Servants or Children? Meaning of נְעָרִים in Job 1:19

DAEJUN JEONG (KWANGSHIN UNIVERSITY)

ABSTRACT

In traditional interpretations, all of Job's children died in the fourth disaster (Job 1:19). However, the narrator does not depict the death of Job's children but rather the loss of his property in Job 1:19 because his servants (נְעָרִים) are proclaimed dead in this incident. This study discusses the meaning of the word נַעַר, analyses the literary structure of Job 1:13–19 and compares the stories of Job and Abraham. The study reveals that the narrator of the book of Job demonstrates a shift in Job's family from a typical family that fears YHWH to an ideal family desired by YHWH.

KEYWORDS: Job 1:19, נְעָרִים, Servants, Children, Literary Structure, Ideal Family, Consolation

A   INTRODUCTION

The hardest thing
I have ever had to hear was that my child died.
The hardest thing that
I have ever done is to live every day since that moment.[1]

In the book of Job, a reader may be greatly shocked at the idea that YHWH gave Satan permission to kill Job's sons and daughters. The permission is granted apparently to test Job's faith. That way, YHWH allows Satan to attack Job by plundering his possessions (Job 1) and tormenting his health (Job 2), using heavenly and earthly forces. Presumably, like all parents, Job loved his children and was fond of them (Job 1:5). If Job lost all his children simultaneously, it would have been extremely devastating. It is impossible to express the devastation that befalls parents when their children die an untimely death. Unless their dead children are miraculously revived, nothing can console parents who have lost their children.

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[1]   Author unknown. Quote accessed from https://sayingspoint.com/death-of-a-child-sayings/death-of-a-child-quotes-4/.

Many scholars insist that the fourth disaster in Job 1 refers to the death of all Job's children (see v. 19).[2] However, in our view, the narrator's choice of words in Job 1:15–17 is interesting, as the words possess multiple meanings. Furthermore, the book of Job has a distinct literary structure, including a parallel structure between the introductory chapters and the concluding chapter.[3] As Parsons explains:

> Job is a complex literary work in which there has been a skillful wedding of poetry and prose and a masterful mixture of several literary genres. The basic structure of Job consists of a prose framework (the prologue in chapters 1 and 2, and the epilogue in 42:7–17) which encloses an intricate poetic body.[4]

For Parsons, the prologue and the epilogue of the book of Job create a sturdy skeleton[5] for certain functions within the book.

As we will observe in this article, the prose sections of the book of Job reveal a shift in Job's family, from a typical family to an ideal family. Therefore, this article argues that Job's children did not die in Job 1. This argument is developed as follows: first, we discuss the word נַעַר (plural form, נְעָרִים) in Job 1, considering the word's meaning and the narrator's intention. Second, we analyse the structure of the book of Job and determine how the concept of נַעַר fits within the broader scope of the book. Lastly, we compare the stories of Job and Abraham, considering their parallel experiences of familial loss.[6]

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[2]   See Robert L. Alden, *Job* (NAC 11; Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 60; Francis I. Andersen, *Job* (TOTC 14; Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1976), 92; David J. A. Clines, *Job 1–20* (WBC 17; Dallas: Word Books, 1989), 33; Samuel Rolles Driver and George Buchanan Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Job* (ICC 1; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1921), 18; Daniel J. Estes, *Handbook on the Wisdom Books and Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 31; Norman C. Habel, *The Book of Job: A Commentary* (OTL; Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1985), 78; John E. Hartley, *The Book of Job* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 77; Tremper Longman III, *Job* (BCOTWP; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 86; Roland E. Murphy, *Wisdom Literature: Job, Proverbs, Ruth, Canticles, Ecclesiastes, and Esther*. (FOTL 13; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 22; William David Reyburn, *A Handbook on the Book of Job* (UBS Handbook Series; New York: United Bible Societies, 1992), 52.

[3]   See Murphy, *Wisdom Literature*, 21; Gregory W. Parsons, "The Structure and Purpose of the Book of Job," *BS* 138 (1981): 139–157; Claus Westermann, *The Structure of the Book of Job* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), 1–28.

[4]   Parsons, "The Structure and Purpose," 139.

[5]   The skeleton is similar to *inclusio* in that the prose parts enclose the poetry part.

[6]   This idea is from Henrietta L. Wiley, "They Save Themselves Alone: Faith and Loss in the Stories of Abraham and Job," *JSOTS* 34 (2009): 115–129.

B   MEANING OF נַעַר IN THE PROSE PORTIONS OF THE BOOK OF JOB

The word נַעַר appears four times in plural form in the prose portions of the book of Job (1:15, 16, 17, 19). The word נַעַר is an ambiguous word, which may be translated as 'youth' (including infants to men approaching marriage; Exod 2:6; Judg 13:5; 1 Sam 1:22). However, it may also mean 'servants' (Num 22:22) or 'soldiers' (1 Chr 12:28 [MT v. 29]). Scholars have made Numerous attempts to define the word נַעַר in order to unite the multiple meanings that it holds but such attempts are fraught with challenges.

In his study of נַעַר, MacDonald concludes that the term refers primarily to "a male of highborn status, similar to a medieval squire or knight."[7] MacDonald's argument assumes that there was a sharp class division in ancient Israel going as far as the patriarchs. In this view, a male or his parents come from this class. MacDonald's view, however, only applies to certain texts and it is not representative of each instance in which the word appears.[8]

In an essay on the Israelite family, Lawrence E. Stager suggests that נַעַר is a man who has not yet become the head of a household and is either waiting for his inheritance or is trying to establish a household for himself.[9] He believes that youth and military positions are only indirectly related to the term since, typically, one who is waiting for an inheritance or in the military is young.[10] Stager does not examine all the uses of נַעַר and its final definition is nearly as broad, as the term means "boy" or "youth."[11] Carolyn S. Leeb provides summaries and critiques to find a unified meaning for נַעַר. She cites Hans-Peter Stähli's claim that נַעַר means either a servant or an unmarried son who is still under the power of the head of his household.[12] Leeb also notes the study by Walter Mayer and R. Mayer-Opificius, who conclude that נַעַר are "servants and camp followers."[13]

Leeb's study of the word נַעַר is somewhat similar to her predecessors'. She concludes that נַעַר is a man who is no longer part of his father's household

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[7]   John MacDonald, "The Status and Role of the Naʿar in Israelite Society," *JNES* 35 (1976): 168–170.

[8]   Leeb points out a few errors in his data. Carolyn. S. Leeb, *Away from the Father's House: The Social Location of Naʿar and Naʿaah in Ancient Israel* (JSOTSup 301; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 17.

[9]   Lawrence E. Stager, "The Archaeology of the Family in Ancient Israel," *BASOR* 260 (1985): 25–26.

[10]   Stager, "The Archaeology of the Family," 26–27.

[11]   Is there a male other than a slave and a head of a household who does not fit this description?

[12]   Leeb, *Away from the Father's House*, 15–16.

[13]   Ibid., 19–20.

but has become part of a new household.[14] She considers that the term may have changed nuance over time to denote later youth or servility.[15] Quoting J. R. Lundbom, she concludes: "Clearly, the term נַעַר here has more to do with societal status than age."[16]

All these studies follow a common trajectory—the word נַעַר says something about a person's social status. While this can account for how the word functions to describe certain military personnel or youth and is backed by cognates in other Semitic languages, it remains slightly difficult to account for its use in Job 1 and other passages.[17] More scholarship is needed to elaborate on these studies and make them more convincing. The current state of scholarship leaves room for deeper exploration of the more difficult uses such as in Job 1. In this case, it may be beneficial to identify the use of נַעַר not literally but through the narrator's intention.

Most modern translated versions render the word נְעָרִים as 'servants' or 'young people' in Job 1:15–19.[18] Although נְעָרִים in verse 19 is rendered differently from the previous verses in most modern translated versions, its meaning remains open to the readers.

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[14]   Ibid., 190–191.
[15]   Ibid., 190–191.
[16]   Ibid., 160.
[17]   See biblical usages of נַעַר: 1) As a child of his/her parents: Gen 21:12, 17, 18, 19, 20; 22:5,12; 24:14, 28, 55; 25:27; 34:3, 12, 19; 43:8; 44:22, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34; 48:16; Exod 2:6; Deut 22:15, 16, 21, 23, 24, 25, 27, 28, 29; Judg 13:5, 7, 8, 12, 24; 1 Sam 1:22, 24, 25, 27; 2:11; 4:21; 16:11; 18:5, 12, 29, 32; 2 Sam 12:16; 13:32; 14:21; 18:5, 12, 29, 32; 1 Kgs 14:3; 7; 2 Kgs 4:29, 30, 31, 32, 35. 2) As a soldier: Josh 6:23; Judg 9:54; 1 Sam 14:1, 6; 21:3[Eng 2], 5[4], 6[5]; 25:5, 8, 9, 12, 25, 27; 30:17; 2 Sam 1:15; 2:14, 21; 4:12; 13:34; 18:15; 20:11; 1 Chr 12:29[28]; Job 24:5. 3) As a servant: Gen 18:7; 22:3, 5, 19; Exod 33:11; Num 22:22; Judg 7:10, 11; 16:26; 19:3, 9, 11, 13, 19; Ruth 2:6, 9, 15, 21; 1 Sam 2:13, 15, 17; 9:3, 5, 7, 8, 10, 22, 27; 10:14; 16:18; 20:21, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41; 25:14, 19; 26: 22; 30:13; 2 Sam 1:5, 6, 13; 9:9; 13:17, 28, 29; 16:1, 2; 17:18; 19:18[17]; 1 Kgs 18:43; 19:3; 2 Kgs 4:12, 19, 22, 24; 5:20, 22, 23; 6:15, 17; 8:4; 9:4; 19:6; Job 1:15, 16, 17, 19(?); Neh 4:10, 16, 17; 5:10, 15, 16: 6:5; 13:19; Esth 2:2; 6:3, 5; Isa 37:6. 4) As a youth: Gen 14:24; 19:4; 37:2; 41:12; Exod 10:9; 24:5; Num 11:27; Deut 28:50; Josh 6:21; Judg 8:14(?), 20; 17:7, 11, 12; 18:3, 15; 1 Sam 2:21, 26; 3:1, 8; 17:33, 42, 55, 58; 1 Kgs 3:7; 11:17, 28; 20:14(?), 15(?), 17(?), 19(?); 2 Kgs 2:23; 5:14; 1 Chr 22:5; 29:1; 2 Chr 13:7; 34:3; Esth 3:13; Job 29:5, 8; 33:25; 36:14; 37:25; Ps 37:25; 88:16[15]; 119:9; 148:12; Prov 1:4; 7:7; 20:11; 22:6, 15; 23:13; 29:21; Eccl 10:16; Isa 3:4, 5; 7:16; 8:4; 10:19; 11:6; 13:18; 20:4; 40:30; 65:20; Jer 1:6, 7; 51:22; Lam 2:21; 5:13; Hos 11:1(?); Zech 2:8[4]; 11:16.
[18]   Only NLT follows the LXX's rendering.

v.	Esv, Kjv, Nasb, Niv, Rsv	Njps	Nlt
15	the servants	the boys	the farmhands
16	the servants	the boys	all the shepherds
17	the servants	the boys	your servants
19	the young people (Esv, Nasb, Rsv), the young men (Kjv), them (Niv)	the young people	all your children

Conversely, the LXX, the ancient version, translates נְעָרִים as a word with multiple meanings such as the "servants," the "shepherds" and "your children." Crucially, the gender was neutral and the genitive pronoun (your) was added in verse 19 in the LXX. It is not clear why the LXX rendered these words with diverse meanings. By translating the word as children with the genitive pronoun in verse 19, readers can understand the incident in this verse as the death of Job's seven sons and three daughters in the first son's house. With this assumption, the readers will want to find a way to maintain Job's steadfast faith in YHWH following such a tragedy. In my opinion, there is only a theological intention from the translator in these passages to make Job a devoted adherent who refuses to resent YHWH in any circumstance, even when his children all die at the same time. It would be scarcely possible that the narrator refers to the death of all of Job's children in verse 19 because the narrator does not refer to Job's children using נַעַר but different Hebrew words (בַּת and בֵּן) in Job 1.[19]

v.	MT	LXX
15	וְאֶת־הַנְּעָרִים	καὶ τοὺς παῖδας (and the servants)
16	וּבַנְּעָרִים	καὶ τοὺς ποιμένας (and the shepherds)
17	וְאֶת־הַנְּעָרִים	καὶ τοὺς παῖδας (and the servants)
19	עַל־הַנְּעָרִים	ἐπὶ τὰ παιδία σου (upon your children)

David J. A. Clines explains the translation problem in verse 19, rendering it as "their attendant servants also have died"[20] with Job's children. By the same token, Norman C. Habel assumes that the messenger in the fourth disaster removed information about the death of Job's children because this disaster was the most terrible of all the accidents.[21] However, he translates verse 19 to "the servant 'boys' were crushed and died."[22] Considering the problem of translating נְעָרִים, Kenneth Numfor Ngwa suggests that "the seven sons and three daughters in the Epilogue may be playing on the idea that the children did not die, that perhaps they underwent something similar to the binding of Isaac."[23] Therefore, the readers could understand that each instance of נְעָרִים in verses 13–19 have the same meaning—the 'servants.'

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[19]   See Job 1:2, 3, 5, 13, 18.
[20]   Clines, *Job 1-20*, 33.
[21]   Habel, *The Book of Job*, 93.
[22]   Ibid., 93.
[23]   Kenneth Numfor Ngwa, *The Hermeneutics of the 'Happy' Ending in Job 42:7–17* (BZAW 354; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2005), 112.

C   LITERARY STRUCTURE OF THE PROSE SECTIONS OF THE BOOK OF JOB

As mentioned, the prose portions have an outstanding literary structure. James E. Patrick's assertions offer a notable analysis of this structure. His study of the book of Job, namely "the fourfold structure,"[24] is intriguing. According to his research, the narrator establishes a strong relationship between the prologue and the epilogue using a fourfold structure.

He divides the prose sections as shown in the following table:[25]

1. Heaven: YHWH and the Adversary in dialogue (i 6–12)	1. YHWH restores to Job twofold (xlii 10)
2. Earth: Job's prosperity is attacked (i 13–22)	2. Job's family and friends comfort him (xlii 11)
3. Heaven: YHWH and the Adversary in dialogue (ii 1–7a)	3. YHWH blesses Job's latter days more (xlii 12)
4. Earth: Job's health is attacked (ii 7b–10)	4. Job's family grows and prospers (xlii 13–17)

According to the table above, Job's property is related to people's comfort, while his health is related to his family's life. Robert L. Alden suggests that "these children were his own flesh and blood. Through shrewd maneuvering he might have been able to restore his fortunes in livestock and servants, but children are a special gift from God (Ps 127:3)."[26] Therefore, Job's children are not grouped with his personal property such as animals and servants but are equivalent to his life. If the narrator wants to elaborate on Job's children's death, the incident would be categorised as number 4 in the left column (in the table above; Job 2:7b–10) because it is parallel to Job's family's growth and prosperity in the epilogue. However, there is no mention of his children's death.

The readers will find YHWH's concern for Job's life in the second stage of the calamity (Job 2:6).[27] YHWH did not want Satan to kill Job. Thus, we must consider what the Hebrew Bible says about the family members' lives. In 2 Sam 21:1-14, the Hebrew Bible says that a person's life is closely knitted with the lives of other family members. In order to appease the Gibeonites, they request King Saul's family members to report to King David. King Saul's life indeed is

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[24]   James E. Patrick, "The Fourfold Structure of Job: Variations on a Theme," *VT* 55 (2005): 185–206.

[25]   Patrick, "The Fourfold Structure," 187, 190.

[26]   Alden, *Job*, 60–61.

[27]   Yairah Amit, "Progression as a Rhetorical Device in Biblical Literature," *JSOT* 28 (2003): 17; Andrew E. Steinmann, "The Structure and Message of the Book of Job," *VT* 46 (1996): 86.

treated equally with his family members' lives. Therefore, we can assume that Job's children's lives have the same value as Job's life.

In addition, there are several other fourfold structures in the prose parts of the book. Patrick asserts that the "Prologue and Epilogue inversely parallel each other following a fourfold structure."[28] We can observe that the part including Job's children is separated from the part including Job's property.

1. Introduction to Job (i 1–5)
  A. Job himself (i 1)
  B. children (i 2)
  C. possessions (i 3)
  D. activities (i 4–5)
…
	4. Conclusion to Job (xlii 10–17)
	  A. Job himself (xlii 16–17)
	  B. children (xlii 13–15)
	  C. possessions (xlii 12)
	  D. activities (xlii 10–11)
	…

2. Introduction to the three friends (ii 11–13)	3. Conclusion to the three friends (xlii 7–9)

Job 1:13–19 has a fourfold structure as follows. The four incidents also build the fourfold structure.

A. Job's sons and daughters were eating and drinking (v. 13)
       1. First incident (vv. 14–15)
    B. 2. Second incident (v. 16)
       3. Third incident (v. 17)
C. Job's sons and daughters were eating and drinking (v. 18)
      D (4). Fourth incident (v. 19)

In addition, these verses employ an "interlocking device"[29] as follows:

	the incidents		
v. 13	vv. 14–17	v. 18	v. 19
	Job's children		
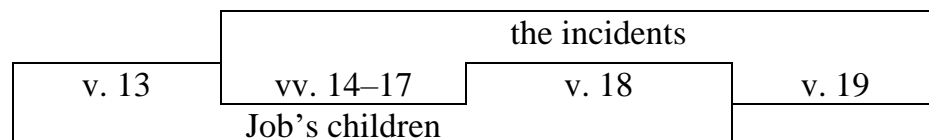
The interlocking device highlights the incidents and Job's children. Each outer structure acts as brackets to emphasise the inner content. The parts of the incidents form a staircase parallelism (shown below) and "the alternation of human and 'natural' (or 'supernatural') calamities."[30]

v. 15. They killed the *servants* (one)
v. 16. It burned up the *sheep* and the *servants* (two)

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[28]   Patrick, "The Fourfold Structure," 189–190. See Patrick's table.
[29]   On the interlocking device, see Jerome F. D. Creach, *Yahweh as Refuge and the Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* (JSOTSup 217; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 87.
[30]   Clines, *Job 1–20*, 30. About the repeated pattern in these verses, see Ellen van Wolde, "The Problem of the Potsherd: Job 2:8 in a New Perspective," *OTE* 31/3 (2018): 696.

v. 17. They formed *three* companies (three)
v. 19. It struck the *four* corners (four)

The number four is important in the book of Job. According to Patrick, the book presents Job's four friends (or counsellors)[31] and Job's four women. Those four people can be divided into two groups—the three friends and Elihu and the three daughters and Job's wife.[32] The characters mentioned fourth in each group seem more important than the others because Elihu and Job's wife play important theological roles as supporting actor or actress in the book.[33] As mentioned, the fourfold structure can be divided into two parts—the first three and the fourth. The fourth incident is more of a terrible disaster than the previous three incidents[34] and the conclusion to the catastrophes.

Thus, we can consider verses 13–19 as a well-established unit that should not be considered separately. If we consider verses 13–19 as a strong unit, we must render נְעָרִים in verses 13–19 as 'servants.' If we translate נְעָרִים in verse 19 as 'servants,' we can find the narrator's intention for the prose sections of the book of Job. The narrator certainly does not show the death of Job's children but shows that Job's property and family are destroyed. It is clear that the literary structure in this passage and the whole book supports the understanding of the word as such.

D   JOB'S FAMILY AS AN IDEAL FAMILY

If the idea above were applied to the context of the book, what does the narrator want to say through this structure? In the Hebrew Bible, we can find instances of the relationship between family members, for instance, the extreme cases of familial relationships in Job's and Abraham's families.[35] Particularly, similarities are evident in Job's and Abraham's "devastating loss of family members."[36]

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[31] Larry J. Waters, "Elihu's Categories of Suffering from Job 32–37," *BS* 166 (2009): 407.

[32] Patrick, "The Fourfold Structure," 201. According to Yair Zakovitch, this structure is a usual pattern in the Bible. Yair Zakovitch, *"For Three… and for Four": The Pattern of the Numerical Sequence Three-Four in the Bible* (Jerusalem: Makor Publishing Ltd, 1979), vii-viii.

[33] Elihu's speech heralds Yʜwʜ's appearance. His name means "He is [my] God." David J. A. Clines, *Job 21–37* (WBC 18A; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 712. Job's wife also echoes Satan's speeches with a twist.

[34] Clines, *Job 1–20*, 30.

[35] This idea is from Henrietta L. Wiley, "They Save Themselves Alone: Faith and Loss in the Stories of Abraham and Job," *JSOTS* 34 (2009): 115–129.

[36] Wiley, "They Save Themselves Alone," 115.

The two men's strong relationship with YHWH places them in a terrible situation.[37] Whether his children died or not, Job lost his property and family. Abraham also feels isolated from his family. The origins of these disasters are from YHWH, who tries to test their faith in Him. Wiley makes a keen observation in this regard:

> In these men (Job and Abraham)'s stories, as in most the Hebrew Bible, the greatest of God's blessings, they also share the experience of isolation and familial loss. YHWH professes his confidence in Abraham's and Job's faith (Gen 15:6; Job 1:8), but perversely tests that faith with devastating loss of family members, and then rewards them finally with what I call a 'consolation family' (Gen 25:1–6; Job 42:13–16).[38]

There are several similarities as well as some differences in the relationships between YHWH and the two men.

Name	Job	Abraham
Similarities		
Relationship with YHWH	Good but a one-sided interest on the part of Job	A mutual relationship
The loss	His property and experiences isolation from his family members (his wife and his children)	Isolation from his family members (Lot, Ishmael and Isaac)
Distinctive characteristics	The readers do not find any information about his children after the disasters in Job 1–2.[39]	The readers cannot find any information about restoration between Abraham and Isaac after the event in the land of Moriah.
YHWH's way of consoling them	Double property for Job (Job 42:12) and ten children (Job 42:13)	New wife (Gen 25:1) and six new children (Gen 25:6)
Differences		
The atmosphere after YHWH's consolation	Perfect harmony reigns in Job's family. The members eat bread together in his house (Job 42:11).	He sends those six sons away from Isaac (Gen 25:6). We cannot find

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[37]   In the case of Job, we see a good relationship between him and YHWH in YHWH's words (Job 1:8, 12; 2:3, 6).
[38]   Wiley, "They Save Themselves Alone," 116.
[39]   The phrase נְבְנֵי בִטְנִי in Job 19:17 refers not to Job's children but his brothers because בֶּטֶן means "womb." Clines, *Job 1–20*, 448.

	He gives his three daughters special names (Job 42:14).	the feature of an ideal family in this scene.[40]
Death	He experiences a long life with his family (Job 42:16–17).	He seems to face a lonely death.[41] We see the final relationship between Isaac and Ishmael at their father's funeral (Gen 25:8–9).

Job and Abraham experienced similar situations. They experienced wrenching pain and could not recover from the shock of losing their family members. Wiley asserts that "instead of giving encouragement, the consolation family functions as a symbol of loss."[42] However, the results of their isolation from their families were different. Although YHWH did not allow Abraham to kill Isaac in the land of Moriah, the relationship between the father and the son was not restored after the event. The "consolation family" for Abraham did not bring him much comfort but rather reminded him of the breach in his family. Abraham's new wife, Keturah, could not comfort him because she could not replace his old wife, Sarah.[43] It is true that loved ones can never be replaced. Wiley's comment on this is important:

> A high mortality rate does not prevent David's anguish over the death of his son Absalom (2 Sam 18:3–19:4). Patriarchal family structure does not make the concubine Bilhah an emotionally equivalent substitute for Jacob's beloved Rachel (Gen 30:1-8). Grief over the loss of a child, especially the loss of an only child, is biblically proverbial (Jer 6:26; Amos 8:10; Zech 12:10). On the whole, people love their children and grieve their loss.[44]

Abraham had an amazing faith in YHWH. He made great sacrifices in order to become an honest and trustworthy man in His sight. Although YHWH gave Abraham a new wife and new children, he felt isolated from his familial relationships because those family members could not replace his original family. However, Job's ending is different from that of Abraham. Job's broken relationship with his family members was restored. At the end of the story, he had ten children, just as at the beginning. YHWH restored his lost property by doubling it but the number of Job's children remained the same. In addition, the

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[40]   Wiley, "They Save Themselves Alone," 116. Regarding the relationship between Abraham and Isaac, Wiley insists that "father and son are completely absent for each other both in their grief and in their joy."

[41]   Ibid., 121.

[42]   Ibid., 116.

[43]   Ibid., 121.

[44]   Ibid., 117.

verb הָיָה means to "have"[45] in Job 42:13, not to "beget."

Therefore, we can infer that Job's children did not die in the terrible disasters of 1:13–19. If the word נְעָרִים means "servants" in 1:13–19, we can assume that his children were alive. The fourth נְעָרִים in verse 19 should be rendered "servants" in its context. The literary structure of verses 13–19 leads us to render the word נְעָרִים in verse 19 as "servants" as in the previous three usages. If Job was blessed with ten new children by YHWH in order to restore of his family, he would be in the same situation as Abraham because the new set of children cannot replace his original ten children. It is reasonable to assume that the children in the prologue and the epilogue of the book of Job are the same children. Job seemed to think of the children as "a consolation family." Most scholars assert that Job's first children died in the fourth disaster. However, they do not answer "the dilemma of the dead children."[46] They just claim the problem "remains unresolved."[47] To solve this problem, Robert Alden insists that "one might ask why he did not have fourteen sons and six daughters to correspond with the doubling of his other assets. The answer is that he did: the first set, to be reunited with him when he died, and the second set, born after his tragedies and trials."[48] If his proposal is right, we cannot explain Job's happiness and satisfaction at the end of his life because he held a feast with all his family members. Furthermore, the Hebrew Bible says that he died (and lived) satisfied[49] in Job 42:17.

Stark differences can also be observed between the prologue and the epilogue in Job's attitude towards his children. There was also a change in the relationship between Job and YHWH[50] in the two sections, from a one-sided relationship to a bilateral relationship in the case of Job's family.

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[45]   *HALOT*, 243–244.

[46]   Michael David Coogan, "Job's Children," in *Lingering over Words* (ed. Tzvi Abusch, John Huehnergard and Piotr Steinkeller; HSS 37; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 147.

[47]   Coogan, "Job's Children," 147. In solving this problem, Bruce Zuckerman proposes that there is a "resurrection of Job's original children from the dead." Bruce Zukerman, *Job the Silent: A Study in Historical Counterpoint* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 128.

[48]   Alden, *Job*, 413.

[49]   The adjective שָׂבֵעַ translated as "satisfied."

[50]   Considering the first relationship between Job and YHWH, Albert Kamp's assertion is very useful: "His (YHWH) very relationship with Satan, and not that with Job, cause God to react in a certain manner." Albert Kamp, "With or without a Cause: Images of God and Man in Job 1–3," in *Job's God* (ed. Ellen van Wolde; Concilium 2004/4; London: SCM Press, 2004), 12.

Prologue	Epilogue
1. Job offered burnt offerings. There was just a relationship between Job and YHWH.	1. YHWH heard Job's prayer. There was a good relationship between Job and YHWH.
2. His children held the feast by themselves without their parents. There was no relationship between the parents and the children.	2. Job's family members enjoyed the feast together. There was a good relationship among them.
3. He only worried about his sons' sins. The three daughters seemed to be faceless beings to him.	3. He gave his three daughters names. The three daughters seemed to mean something to him.

In addition, Job shows greater interest in his three daughters at the end of the story. He gives his daughters personal names (Jemimah, Keziah and Keren-happuch, meaning "dove," "cinnamon" and "eye-shadow case,"[51] respectively) and property. Stephen Mitchell explains that those names are emblematic of "peace, abundance, and a specifically female kind of grace."[52] Through the three daughters' names, we can picture what Job wants for his family and the isolated family members, especially as women in Job's era.

Commenting on the end of the book of Job, Mitchell claims that "the very last word is a peaceful death in the midst of a loving family. What truer, happier ending could there be."[53] We can imagine without difficulty that Job's final days were full of happiness. Every area of his life was perfect. YHWH restored his property, and his relationship with his family transformed into an ideal one.

E   CONCLUSION

As mentioned, the prose sections of the book of Job have a distinct literary structure, namely the framework that emphasises the inner poetic contents. In addition, the structure plays an important part in delivering the narrator's purpose.

This article shows why the word נְעָרִים should be translated as "servants" in Job 1:19. Although most commentators hold that Job's children died in the fourth disaster and that the fourth usage of נְעָרִים refers to Job's children, there is no reason to uphold this view. Rather, we argue that problem is one of translation. The structure of Job 1:13-19 offers certain hints for translating the word נְעָרִים. This passage uses various literary structures such as *inclusio*, staircase parallelism and interlocking device. Using these literary structures, the narrator

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[51] Coogan, "Job's Children," 147.

[52] Stephan Mitchell, *The Book of Job* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1987), xxx.

[53] Mitchell, *The Book of Job*, xxx.

implies that the word cannot carry several meanings in the passage but must be translated as the "servants."

In the Hebrew Bible, many people were living in similar circumstances as Job and Abraham. However, the ends of their lives were extremely different. Job's relationship with others was perfectly restored while Abraham's relationship with others was broken. Job tried to restore not only his relationship with YHWH but also with his children. Unfortunately, Abraham did not attempt to fix his relationships with others but instead isolated Isaac to shield him from his other children.

YHWH offered his people consolation in a way. However, it would be a misconception to argue that giving new children to parents who lost their children is YHWH's way of consoling them. All sons and daughters in the world are irreplaceable to their parents.[54] The narrator of the book of Job tries to reveal YHWH's mind by using the word נְעָרִים in the literary structure. The prologue and the epilogue of this book show the readers YHWH's ideal family. The story does not suggest that beloved children are replaceable like wealth or property.[55] Rather, it is a story of transformation. YHWH brings Job's family together following the separation to create an ideal family.

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[54]   Samuel E. Balentine tries to link two stories (Job's and Jesus'). YHWH gave us Jesus Christ as Saviour. Although Jesus died, YHWH resurrected him for us. After Jesus' death on the cross, He did not plan to give us another son to comfort us. Throughout history, Jesus remains the same. See Samuel E. Balentine, *Job* (Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary; Macon: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2006), 719–724.

[55]   Ngwa, *The Hermeneutics*, 78.

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Daejun Jeong, Department of Theology, Kwangshin University, Gwangju, South Korea. Email: jdj0115@yahoo.co.kr. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8911-6901