 175. However, the logic of Dhorme’s etymological derivation does not support his conclusion.


\(^{94}\) The verb קָרֵא is understood to mean “they press oil,” for instance, by Targum: Rashi (\textit{Rabbinic Bibles, ad loc}); Ibn Ezra (\textit{Rabbinic Bibles, ad loc}); Ralbag (\textit{Rabbinic
down” and “press out oil,” Vulgate connects בָּשָׂם לִבְנֵי אֲדֻמָּה “noon” (meridiati sunt);

עַרְד הַמִּצְרָים, מְצֹרֹא הַמַּעֲשֶׂה, מְצֹרֹא הַמַּעֲשֶׂה “terror” – standard expression for the part of population that is unfit for warfighting, as the old, sick, and handicapped (Deut 2:34, 3:6, 4:27), means “populated city,” read מְצֹרֹא הַמַּעֲשֶׂה “from their labor,” means “terror”,

ומְצֹרֹא יִתְנַשֶׁה “and from the houses they will be ejected,” read מְצֹרֹא יִתְנַשֶׁה instead of מְצֹרֹא יִתְנַשֶּׁה, read מְצֹרֹא יִתְנַשֶּׁה “they are chased away” instead of מְצֹרֹא יִתְנַשֶּׁה, usually means “groan”.

throat – means “throat,” soul, “spilled blood,”

Bibles, ad loc); Berachia ben Natronai, in Hirsch, Commentary, 161; Merx, Gedicht, 130; Hahn, Hiob, 200; Hitzig, Hiob, 181; Delitzsch, Hiob, 69; Barton, Job, 208; Pope, Job, 175; Hacham, מְצֹרֹא אֲדֻמָּה, 187; Habel, Job, 352; Fohrer, Hiob, 368; Gordis, Job, 262; and, Clines, Job 21-37, 574.

So do, for instance, Sa’adia, in Kapah, 135; Isaiah Mitrani (the last), in Schwartz, תְּפֵית, 54; Tur-Sinai, Job, 365; and, Kissane, Job, 151. Cf. Sir 43:3.

Ehrlich, Randglossen 6, 279. So also render, for instance, Qara, in Ahrend, Commentary, 69; Isaiah Mitrani (the last), in Schwartz, תְּפֵית, 54; and, Kaplan, גְּנַפְרִי, 185.

Hacham, מְצֹרֹא אֲדֻמָּה, 188. This understanding is implied by the cantillation signs, which connect the two words מְצֹרֹא יִתְנַשֶּׁה is rendered “men,” for instance, by David Qimchi, in Schwartz, תְּפֵית, 137; Ramban (Rabbinic Bibles, ad loc); Berachia ben Natronai, in Hirsch, Commentary, 161; Hahn, Hiob, 200; Hitzig, Hiob, 183; and, Habel, Job, 352. Hahn says: “מְצֹרֹא יִתְנַשֶּׁה is Subject, und unter den Leuten sind zu verstehen die unglücklichen im harten Dienste der reichen Gläubiger schmachtenden Armen.” Cf. Hahn, Hiob, 201.

So render, for instance, BHK; Beer, Hiob, 162; and, Fohrer, Hiob, 367. However, it is difficult to see how מְצֹרֹא יִתְנַשֶּׁה can be an orthographic corruption of מְצֹרֹא יִתְנַשֶּׁה.

So render, for instance, Tur-Sinai, Job, 364; Gordis, Job, 267; and, Strauss, Hiob 19,1-42,17, 95. Cf. Jer 15:8 and BDB, 735b. Clines, Job 21-37, 586, observes that “terror seems the wrong emotion here.”

Merx, Gedicht, 131. Merx adopts the Septuagint’s reading καὶ οἶκοι ἀῤῥημὸν ἐξεβῆσθαν. So does Barton, Job, 208.

So render Duhm, Hiob, 123, and Beer, Hiob, 162.

Pope, Job, 177. So render, for instance, Peshitta ( ואני), Umbreit, Hiob, 168; Ewald, Job, 243; Hirzel, Hiob, 151; Delitzsch, Hiob, 69; Dillmann, Hiob, 217; Driver and Gray, Job II, 168; Dhorme, Job, 361; Kissane, Job, 151; Rowley, Job, 208; Tur-Sinai, Job, 364; Gordis, Job, 267; Pope, Job, 175; and, Good, Turns, 115. However, in the Tanach מְצֹרֹא יִתְנַשֶּׁה are “the dead” not “the dying.”

So renders Duhm, Hiob, 123.

So render, for instance, Moses Qimchi, תְּפֵית, 108; Ewald, Job, 243; Hahn, Hiob, 201; Hitzig, Hiob, 183; Dhorme, Job, 161; Rowley, Job, 208; Tur-Sinai, Job, 364; Pope, Job, 175; Hacham, מְצֹרֹא אֲדֻמָּה, 188; and, Clines, Job 21-37, 574. Tur-Sinai, Job, 366, reading מְצֹרֹא אֲדֻמָּה (by metathesis) is gratuitous.

It is obvious from this partial review of the exegetical literature that vv. 5-12 have been viewed as addressing various entities (victims, oppressors, vagrants, city dwellers, rabble, and civil folks) and they evoked a considerable range of interpretation. These diverse interpretations also garnered substantial acceptance, reflecting the ambiguity of the metaphor, its linguistic articulation, and referential framework.

105 So render, for instance, Berachia ben Natronai, in Hirsch, Commentary, 161; Gordis, Job, 167; Pope, Job, 175; Hacham, תְּסֵפ כְּפִיעַת אָוָה, 188; and, Good, Turns, 115.
106 So render for instance, Duhm, Hiob, 123; Ewald, Job, 243; Hahn, Hiob, 201; Hitzig, Hiob, 182; Delitzsch, Hiob, 69; Barton, Job, 208; Dhorme, Job, 361; Habel, Job, 352; and, Clines, Job 21-37, 586.
107 So renders Isaiah Mitrani (the last), in Schwartz, קַשְׁת, 54.
108 So read, for instance, the Septuagint, Merx, Gedicht, 130; Duhm, Hiob, 123; Beer, Hiob, 162; and, Barton, Job, 208. On the נֶשׁ confusion cf. Aron Pinker, "On the Interpretation of Proverbs 12:27," JBTC 18 (2013): 1-8. Qara circumvents the need for this emendation by understanding v. 12c as וּמַלִּיקֵי נַפְשֵׁי הָאָ残疾人 as "wounded (mortally), dying." Cf. Ahrend, Kara's Commentary, 70.
109 Ehrlich, Randglossen 6, 279. Ehrlich says: "would not hear the plea," and referential framework.
110 Pope, Job, 177. Pope’s attempt to distance his notion from the war milieu by explaining that “the reference is to earthly suffering” makes his interpretation unrealistic. The meaning “wounded (mortally), dying” is adopted, for instance, by Rashi (Rabbinic Bibles, ad loc); Ralbag (Rabbinic Bibles, ad loc); Umbreit, Hiob, 135; Ewald, Job, 243; Hirzel, Hiob, 151; Hahn, Hiob, 201; Dillmann, Hiob, 216; Delitzsch, Hiob, 69; Driver and Gray, Job II, 168; Dhorme, Job, 361; Pope, Job, 175; Hacham, תְּסֵפ כְּפִיעַת אָוָה, 188; BHS, Good, Turns, 115; Gordis, Job, 267; Hartley, Job, 344; and, Clines, Job 21-37, 586.
111 So do, for instance, Peshitta (2 MSS), Umbreit, Hiob, 135; Noyes, Job, 46; Driver and Gray, Job II, 169; Beer, Hiob, 162; Barton, Job, 208; Ehrlich, Randglossen 6, 279; Dhorme, Job, 361; and, Fohrer, Hiob, 367. Fohrer notes: “Eine Änderung von וּמַלִּיקֵי נַפְשֵׁי הָאָ残疾人 »hört« ist angesichts 23,6 unnötig.” Cf. Fohrer, Hiob, 369. Habel, Job, 354, observes that by making this emendation “the ironic interplay with 1:22 is lost.” Septuagint omits וּמַלִּיקֵי נַפְשֵׁי הָאָ残疾人.
112 So render, for instance, Ewald, Job, 243; Arnheim, Job, 158; Hirzel, Hiob, 151; Dillmann, Hiob, 217; Hitzig, Hiob, 183; Rowley, Job, 208; Pope, Job, 175; Hacham, תְּסֵפ כְּפִיעַת אָוָה, 188; Hartley, Job, 344; and, Clines, Job 21-37, 586. Sa’adia understands v. 12c as a categorical denial that God is the cause of the situation described in v. 12a and 12b. Cf. Kapah, Job, 135.
The challenges posed by the thematic and textual difficulties forced some commentators into making rather daring reorganizations in the order of the verses and emendations that do not have any standard text-critical rationalization or literary support. Dhorme says with respect to v. 5: “A spirit of arbitrariness seems to have presided over the various attempts to restore this unfortunate verse.” This spirit can be detected also in the interpretation of some other verses in the sub-unit consisting of vv. 5-12.

C PROPOSED SOLUTION

Ewald thought that in vv. 5-12 Job presents the “undeserved sufferings of all kinds endured by the unprotected from human violence: both by those who are not in direct dependence, vv. 5-8, and by those who under civil government live in complete dependence on their lords, vv. 9-12.” Driver and Gray consider the subjects referred to in vv. 5-8 as being “certain miserable starvelings of the steppe, whose search yields them little food and no shelter; cp. 30:2-8.” Here there is no allusion to the authors of the misery. Whybray notes that: “In vv. 5-12 Job turns from the oppressive actions of the wicked to describe the misery of their victims, who are outcast from society.” Neither of these refers adequately fits the descriptions in vv. 5-12. More appropriately, Job refers in vv. 5-12 to society’s outcasts—victims of the community at large. The solution that is being proposed considers vv. 5-12 being an integrated unit dealing with various aspects of the life of society’s undesirables. Job considers the case of the undesirables, who offer a clear illustration of God’s lack of concern for those suffering for no obvious cause.

113 Dhorme, Job, 357.
114 Ewald, Job, 242.
115 Driver and Gray, Job 1, 207, assume that v. 5 describes “the country remote from men and cities where this pitiable set of human beings, not naturally adapted to it like the wild asses, eke out their existence.” However, the metaphor is about this group of individuals being like the wild asses.
116 Whybray, Job, 110. Similarly, Rowley, Job, 207, says: “In verses 6-8 the state of outcasts is depicted.” Cf. also Dillmann, Hiob, 214.
117 Fohrer Hiob, 372. Fohrer calls the “undesirables” Steppenproletariat (“desert work force”). This term does not connote the stigma and sense of rejection associated with a social sub-group that is compelled to live on the fringe of the society. Duhm, Hiob, 122, felt that “Den Charakter dieses Gedichts hat besonders BICKELL richtig erkannt, der auch mit Recht behauptet, dass Cap. 30 2-8 ein weiterer Teil dieses Gedichts aufbewahrt ist. Es handelt von den ‘Idioten und Namenlosen, die herausgepeitscht wurden aus dem Lande’ (Cap. 30:8) und nun, in der Wüste und auf unwirtlichen Bergen wohnend, in Mangel und Elend, durch Diebstahl und nächtlichen Einbruch, sich durchs Leben schlagen. Sie gehören nach Cap. 30:5 nicht zum herrschenden Volk, sei es, dass sie einer unterjochten (Troglobyten-) Rasse angehören, sei es, dass sie sich aus den v. 4 erwähnten Volksschichten rekrutieren.” Commentators may be right in identifying the undesirables as consisting of individuals/families who are handicapped, unsocial, or reclusive, but they are not troglodytes.
The unit limits are clearly identified by a call to pay attention, “Behold” (וה), in the beginning (v. 5), and by the resigned recognition that God does not pay attention (לא ראיתם אל הבה) at the end (v. 12). וה and לא ראיתם form an inclusio for the unit; illustrating another case of impropriety, but otherwise unrelated to the acts of the wicked in vv. 2-4. Viewing vv. 5-12 as having a single referent draws on the thematic similarity with 30:2-8 and would be detailed in the seriatim discussion of the verses that follow.

1 Verse 5

Kissane rightly notes that “This verse, particularly the final clause is very corrupt. … The obscurity of the passage has led to the omission of some words by the Versions. … Most of the corrections proposed are arbitrary in the extreme and in many cases amount to a re-writing of the whole passage.”

Driver and Gray point to the fact that “As a new class is evidently here introduced,—and one consisting, moreover, not of oppressors, but of oppressed,—a word pointing to a fresh subject is desiderated.” The author, in an argumentative manner, uses וה. Driver and Gray, however, think that Budde’s emendation of וה to וה or וה (as in v. 2) is very plausible. Though the emendation is minor, it is unnecessary, since וה could mean “lo! Behold.”

In the poetic books of the Tanach, וה occurs mostly in Isaiah and Job (32 times). It is often used for stating an agreed upon premise, or for calling attention to a well-known occurrence. In v. 5 it points to the similarity between a community’s undesirables and the desert onagers. It is not necessary to assume the omission of the particle היה, in order to clarify that a metaphor is intended.

Verse 5 uses the familiar image of the אֶכֶת הָעָרָקָא in the desert to form a vivid metaphor. The אֶכֶת “Syrian onager” (Equus hemionus hemihippus), commonly called “wild ass,” is an undomesticated member of the horse family (genus Equidae). In antiquity, it was very common in wildernesses of the

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118 Kissane, Job, 157.
119 Driver and Gray, Job 2, 165.
120 Habel, Job, 353-354. Habel notes that “The equation of the victims with ‘wild asses’ is good poetry; no comparative particle is required.”
121 Tur-Sinai, Job, 360-361. Tur-Sinai argues that אָכַךְ בָּאִישׁ refers to those that flee (into the desert). In his view the Aramaic original of the Book of Job had וַיָּרֶא, “they flee,” which was misunderstood by the translator as being וַיָּרֶא (Hebrew וה בָּאִישׁ) and translated וה in v. 30:3. While intriguing, the explanation cannot be accepted, since its premise that the Book of Job was originally written in Aramaic has not been consistently validated.
122 Jehuda Felix, The Animal World of the Bible (Tel Aviv: Sinai, 1962), 29. Onagers were assiduously hunted by men (Jer 2:24). Felix notes that an “extremely harsh winter about a half century ago was responsible for their complete extinction even in the Syrian Desert.”
Near East and is mentioned in Xenaphon’s works. The Tanach describes the onager as being untamable (Job 11:12), independent (Job 39:5), ranging (Job 39:6), solitary (cf. Gen 16:12, Hos 8:9), and lustful (Jer 2:24).

When these characteristics of the שַׁלֹּם are applied to a human they describe a very unconventional individual. Such individuals are the undesirables of a conservative, conformational, in-bred, and closed society. The metaphor of “the wild asses” aptly refers to those who are uncomfortable with societal constraints (“shouts of the driver he will not hear,” see 39:7b) and expectations, who want to distance themselves from the communal rigors (“he scorns the city’s crowd,” see 39:7a), and for who the community cannot find a proper function. Each society has elements “on the fringe,” a product of common rejection. Such people place great value on individualism, independence, freedom, and rejection of materialism. They have much in common with the onager, but to the “solid folks” of the city they were the “wild” (ナルא), which also connoted the “ghosts” of the Netherworld (רטיים).

A vivid description of these undesirables is presented in 30:3-8. This description also echoes some of the characteristics in vv. 5-12. The undesirables lived in the vicinity of the agricultural land that normally surrounded a city/village (cf. 30:3, גידורו והאש שנאה והמאוה). The uninhabited and uncultivable parts beyond the city/village limits were practically the desert (עדרה).
Hahn rightly says: “Die Oede, Wüste, Steppe ist der Ort, der ihnen, nachdem sie die menschliche Gesellschaft haben verlassen müssen, Nahrung seyn.” So they left it usually (מְגִלָּה) in the morning (מָעָה) to search for food (מָעָה). Some detail of what these undesirables looked for is provided in 30:4; that is, *plucking saltwort among the scrub, broom roots for warmth*.

However, the desert could not provide food for the shaken out (עֵבָרֵב אֵלַת הַתַּחַת) for the undesirables. Hitzig rightly observes: “Die unfrucht-

während der Wüstenwanderungszeit auch die für das spätere Leben im Kulturland gültigen Weisungen vermittelt werden.”

Hahn, *Hiob*, 199.

Seven ancient MSS have מְגִלָּה instead of מָעָה. The reading “as they would habitually do” relies on the confusion which is well-attested in the *Ketib/Qere* apparatus and some MSS. For instance, Jos 4:18, Judg 19:25 is בַּמֶּלֶךְ but בַּמֶּלֶךְ (Qere); Jos 6:5 is הָעַדְתָּה but הָעַדְתָּה (Qere); 1 Sam 11:6, 9 is בהז but בהז (Qere); 1 Sam 5:24 is כַּשְׁמַע but כַּשְׁמַע (Qere); 2 Sam 12:31 is בְּמֶלֶךְ but בְּמֶלֶךְ (Qere); 2 Kgs 3:25 is יָרֵץ but יָרֵץ (Qere); Prov 21:29 is יָשָׂר but יָשָׂר (Qere); Esth 3:4 is סֵאָר but סֵאָר (Qere); Job 21:13 is יָלַל but יָלַל (Qere); Ezra 8:14 is וּכְלִי but וּכְלִי (Qere); Neh 3:20 is וּכְלִי but וּכְלִי (Qere); and 2 Chr 33:16 is יָרֵץ but יָרֵץ (Qere).

Hosea 14:3 has instead of מָעָה. The *Koren Tanach* (Jerusalem: Koren, 1983), 11-14 at the end) notes that: some MSS have in Jos 6:15 is בַּמֶּלֶךְ (K) and בַּמֶּלֶךְ (Q); 1 Sam 30:30 has יָרֵץ but יָרֵץ in some MSS; 1 Sam 7:22 has יָרֵץ but יָרֵץ in some MSS; 2 Kgs 12:22 has יָשָׂר but יָשָׂר in some MSS; Ezek 30:9 has יָרֵץ but יָרֵץ but יָשָׂר but יָשָׂר in some MSS; Ezek 31:11 has יָנֵר but יָנֵר but יָנֵר but יָנֵר but יָנֵר but יָנֵר in some MSS. *Mikraot Gedolot Venice* (1525-1526) has in Job 21:12 but יָנֵר instead of יָרֵץ. In Job 22:24, Codex Petersburg has יָרֵץ but Codex Aleppo has יָנֵר. In Job 36:12, Codex Petersburg and Codex Aleppo have יָנֵר but יָנֵר but *Mikraot Gedolot Venice* (1525-1526), has יָנֵר.

127 Use of יָשָׂר יָרֵץ indicates a play on the noun יָשָׂר “down” and verb יָרֵץ “seek.” The construct followed by a relative prefix occurs also in 18:2 (_KERNEL (תּוֹלֵדָה), Ezek 38:11 (תּוֹלֵדָה), Pss 122:5 (תּוֹלֵדָה), Isa 9:2 (תּוֹלֵדָה), 14:19b (תּוֹלֵדָה), and 19:8 (תּוֹלֵדָה). The phrase is equivalent to מְגִלָּה יָשָׂר יָרֵץ. "Messianic Light." 128 Note that יָשָׂר in 30:4 might echo יָשָׂר in 24:5.

129 The אֲלֵי/לensis is amply attested in the *Ketib/Qere* apparatus. For instance, in Lev 25:30 has יָרֵץ (Ketib) but יָשָׂר (Qere); 1 Sam 2:3 has יָרֵץ (K) but יָשָׂר (Q); 1 Sam 20:2 has יָרֵץ (K) but יָשָׂר (Q); 2 Sam 16:18 has יָרֵץ (K) but יָשָׂר (Q); 2 Sam 18:12 has יָרֵץ (K) but יָשָׂר (Q); 2 Sam 19:7 has יָרֵץ (K) but יָשָׂר (Q); Isa 9:2 has יָרֵץ (K) but יָשָׂר (Q); Isa 49:5 has יָרֵץ (K) but יָשָׂר (Q); Ps 100:3 has יָרֵץ (K) but יָשָׂר (Q); Ps 139:16 has יָרֵץ (Q) but יָשָׂר (Q); Prov 19:7 has יָרֵץ (K) but יָשָׂר (Q); Job 13:15 and 41:4 has יָרֵץ (K) but יָשָׂר (Q); and 1 Chr 11:20 has יָרֵץ (K) but יָשָׂר (Q).

bare Steppe, auf welche sie angewiesen sind, vermag allein nicht, sie zu ernähren; also falle sie auch wieder ins Culturland ein."\textsuperscript{132} Though the undesirables were as the מַרְאֵי בַּשָּׁלֹם, the source of their sustenance must have been the fields of the city/village.\textsuperscript{133} The undesirables were certainly abjectly-poor (כָּל בְּשָׁלֹם, 30:3). Yet, their search for food was not their only or even the most distinguishing characteristic.\textsuperscript{134} As the onagers in the desert these outcasts were society’s untamable, the free spirits, the loners, and maladjusted.

2 Verse 6

The undesirables find use in what society considers undesirable and leaves unused. Job refers in v. 6 to the exhausted field and failed vineyard. This notion is obtained by reading בָּשָׁלֹם instead of the MT.

The word קִלִּים occurs only three times in the Tanach (Isa 30:24, Job 6:5, 24:6). It seems that in Isa 30:24 it refers to grain, and in v. 6:5 to the fodder consumed by an ox. In each of these cases the reference is to animal feed after the harvesting stage. Moreover, the singular קִלִּים does not agree with the plural קִילֵי. Driver and Gray say: “The singular suffix, which cannot naturally refer either to קִלֵי or to קִילָם, is very harsh beside the plural קִילֵי. And what point is in their reaping mixed fodder?”\textsuperscript{135}

It seems that קִילָם is corrupt. The suggested reading קִלָּם, “all despise,” makes minor emendations but results in an eminently cogent text. It has been noted already that the confusion is well-attested in the Ketib/Qere apparatus and some ancient MSS. The orthographic similarity between ג and ח in the square Hebrew script is obvious, though the ב confusion is not attested in the Ketib/Qere apparatus.\textsuperscript{136} This similarity suggests the reading קִלָּם, 3rd masculine singular qal imperfect of קָל, “sneer, talk disrespectfully, turn aside.” קִלָּם, does not occur in the Tanach, but the plural קִילֵי occurs in Prov 3:21. Altogether the root קָל is attested six times in the Tanach, five of them in the Book of Proverbs.

missing 2, is attested in Judg 4:11 (Ketib) but (Qere), and Prov 3:15 מְפַלֵּית (K) but מְפַלִּית (Q).

\textsuperscript{132} Hitzig, Hiob, 181.

\textsuperscript{133} Duhm, Hiob, 122. Duhm says that the undesirables “hausen in der Steppe und ziehn von dort aus auf Füllung des hungrigen Magens, natürlich nicht in die Steppe hinein, sondern in die bewohnten Gegenden.”

\textsuperscript{134} Contra Clines, Job 21-37, 605, who says: “One of the key elements in the depiction there is of the onager’s ceaseless search for food, even in unlikely places, ranging over the mountains as its pasture and searching after any green plant (39:8). In 6:5 also the onager’s life is centered on the quest for ‘green grass’ (שֶׁבֶד; similarly the hind in Jer 14:5-6), and it brays no longer when he has found it. This is the point of comparison with the poor: their total concentration on the quest for survival.”

\textsuperscript{135} Driver and Gray, Job 2, 166.

\textsuperscript{136} The similar ב confusion is attested in Job 17:1 where is usually understood as בַּשֶּׁם.
The field that all turn away from, is apparently a poor field that was over-tilled and is not used any more, but still untended produces some stalks of various grains that in the past grew on it. The undesirable reaped these meager stalks and used the grain; they sustained themselves from the marginal fields and the marginal vineyards as we shall see from what follows. The proposed emendation integrates the two concepts “not his” and “without yield,” which most commentators felt expresses.

It seems that in v. 6b רֹשֵׁם אֱלֹיהָ is corrupt. Driver and Gray rightly note that “the ethical character of the landowner is not here in question.” The suggested solution rests on the possibility that a copyist wanted to write דרך but wrote שֶׁ. Unable to correct his error he wrote the שֶׁ after the שֶׁ and placed a dot over the שֶׁ to indicate that the letter is an error, as was the accepted norm. This dot may have fallen off or was misunderstood by later a copyist as being part of the parchment surface and word was incorrectly read as רֹשֵׁם שֶׁ. It is interesting to note that Good translates רֹשֵׁם שֶׁ by “a poor vineyard.” He might have read through instead of MT רֹשֵׁם שֶׁ, as is being suggested here.

The reading קָשֵׁם instead of MT קָשֵׁם is based on the orthographic similarity between the ק and the ש in the square Hebrew script. Indeed, the Ketib/Qere apparatus attests to the ק/ש confusion in 1 Sam 14:32 where ק is the ketib but ש is the Qere. The verb קָשֵׁם occurs only in our verse and nowhere else in the Tanach. It does not occur in the Talmud, and in the Midrash it is used in the sense of “slow down,” a meaning that would not fit the context. The assumed meaning “despoil” for the verb קָשֵׁם would not fit v. 6b. A vineyard, which produced a lucrative fruit, was well protected in the critical period of ripening, and poor people could not despoil it.

The reading that has been suggested in this solution makes it clear that the vineyard, as the field in the parallel colon, has been abandoned. Whatever grows in the vineyard is wild untended growth, which the undesirables and other poor people make use of. The proposed reading of v. 6 highlights the parallelism between its two cola and clarifies the situation referred to.

3 Verse 7

Verse 7 describes the attire of the undesirables. In the summer, when it is hot they sleep כְּפָר שְׁהֵמָה; and in the winter they have no כְּפָר שְׁהֵמָה. From Isa 20:2 it is clear that כְּפָר שְׁהֵמָה means “without the sackcloth” covering a person’s private parts. It is obvious that v. 7b refers to the typical outer garment, as Deut 24:13 attests.
The sackcloth, an apron around the hips or loins worn next to the skin, was the most basic garment. It was later replaced by an under-tunic (גּוּלָה). People wore usually also an outer garment, a simlah (שִׁלֹה) over the under-tunic, which was made of a large rectangular piece of rough, heavy woolen material, crudely sewed together so that the front was unstitched and two openings were left for the arms. Since the simlah was inconvenient for manual work, it was removed when working. In the winter it protected from rain and cold, and at night peasant Israelites could wrap themselves in it for warmth (Deut 24:13). The more wealthy and of rank also wore a cloak (עָטָה) over the under-tunic (1 Sam 2:19, 15:27). The cloak was a costly (1 Sam 2:19, 18:4, 24:5, 24:11) long-sleeved garment made of a light fabric, probably imported from Syria.

God’s order to Isaiah to walk around naked for three years was an extraordinary symbolic act. In Israelite society, even among the poor, public exposure of genitalia was usually not tolerated. Thus, v. 7a must be alluding to individuals who discarded societal mores, who do not find shame in nakedness (בַּשָּׁש), and who enjoy doing the unusual—the undesirables. These are people who live from day-to-day and are not interested in securing their future. It is thus not surprising that they find themselves without a simlah when the cold sets in.

4 Verse 8

Verse 8 describes the lot of the undesirables in the winter; it obviously cannot be speaking about the poor in the city/village. To protect themselves from the cold winter winds they try to hide among the rocks at as low-ground as possible. This is elaborated in vv. 30:6-7, which describe the places that the undesirables choose to spend their nights in: In the wadi gullies to dwell, // Holes in the ground and rocks. // Among the bushes they bray, // Under the nettles they huddle. //

Unfortunately, the wadis are the natural conduits for the rain water from the mountains (הָרֵי הָרֵי). Flow of water in wadis is intermittent, or ephemeral; they are usually dry most of the year. However, after a rain, flash floods can occur in a wadi, even in places where there is no rain. Thus, it is not unusual for the undesirables to be caught in a sudden rush of waters in the wadi; becoming completely drenched (רָפָא). Lacking normal shelter against the weather, they try to find some protection clinging to the boulders of the wadi (הָרֵי הָרֵי).

5 Verse 9

Verse 9 has been emended by many to read "they rob from the breast an orphan and seize the child of a poor as a pledge." This reading gives a well-balanced verse and excellent parallelism between the two cola. However, contextually it is not admissible. Driver and Gray aptly note:
The verse coheres badly with the context: vv.6-8 and vv.10-11 describe the suffering of the helpless, v.9 describes the inhumanity of the heartless.”

Context requires that v. 9 should speak about the suffering of the helpless in the winter because of the rain and flow of waters. Such a sense can be obtained if v. 9 is emended to read וַיִּבְרֹא הָיוֹתֶנָּה יָדֶֽלֶתלֶת, “Rain rob the lonely, and would ruin what is on the poor.”

The word is derived from מְשֶׁש מַחַץ and וָרָֽל (c heading 2, “Verse 6”). The וָרָֽל confusion also rests on orthographic similarity and many instances of it are encountered in the Tanach. It is possible that a copyist misread the word מְשֶׁש מַחַץ as מְשֶׁש מַחַץ in a manuscript from which he copied. The rarity of the plural of מְשֶׁש מַחַץ (only in Job 37:6) suggests that it should be understood here in a pars pro toto sense (that is, “any of the rains”) because of the plurals תֶֽלֶת and כְּבָֽלָל (cf. Job 5:10). It should be noted that confusion of number occurs in almost every verse in our unit. The emended text continues to be solitary, bereaved.

This understanding of v. 9 obviates the need for moving the verse from its MT position.

6 Verses 10-11

In vv. 10-11 Job describes the exploitation of the undesirables in agricultural work. Just as the onagers in the desert are prey for the lions, so the undesirables in the fayyum...
bles are subjects for exploitation by the rich: יִתְמוֹנָה צְפִינוּ לָתֶם בְּמַעֲשָׂהּ צָרִים (Sir 13:19). Usually, anyone dressed only in the undergarment was considered naked בְּבִין לַבְּשָׂהּ (שֵׂרֶשׁ). The addition of הבָּשָׂת seems to imply that the undesirables worked without any clothing on. This could be viewed as an attempt to control and confine their movement, and minimize the possibility of stealing. Both intents were exploitative and dehumanizing.

Living a hand-to-mouth existence, the undesirable came to work hungry and weak. Working with pangs of hunger פָּשַׂט וְפָרְסָיא, though they processed edible products יָבִוק מְצֹלָד ( showMessage =stalks and ears of a cereal grass) was an obvious torment.¹⁴⁴ This gross mistreatment, in contravention of clear Torahic injunctions (Deut 23:25-26) is intended to make the point that God does not react to the violation of his own laws.

Verse 11a is enigmatic, since it contains two hapax legomena. Tur-Sinai is right saying: “The exact meaning of this sentence is very difficult to establish, and all suggested interpretations and emendations are mere guesswork.”¹⁴⁵ The meaning of the unique form שֵׁרה II “wall.” However, the feminine of שֵׁרה II is not attested in Hebrew or Aramaic.¹⁴⁶ The parallelism between the cola in v. 11 is built on the press worker and his action. Thus, הבִּין וּשְׁרֵיה has to reflect a typical action of the worker in the oil-press as describes a typical action of a worker in the wine-press. Such a term can be obtained if it is noted that הבִּין וּשְׁרֵיה (sans matres lectionis) might be a misreading of הבִּין וּשְׁרֵיה “in their stepping” in the Talmud, implying also הבָּשָׂת “armful, heap,” and הבָּשָׂת “nakedness.”

This misreading might have occurred because of the ligatures י = ב and ב = ב, as well as the rather common י/ב confusion.¹⁴⁸ Tov notes that “In the

Felddiebstahl die Rede.” However, Duhm’s concept requires several textual emendations, and does not incorporate v. 11 properly in the image. His explanation that “sie pressen das Öl gleich in den Oliven-pflanzungen, weil sie selber keine Pressen besitzen, natürlich nächtlicher Weile” makes no sense.

¹⁴⁴ Note the word-play in הבָּשָׂת, implying also הבָּשָׂת “armful, heap,” and הבָּשָׂת “nakedness.”
¹⁴⁵ Tur-Sinai, Job, 364.
¹⁴⁶ Driver and Gray, Job 2, 168. Driver and Gray suggest reading הבִּין וּשְׁרֵיה “rows” relying on an emended reading of Jer 5:10 (בָּשָׂת) and the later use of הבָּשָׂת in the Talmud (v. Ber. 4:7d; y. Kil. 4:5; y. Bik. 3:65c; b. Hor. 13b). However, neither “walls” or “rows,” though linguistically possible, result in a meaningful text.
¹⁴⁷ It is easy to imagine that the undesirables were weak because of the inadequate nutrition. Indeed, v. 30:2 confirms that being the case. Cf. Aron Pinker, “On the Meaning of הבָּשָׂת in Job 5:26 and 30:2,” BT 65/1 (2014): 12–23.
¹⁴⁸ Tov, Textual, 199. The ligature י = ב can be easily envisioned when the י is slightly inclined to the left and closely follows a ב. This ligature might explain the difficult הבָּשָׂת in
writing of some copyists various letters fuse into a single letter, which can be confused with other letters. This tendency is clearly noticeable in the Qumran Scrolls in which א – כ, ר – כ, ר – כ fuse into a single letter similar to כ (see in particular 11QPs⁴ [Plate 8’, Column X, lines 1 and 6]).⁴⁹ If this possibility is admitted for כ (כ) of הב and כ of הת then the word הבטיה is obtained. The feminine noun הבטיה “step” is of the same form as הבטיה (from הבטיה, הבטיה, הבטיה) (from הבטיה, הבטיה, הבטיה) (from הבטיה, הבטיה, הבטיה) (from הבטיה, הבטיה, הבטיה) (from הבטיה, הבטיה, הבטיה) (from הבטיה, הבטיה, הבטיה). It is reflected in the hip’il הבטיה (Job 18:14) and occurs in the Talmud (ySanhedrin 10:29a). It is easy to imagine an early copyist, not being familiar with the form הבטיה, reading הבטיה instead of הבטיה. He might have thought that Job refers to the walls that kept the grape juice within the press and the walls that enclosed the olive-press.

The noun הבטיה “fresh oil” occurs frequently in the Tanach, usually in conjunction with הבטיה, הבטיה, הבטיה and הבטיה, הבטיה. Since הבטיה was mentioned in v. 9b and הבטיה, הבטיה is mentioned in v. 10b, it is reasonable to assume that the unattested verb הבטיה has been derived from the noun הבטיה “fresh oil.”⁵⁰ The verb הבטיה occurs in Leviticus Rabba section 5 in the sense “makes glisten” and the Aramaic verb הבטיה is used in the Talmud (b. Qidd. 39a, b. Beşah. 14b) with the sense “to be clear, to understand.”⁵¹ Thus, הבטיה, הבטיה likely means “they press oil.”

Production of oil from olives involved two steps: (a) crushing of the olives with a stone hand roller, or with the feet (Mic 6:15), in a shallow rectangular basin and collecting the pulp into baskets; and, (b) placing the baskets into vats and pressing them with a lever that was anchored in a niche of the

Ps 74:8 (that is, a misreading of הבטיה “we shall trap”); the contextually unfitting הבטיה in Deut 33:19 (that is, a misreading of הבטיה “they pour out”); the difficult הבטיה in Isa 11:15 (that is, a misreading of הבטיה “with his wood” by assuming the ligature הבטיה הבטיה = הבטיה, הבטיה; and, the contextually unfitting הבטיה in Job 20:16 (that is, a misreading of הבטיה “he pours”). The הבטיה confusion is attested in the Ketib-Qere apparatus in the following cases: 2 Sam 13:37 has הבטיה (K) but הבטיה instead of הבטיה (Q); 2 Kgs 16:6 has הבטיה (K) but הבטיה instead of הבטיה (Q); Ps 19:19 and Prov 19:19 have הבטיה (K) but הבטיה instead of הבטיה (Q); Jer 2:2 has הבטיה (K) but הבטיה instead of הבטיה (Q); Jer 31:39 has הבטיה (K) but הבטיה instead of הבטיה (Q); and Ezra 8:14 has הבטיה (K) but הבטיה instead of הבטיה (Q). Also, in some MSS Josh 15:52 has הבטיה instead of הבטיה; in many MSS 2 Sam 8 and 1 Chr 18 have הבטיה instead of הבטיה (cf. Koren Tanach, 11-12). Finally, in Hab 3:12 the Septuagint reads “you will bring low” (άλγωσις), probably reading הבטיה instead of הבטיה; in Hab 3:13 the Septuagint translates הבטיה as “bands or bonds” (δομοιοις), implying a reading הבטיה instead of הבטיה, and in Hab 3:16 the Septuagint translates הבטיה as “of my sojourning,” perhaps reading הבטיה.


Hacham, אicional, 188.

Jastrow, Dictionary, 1265a.
wall that surrounded the press. The meaning יָֽנַ֫שׁכַּקְתָּם, “in their stepping,” would perfectly fit the first phase of oil production, in which the purest and most precious oil is extracted.

Walsh and Zorn note that “Grape pressing was most often done outside in the field along with other agricultural chores, such as olive-oil pressing and grain threshing.” Typically, a farmer would make a wine press by curving an area of the bedrock to create a flat surface surrounded by short walls. The flattened surface was for treading and the walls kept the grape juice within the press. Since the verb כָּבֹד “tread” is usually collocated with the word יָֽנַ֫שׁכַּקְתָּם “wine-press” it was understood as referring specifically to the trough in which the grapes were trodden with the feet. The generated grape juice flowed into a vat (יָ֝נַ֭שׁכַּקְתָּם). Job used the more frequent term for “wine-press” and shied from technicalities.

Finally, the word יִֽנְּסֵֽנָּֽה “and they were thirsty” refers to the harsh working conditions of both types of workers. Hungry, thirsty, and naked the undesirables labored all day long in the oil-press and wine-press doing hard physical work in dehumanizing conditions.

7 Verse 12

Many commentators assume that in v. 12 the description shifts from the desert/steppe to the suffering in the towns. Driver and Gray rightly note that in v. 12 “there is nothing distinctive of town-life: men die everywhere and may be wounded anywhere.” In our view, the concluding v. 12 clearly identifies those referred to by Job in vv. 5-12 by noting that these are the “undesirables”; those “cleansed” from an inhabited city.

This understanding is obtained by reading v. 12a כָּנָֽסְנִֽנֶקְלַקְתָּם “from an inhabited city they were cleaned,” instead of MT. The root נָֽסְנִֽנֶקְלַקְתָּם “to clean” occurs as נָֽסְנִֽנֶקְלַקְתָּם in Aramaic and Palmyrene (cf. Dan 7:9). This form is also reflected in the adjective נָֽסְנִֽנֶקְלַקְתָּם “innocent, clean” (Joel 4:19, Jonah 1:14, Samaritan Gen 24:21, 1QIsא 59:7). Thus, נָֽסְנִֽנֶקְלַקְתָּם is obtained from נָֽסְנִֽנֶקְלַקְתָּם by simple metathesis of two adjacent letters. It is also possible that the נ of נָֽסְנִֽנֶקְלַקְתָּם in the MT

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152 Jerome Murphy O’Connor, The Holy Land: An Oxford Archaeological Guide from Earliest Times to 1700 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 513. The oil that ran off from the pulp placed in the wicker baskets was the lightest and finest oil (שְׁנַיִם). A second grade was produced by heating and further pressing the pulp.


154 Three terms are used for “wine press” in the Tanach: יָֽנַ֫שׁכַּקְתָּם (16 times), יָֽנַ֫שׁכַּקְתָּם (5 times), and יָֽנַ֫שׁכַּקְתָּם (2 times).

155 Driver and Gray, Job 1, 209.
is an extra ק, which the scribe put in by mistake, confusion of ינק with the homophone ננק, or for harmonization with תספרת.\footnote{For instance an extra ק occurs in Prov 10:4 for רשת; Prov 13:23 for רשת; 2 Sam 12:3-4 for רשת and and Neh 5:7 (Keitib) but נפקס (Qere); Ezra 8:17 אטרחר (K) but נפקס (Q); Ezra 41:15 אטרחר (K) but נפקס (Q); and, Hos 4:6 אטרחר (K) but נפקס (Q).

Beer, Hiob, 162. Beer felt that ק is an extra ק, “= נף. von kommt vgl. Jon 2,11.”}

The undesirables are “cleansed” from the inhabited city by communal rejection (cf. 30:5, מָרַדָּה וְרַעַשׁ תִּפְלֵי חֲנַנַּה), becoming as the onager denizens of the outlying waste land. This perception is also supported by Septuagint’s reading καὶ οὐκολαμβάνειν ἐξεβάλοντο suggesting a Hebrew text ינָקִים ינָקִים “and from the houses pushed out,” instead of MT מָתָא תִּשְׁאָה. Moreover, it is possible that the homophone נַעֲרָה “they were expelled” in v. 30:8b echoes נַעֲרָה (emended) in v. 12a, or נַעֲרָה is a scribal error for נַעֲרָה (the כ being an unfinished ק).\footnote{Cf. Aron Pinker, “Qohelet 6:9 – It Looks Better Than it Tastes,” JJS 60/2 (2009): 214-225, for נפקס = “throat.” The word נפקס is rare in the Tanach, occurring only in Jer 23:13, Job 1:22 and 24:12. No cognates are available. From the context it seems that it means “unseemliness.”}

The second colon, which uses the term נַעֲרָה, also supports the basic perception that Job speaks in this unit about the undesirables. The Arabic cognate of III נַעֲרָה “untie, undo, to become free, free from obligations or ties,” admirable describes the undesirables’ free spirit. These are the people that have been defiled, profaned, and considered unclean, by the community—the קִלּוּם “profaned, cast down, destroyed” (Ps 89:40, Isa 23:9, Ezek 21:30). The community, acting with the sensitivity of the dead (double entendre on מָתָא), rejected these undesirables, cleansed itself of them, and forced them to the outlying boundaries; thereby implying their uncleanliness and profanity. The throat (נש) of the undesirable cries out (חשון) in anguish at this treatment, but God would not mark it unseemly.

When Job hears the tragic news of the loss of his main possessions and then the tragic death of all of his children he does not blame God (והלא נ泉水ת הצלחה). It is possible that Job would not have found anything unusual in the fate of the undesirables when he lived in peace and was in God’s favor. However now, after his big loss, Job the rejected became sensitized to the plight of the undesirables. The use of the word נ泉水ת intends to stress the difference between Job’s and God’s reactions. As a powerless and limited in knowledge human, Job had to accept his lot. However, it is harder to understand how an all-powerful and all-knowing God could tolerate the obvious injustice meted out to the undesirables. In the past, God took care of his people in the desert,
why doesn’t he take care of the undesirables in the desert now?\textsuperscript{159} The observation in v. 12c propels Job to the ranks of the most sensitive prophets. It is also indirectly Job’s harshest personal accusation against God.\textsuperscript{160}

D CONCLUSION

The perspective adopted in this study regarding the individuals that are the subjects of vv. 5-12 fully corresponds to the metaphor of the free, independent, solitary, untamable, food searching, onagers in the desert. It also enables a uniform thematic treatment of vv. 5-12 as dealing with the rejected undesirables of a community. Job charges that God is oblivious to the obviously miserable fate of the undesirables, and that proper retribution is not enforced. In this charge one can sense Job’s personal accusation that God is not concerned with the fate of the suffering just.

This understanding of vv. 5-12 is obtained by making some easily rationalized emendations in the MT. The study suggests that the original text might have been as follows:

\textsuperscript{159} Viewing vv. 5-12 as referring to the poor and downtrodden in society, Jericke, “‘Wüste,’” 190, answers this question with the following far-reaching statement: “Der im Hiobbuch vorgestellte Y\textsuperscript{H}W\textsuperscript{H} dagegen greift nicht mehr unmittelbar und exklusiv für Israel ein. Die Anklagen von Hiob 24 gehen zunächst ins Leere. Y\textsuperscript{H}W\textsuperscript{H} begnügt sich in seiner Antwort Hiob 38f. mit dem Hinweis auf seine den gesamten Kosmos umfassende Ordnungsfunktion. Diese sieht kein unmittelbares Eingreifen für Israel oder eine Wiederherstellung der von Menschen verletzten Rechtsordnung vor.”

\textsuperscript{160} Good, \textit{Turns}, 279. In Good’s opinion Job accuses here God of causing human misbehavior. He says: “Because the god overlooks those who ought to be under his care, his absence results in human suffering and misdeeds. They are the fault of neither doers nor sufferers but of the god. People behave like beasts if divine guidance is withheld from them.” Habel, \textit{Job}, 360, notes that “The impression is clearly given that the downtrodden are the innocent ones and that God has delayed intervening to redress the ills of society.”
Behold, onagers in the desert,
And would ruin what is on the poor.

Naked they go without clothing,
And have no cover in the cold.

From an inhabited city they are cleaned,
They go out as usual looking early for food,
Stepping they press oil,

Wine-presses they tread,
And in a dilapidated vineyard they glean.

In a field that all despise they harvest,
And in a dilapidated vineyard they glean.

Naked they go without clothing,
And have no cover in the cold.

From the mountain flow they are drenched,
For absence of shelter they hug the rocks.

Rain would rob a lonely one,
And would ruin what is on the poor.

Naked they go without clothing,
Hungry they carry the sheaves.

Stepping they press oil,
Wine-presses they tread,
but are thirsty.

But God would not mark it unseemly.

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