

JOB'S PERSPECTIVES ON DEATH

ARON PINKER

In memory of Vita Avigan z"l a great lover of the Bible and Israel

INTRODUCTION

Is it more advantageous for man that he was born than not having been born? This question occupied the best minds in the academies of Shamai and Hillel for two-and-a-half years. Their learned conclusion was rather pessimistic, for they resolved, "Man is better off not having been born than being born."¹ It seems that life is not a gift from God to cherish and enjoy, but rather a burden and chore to execute properly or suffer the consequences. The author of the Book of Job has his hero express this view in the first round of the dialogue.² In 7:1-3 Job says:

'Truly man has a term of service on earth; His days are like those of a hireling – Like a slave who longs for shadows, Like a hireling who waits for his wage. So I have been allotted months of futility; Nights of misery have been apportioned to me.'

It is thus not surprising that this perspective on life would logically rule out suicide and lead to wishes for death, in particular in dire circumstances.³ Man has to accept the good and the bad in life (2:10), he cannot terminate his own life, but he can wish for death. Job makes many death wishes (3:11, 21-22, 6:8-9, 7:8-10, 15, 20-21, 10:1, 18-19, 14:13, 17:13-16). How does he perceive death? What does he want to achieve by dying? What role does death play in his scheme of argument? My purpose is to discuss these questions and show that the author of Job methodically uses "death as extinction" in his logical arguments, but reverts to the popular concept of Sheol in his emotional ruminations and outbursts.

Aron Pinker has a M.Sc. in theoretical physics and mathematics from The Hebrew University, Jerusalem, and a Ph.D. in mathematics from Columbia University, New York. He was a professor of mathematics at Frostburg State University, and a Principal Operation Research Scientist at ANSER. He is author of numerous articles and several books which have been published in Israel, among them The Atom and Theory of Relativity. Whatever free time he has is dedicated to Judaic studies. Dr. Pinker resides in Silver Spring, Maryland.

DEATH

The Hebrew Bible is rather restrained with regard to descriptions of death and its aftermath. Pitard notes:

One of the most striking aspects about the Hebrew Bible is how little it actually talks about death and the afterlife. The subject does not form a primary theme in any book of the Hebrew Bible. What we find instead are (at best) scant, rather off-hand, ambiguous and non-specific references and allusions to the subject in a variety of contexts.⁴

The validity of this observation is aptly illustrated in the Book of Job. However, because of the decisively theological nature of the book and its use of death as an argument in the confrontation between man and God, we would tend to assume that the author refers to a well-defined concept of death and its aftermath, rather than to some nebulous notion possessed by the average Israelite. Our textual analysis indicates that the author of Job effectively used a combination of both concepts.

The question "Why does man have to die?" seems to have been answered in the opening chapters of the Bible. The Lord God forms man from the dust of the earth (Gen. 2:7) and completes the cycle by returning him to this initial state . . . *you return to the ground – for from it you were taken. For dust you are, and to dust you shall return* (3:19). Low-level matter was elevated to higher-level matter for a purpose, and then returned to its original level. Man dies because his purpose on earth has been fulfilled.⁵ Job recognizes this biblical truth. He says in Job 10:9, *'Remember that of clay You made me and to dust you will return me,'* and in 34:15, *'all living things would perish and man would return to dust.'*⁶

Man is not only shaped dust, but has also a God given *breath of life* (Ps. 104:29, Job 34:14), which makes him a living being (Gen. 2:7). This would implicitly explain "dying" as God's taking back the "breath of life"; that is, what is from earth returns to earth and what is from God returns to God.⁷ That is also how the author of the Book of Job perceives dying in 34:14-15a: *If He but intends it, He can call back His spirit and breath; All flesh would at once expire.* What happens to man's "breath of life" after he dies? Does it maintain an identity? Does it become immortal? Is it immortal? Is it recycled? These questions are not discussed or alluded to in the Book of Job, though they could have provided

some answers to the fundamental issue of the suffering of the righteous.⁸ Despite this unsatisfied curiosity and potential theological utility, one has to admit that the austere formula "what is from earth returns to earth and what is from God returns to God"⁹ effectively explains death and is satisfactory in its closure and conservation of the elements.¹⁰ If man is disposed of without changing the *status quo ante* then death means extinction.

Yet, some of Job's death wishes do not seem to anticipate extinction. Death is envisioned as an escape from torment to peace and comfort. This would logically imply the existence at post-mortem of an entity organically related to the deceased that is able to sense the peace and comfort and indeed compare them with previous experience. For instance, if death is granted *'For then I should have lain down and been at peace, with kings and counselors of the earth'* (3:14-15a). However, if the body turns into dust and the "breath of life" returns to God, then who/what is it that is at peace and cognizant of being on a par with the societal elite? It cannot be argued that such descriptions are poetic exaggerations, and are unrelated to the real perception of the post-mortem state. First, if the underlying validity of the description is questionable or unacceptable, than the theological argument that rests upon it is undermined. Second, being aware that the ancient Near East is rife with concepts of an afterlife, the author of Job would have been cautious in using poetic language that suggests an afterlife had he not believed in it.

SHEOL

That some of Job's death wishes do not seem to anticipate extinction is also evident from his use of the concept of Sheol.¹¹ Job yearns to be in Sheol because *'There the wicked cease from troubling and there the weary are at rest. All the prisoners are at ease they hear not the voice of a taskmaster. Low and high is there and slave is free of his master'* (3:17-19). In Sheol, all are equal and finally at peace. This means that God cannot reward them there for their meritorious deeds in the land of living, nor can He hurt them anymore.¹² Sheol means rest and freedom and escape from tyranny. Yet, while these may imply an ideal rest place it is also a place of darkness and no return: *'I go – and will not return – to a land of darkness and death-shadow. A land whose light is darkness, death-shadow, disarray, and when it shines it's as darkness'* (10:21-22).¹³ Despite

Sheol being such a formidable place, Job desires it. To him the greatest advantage of Sheol is being out of God's punishing reach. Job alludes to this in *slave is free of his master*, where the word *slave* is intended to associate with its use in 1:8 and 2:3. Obviously, if God's reach extends to Sheol it would offer no asylum. Yet, if God is excluded from Sheol then man's "breath of life" is not there either. What exists, then, in Sheol?¹⁴

Johnston's overview of Sheol in the Hebrew Bible suggests a place in which prevails "a somnolent, gloomy existence without meaningful activity or social distinction."¹⁵ For whom? Several biblical texts (Isa. 14:9, Ps. 88:11, Prov. 2:18, Job 26:5, et al.) refer to figures among the dead called *rephaim* [shades, apparitions]. Job describes the *rephaim* as active entities, saying *The shades [rephaim] tremble, under water and its dwellers'* (Job 26:5).¹⁶ Also, the prohibition against there being among the Israelites anyone who casts *spells, or one who consults ghosts or familiar spirits, or one who inquires of the dead* (Deut. 18:11) clearly indicates that this custom was rather prevalent (cf. Isa. 8:19-20). Israelites apparently believed in the possibility and utility of communion with the dead. Indeed, the Hebrew Bible rather causally and without comment describes Saul resorting to a medium (I Sam. 28:3-16).¹⁷ It seems, then, reasonable to conclude that while the Israelite believed in the formulaic "what is from earth returns to earth and what is from God returns to God" he also maintained that some shadowy existence persists and even has relevance for the living. In one death wish, Job expresses the hope that Sheol become his home, which indicates some continuity and perseverance. He says, *Indeed, I have marked out my home in Sheol and spread out my couch in the darkness'* (17:13).¹⁸

The Hebrew Bible seems to suggest that the aspirations and hopes of most Israelites were firmly grounded in the present life. Still, quite a few apparently envisioned continued existence beyond the present life, as the surrounding nations believed, though neither the details of this existence nor its final destination were adequately defined.¹⁹ Job, too, allows himself to toy with the idea of life after death, musing about Sheol as a refuge where he can hide until God's rage subsides and then be called back by God: *'O that you would hide me in Sheol, conceal me until you anger passes, set a fixed time for me, and then remember me. You would call and I would respond, to Your handiwork You yearn'* (14:13-14).²⁰

On the emotional level, Job finds comfort indulging in ruminations about fanciful "hide-and-seek" prospects in Sheol. But he is quickly checked by his logic, which immediately prompts the sarcastic question: *'If man dies, would he live again?'* (14:14)²¹ Indeed, *'As a cloud dissipates and is gone, so who descends to Sheol would not ascend. He will not return to his home, and he would not be recognized in his place'* (7:9-10). Also, *'And lies down and rises not, til the heavens are no more; he will not awake nor will he be roused from his sleep'* (14:12).²² A similar sentiment is expressed in 4:20, 7:7, 10:20, 14:12, 15:22, and 16:22.

AFTERLIFE

The idea of life after death penetrated Judaism during the Second Temple period, but it was not very likely a bolt out of the blue. Muntingh notes: "In the light of the Ugaritic texts we may add that the conception of immortality, though rather indefinite, could not have been completely unknown to the average Israelite in Palestine in the pre-exilic times."²³ There apparently existed a popular substratum of beliefs that accorded God the ability to reverse each of His acts (cf. Job 42:2). The songs of Moses (Deut. 32:39) and Hannah (I Sam. 2:6) seem to allude to God's ability to resurrect the dead.²⁴ The casual description of a dead man's revival upon touching Elisha's bones (II Kgs. 13:21) would be inconceivable if it were not believed that some holiness and magic are retained by the dead. Similarly, Ezekiel's vision of the dry bones coming to life (Ezek. 37:9-10) does not seem inconceivable, perhaps because death did not seem terminal. Considering these verses as containing allusions to resurrection is certainly not compelling.²⁵

However, taken together with the belief in the existence of Sheol and existence in Sheol, casual references to necromancy (Deut. 26:14, I Sam. 28), Job's ruminations about hiding in and emerging from Sheol,²⁶ and archeological evidence,²⁷ one gets a strong feeling about the existence of popular beliefs regarding some post-mortem existence, which were not sanctioned but also not actively combated.²⁸ This substratum of beliefs eventually served as fertile ground for the incubation and sprouting of notions about an afterlife in the time of the Second Temple.²⁹

DEATH WISHES

How does Job exploit death in the dialogue? After seven days of meditation, Job opens the dialogue vehemently cursing the day he was born (Job 3:3-9). This emotional outburst is a precursor to a very logical conclusion that prefers the nothingness of death to the travails of life. We have seen that the sages of the great talmudic academies reached the same conclusion as the one that is at the basis of Job's complaint: *'Because it [He?] did not block the opening of my belly, and hide misery from my eyes. Why did I not die in the womb, expire as I came forth from the belly?'* (3:10-11). They suggested fearful acceptance of this predicament. Job's implicit argument, on the other hand, is that a just God should not have created people for such a fate. It is a cruel wrong to create people who are destined to suffer and be embittered, wishing death and the grave: *'Why is light given to the sufferer, and life to the embittered? Who wait for death but it is not [arriving], who search for it more than for treasure'* (3:20-21).

Certainly, Job must have been aware that life has also happy and joyful periods. He himself attests to his satisfaction being a successful and respected man in his community (Ch. 29). However, this satisfaction was always overshadowed by fears of missteps, punishment, and reversals (1:5). It was always tentative, to a point of being tantalizing and upsetting: *'For the fear I feared reached me, and what I dreaded came to me. I have not been tranquil, at peace and at ease, and trouble came'* (3:25-26). Job's logical/theological argument rests on the fundamental principle that God's actions should be understandable within the framework of moral justice demanded by Him from man. Creating man, any number of men, for the purpose of making them suffer cannot be understood within this framework. In such case, the nothingness of death is preferable to a life of torment. The argumentative nature of the text (3:10-12, 20-26) is highlighted by use of "because" (four times), "for what purpose" (two times), "why," "what," and emphatic "no/there is not" (six times).

Job's death wish and its rationalization in 3:13-19 draws on the popular/mythological concept of death and is linked to Sheol. It resembles the Babylonian and Egyptian views in perceiving death as sleep and rest. The death wish is not part of any argument, just an emotional expression of helplessness, an avenue for escape, even if it is irrational. Eliphaz clearly identifies it as an emotional reaction of mental and physical weakness: *'But now that it has come to*

you, you cannot bear it; it touches you, and you are dismayed' (3:5). The text is replete with verbs of rest and idleness; "lain," "quiet," "sleep," "rest," "cease," "tired," "would not hear," and words that have similar connotations, such as "at ease" and "free."

The clear death wish in 6:8-9, '*O, that my request comes up, and my wish God would grant – and would please God crush me, loose His hand and cut me off!*' is a rational assessment of man's position vis-à-vis God and the physical reality. Job affirms that even in times of *unsparing pain* man cannot *repudiate God's commandments* (6:10). Job fully realizes that a term of hard service has been allotted man on earth (7:1-4). Yet, he also knows that man's strength is not that of stone and his flesh is not of bronze (6:12). Man has his vulnerabilities – he can break. Job wants to depart this world before he reaches this point. Here, death is not an emotional escape valve, but a deliberate preventative means against sin.³⁰ His implicit argument is that he is innocent, because he prefers death to the potentiality of sin. The semantics used are those of an official request, not a plea. He twice uses "grant," "my petition comes up," "my wish," "undertake," and "loose, permit."

The reference to death in 7:6-16 is marked by nostalgic emotions. Life is brief, the good moments cannot be recaptured, and descent to Sheol is final – no chance for return to one's home and regain former recognition. This emotional state, based on popular/mythological notions of afterlife, is the reason for his bitter outburst against God's continual stifling persecution (7:13-14). It reaches its angry crescendo in 7:15-16: '*So my living being prefers strangulation, death rather than my bones. I am disgusted, I shall not live forever, Let go of me, for my days are but a whiff.*' The language used connotes waste, nothingness, and termination that is characteristic of Sheol. A play on the homophones "*qalu* [fly, fleet]" and "*kalu* [fade away]" (two times) highlights the swift passing of life, and the repeated negatives "not return" (twice), "not noticed," "I am no more," "not rise," "not be recognized," bring out the irreversibility of descent into Sheol. This sequence of negatives is the explanation for the consequent "No," and "I too, will not restrain my mouth," but not a theological argument.

The wish for death in 7:15-21, however, leads to a powerful theological argument, the core of which is the symbiosis between God and man, so aptly expressed in 7:21. Job basically says that life is cruel. God endowed man with

excellence but at the same time made him the subject of incessant inspection, implying that such a life is not worth living. Life is short, God's expectations of man are high, and His continuous inspection of his deeds is oppressive. Even if man sins, what can he do about it? After all, the One who guards [*notzer*] and hovers over man is also his Creator [*yotzer*]. If He does not like what He has, then He should remove this obstacle, saving trouble both for Himself and man. Now Job makes his crucial point: '*And what? You would not suffer my sin and forgo my transgression? So now in dust I will lie, and You will seek me and I will be no more*' (7:21). If God cannot leave man alone (7:19), give him some room, but would rather be particular about each of his transgressions and unforgiving, who would be left? Would He still be God if none of His worshippers survives? Death would remove God's worshippers, force Him to seek out man, but he will be no more. Such a symbiosis between God and man would seemingly prescribe a certain tolerance of sinners, and transparency of God's actions. This powerful theological argument is premised on the fundamental austere normative concept of death being extinction. The argumentative nature of the text is highlighted by use of the interrogatives "what" (three times), "how long," "why," the term "because" (twice), the negatives "not turn," "not leave me," "not pardon," "I shall not be," and the confrontational "I and You" terms: "thy mind upon him," "thou not turn from me," "I have done to thee," "me as offense to you," "Thou not pardon my transgressions," and "Thou shall seek me, but I shall not be."

Job's disgust with his life (10:1) enables him to drop all restraint and speak fiercely (*speak in the bitterness of my soul*, cf. Jud. 18:25, II Sam. 17:8 and Hab. 1:6) to God. His intellectual focus is on:

God's justice: How can God pass judgment before making the accusations known? (10:2);

God's satisfaction: How can God draw satisfaction from oppression, despising His own handiwork, and preferring the wicked? (10:3);

God's omniscience and eternity: How can God not see innocence and rush to judgment? (10:4, cf. Hab 1:13);

God's mercy: How can God preserve him alive to punish him repeatedly? (10:12-16).

Job's intellectual frustration leads him into emotional distress and death wish

(10:18-19). He pleads for a stay of God's punishment, for some respite in this world before he descends into the darkness of Sheol (10:20-22). The interrogative particle is used repeatedly, and so are the argumentative conditional "if" (four times) and the emphatic "because" (five times). Personalization of the conflict with God is achieved by means of the terms "upon me," "me," "unto me," "against me," "with me" (three times), and generalization by means of "work of Thy hand," "flesh," "human," "man."

In Chapter 14 we again are presented with the use of death as the basis for a logical argument and an emotional plea. The logical argument exploits man's proclivity for sinning and the finitude of man's existence. Man, unlike the tree, cannot rejuvenate; upon death he becomes extinct:

For there is hope for a tree – if it is cut down, it can sprout again, and its shoots would not cease. If its roots grow old in the earth and its stump dies in the ground, at the scent of water it will bud anew and put forth branches like a new plant. But man grows faint and dies; and man expires, and where is he? (14:7-10).

Consequently, Job argues, man does not deserve the attention that God accords him. He cannot be brought to trial before God, because it is impossible for man not to sin (14:3b-4). Man should be left to serve his term and be gone. The comparative particle is used repeatedly for argumentative purposes, and so are the argumentative conditional "if" (three times) and the emphatic "no" (seven times). On the emotional level, Job looks to death as a temporary safe haven in Sheol (14:13-15). The imbalance in the relation between God and man comes to the fore in the sequence of God's acts: "hide," "conceal," "put," "remember," "call," "long," and man's single act "respond."

Finally, Chapter 17 is almost in its entirety an emotional assessment of Job's sorry state. The beckoning of the grave (17:1) is now welcome, because his days have outlasted his hopes (17:11). Sheol becomes home, and a kinship with Sheol replaces normal familial relations (17:13-14). His hope and thread of life [*tikwati*] have found its final resting place – Sheol, which intellectually he knows is but dust (17:16). The root "*qawah* [wait for, delineate]" is used three times, Sheol or its synonyms are used four times, and the assertive "if" [*im* for *omnam*] forms the *inclusio* and closure. Emotional closeness of Sheol is depicted by the homely terms "house," "bed," "father," "mother," "sister."

CONCLUSION

Introducing Job as a figure tormented in mind and body, the author of Job enabled his hero to react to the core issue of a just God seemingly doing injustice on the logical and emotional levels. Job exploits death within these two realms accordingly. The basis for a theological argument using death is usually the biblical austere normative concept. The popular concept of death and Sheol is usually used as an escape venue, a passionate emotional outlet.³¹ For instance, while Job's body yearns for refuge in Sheol (3:14-18) his mind tells him *Sheol is naked before Him, and Abaddon has no covering* (26:6). That is, Sheol is not beyond His reach (cf. Amos 9:2, Ps. 139:8).

The Book of Job accepts Sheol on the popular and primitive levels of raw emotions as the Hebrew Bible does. One would be hard pressed to go beyond this understanding to resurrection and beatific life in communion with God, though the return of the "breath of life" to God does not preclude such a possibility. The sages of the Talmud, well honed in homiletic insights, could not identify in Job a text that would lend support to their doctrinal outlook on resurrection. Rather, they found that Job denies resurrection: *As a cloud dissipates and is gone, so who descends to Sheol would not ascend* (7:9) – Raba said: "This shows that Job denied the resurrection of the dead" (TB Baba Bathra 16a). The great medieval commentator Rashi felt compelled to adopt this view with respect to Job 7:7. He bluntly says on *I shall never see happiness again*, "after death. Here Job denied resurrection." Such verses as 19:25-27 or 29:18 have been often subject to tendentious interpretations. The texts are difficult, perhaps as a consequence of later manipulations, and even in their current state their theological interpretation is not compelling.³² One may well ask: If Job was convinced of resurrection and beatific life in communion with God, why did he not make this notion the pillar of his argument? Why did he, to the contrary, so vividly highlight man's mortality and discontinuity in Job 14:7-10?

In his state of emotional suffering and physical debilitation Job seeks escape in Sheol, but his intellect realizes that death offers him his strongest argument for a more humane God. For as much as man needs God, God no less needs man.

NOTES

1. "For two-and-a-half years the Academy of Shamai and Academy of Hillel debated. These say 'Man is better off not being born than being born' and these say, 'Man is better off being born than not being

born.' They voted and resolved: 'Man is better off not being born than being born.' Now that he is born, he should investigate his deeds, or search his deeds" (TB Erubin 13b).

2. Job 10:12 has been understood by some commentators as an expression of gratitude for the life granted and God's providence. However, such an interpretation is textually and contextually incorrect. Clearly, "חיים" cannot belong to v. 12 since "חיים וחסד" never form a hendiadys in the Hebrew Bible and the verb "עשית" is improper for "חיים." I attach "חיים" to v. 11 and read the two verses thus: *You clothed me in skin and flesh, with bones and sinew, You set in me life (10:11). And, have you done kindness with me? Rather, your oversight kept over my breath! (10:12).*

3. I. Orbach, "Job – A biblical message about suicide," *Journal of Psychology and Judaism* 18(3) (1994) 241-247. Orbach argues that according to current psychological criteria Job would be considered a severe suicide risk. However, though he had every reason to commit suicide he did not.

4. W.T. Pitard, "Tombs and Offerings: Archaeological Data and Comparative Methodology in the Study of Death in Israel," in *Sacred Time, Sacred Place: Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*, ed. B.M. Gittlen. (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2002) pp. 145-46.

5. The Garden of Eden story suggests that man must die because he sinned and is liable to sin. However, this notion was disputed in the Midrash (Sifre Deuteronomy 339).

6. Only two persons in the Hebrew Bible apparently escaped standard death, Enoch and Elijah. About Enoch the Bible says that he *was no more, for God took him* (Gen. 5:24), and Elijah *ascended in a whirlwind into heaven* (II Kgs 2:11).

7. A.S. Hartom, *Ben-Sira* (Tel Aviv: Yavneh, 1967) p. 149.

8. M. Zer-Kavod, "קְהֵלוֹת" in חננוּת חגילות (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1973) p. 21 n. 42. What happens to man's "breath of life" after he dies, and in what sense it is different from that of an animal, was of interest to Kohelet (Eccl. 3:21), though he too subscribed to the notion that the "breath of life" returns to God (Eccl. 12:7).

9. J. Neusner, "Death and Afterlife in the Late Rabbinic Sources: The Two Talmuds and Associated Midrash-Compilations," in *Judaism in Late Antiquity*, Part 4, eds. A.J. Avery-Peck and J. Neusner (Leiden: Brill, 2000) p. 268. Neusner asserts that "The basic logic of the monotheist system requires the doctrine of personal resurrection, so that the life of this world may go onward in the next. Indeed, without the conception of life beyond the grave, the system as a whole yields a mass of contradictions and anomalies: injustice to the righteous, prosperity to the wicked, never recompensed." This is, however, debatable.

10. P.S. Johnston, "Death in Egypt and Israel," *Oudtestamentische Studion* 52 (2005) pp. 104-116. To appreciate the austere nature of the biblical concept of death one has only to compare it with that of the neighboring Egypt.

11. A. Pinker, "Sheol," *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 23(3) (1995) pp. 168-179. The paper provides an overview of the concept of Sheol in the Hebrew Bible. "Sheol" seems to be a Hebrew term the etymology of which is still unclear, but probably arising out of "ask," in the context of necromancy. See, W.F. Albright, "The Etymology of Sheol," *American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* 34 (1918) pp. 209-10.

12. Mot's struggle with Ba'al is perhaps echoed in Isaiah 25:8, alluding to the possibility that God does not have dominion over Mot and his domain. Cf. Isaiah 38:11. It is notable that a talmudic sage would find it relevant to caution "and do not let your evil impulse persuade you that Sheol is a place of refuge for you" (Mishnah Abot 4:22).

13. J. Pritchard (ed.), *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969) p. 107. The "Descent of Ishtar to the Netherworld" (1-11) is described in terms similar to those of Job.
14. W. Whiston, trans., *The Works of Josephus, Complete and Unabridged* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1992) p. 813. Josephus (37-c.100) provides a vivid description of Sheol in "Josephus' Discourse to the Greeks Concerning Hades."
15. Johnston (2005), p. 105.
16. R.E. Murphy, "Death and Afterlife in the Wisdom Literature," in *Judaism in Late Antiquity*, Part 4, op. cit., p. 102. Murphy believes that one can find symbols of existence, such as descriptions of an 'I' who 'exists' in Sheol, and who even speaks of fellow travelers (Job 3:13-19) or 'shades' [*repa'im*, Prov. 2:18, 9:18]. But such passages do not really designate survivors in an afterlife.
17. It seems that Job's view is that the dead do not know nor empathize with what goes on with the living, even with their own kin (14:21).
18. R. Gordis, *The Book of Job, Commentary New Translation and Special Studies* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1978) p. 172. I adopt Gordis's translation.
19. K. Spronk, *Beatific afterlife in Ancient Israel and in the ancient Near East*. (Kevelaer: Butzon and Bercker, 1986) pp. 117-124.
20. Older Jewish and Christian exegetes saw also in Job 19:25-27 an expression of hope for post-mortem bodily resurrection. The textual difficulties of these passages probably indicate efforts by later scribes to imbue them with notions of afterlife.
21. The LXX reads the affirmative "He will live! [zesetai], instead of the interrogative "Will he live again?" thereby confirming resurrection.
22. L.M. Muntingh, "Life death and resurrection in the Book of Job," in *Old Testament Essays* 17/18 (1974/1975) 35. See also note 25 there.
23. This translation categorically denies resurrection. However, the NJPS translation *So man lies down never to rise; he will awake only when the heaven are no more, only then be aroused from his sleep* introduces an ambiguity.
24. Sifre Deuteronomy 129:II suggests that resurrection is alluded to in four biblical texts: Deuteronomy 32:39, Numbers 23:10, Deuteronomy 33:6 and, Hosea 6:2.
25. Cf. NJPS translation on Deuteronomy 32:39 and I Samuel 2:6. The man who revived upon touching the bone of Elisha may not have been dead but in deep shock. Ezekiel's prophecy is more likely a metaphor, but there may have been other views of it (cf. TB Sanhedrin, 92).
26. R. Althann, "Job and the idea of the beatific afterlife," in *Old Testament Essays* 4,3 (1991) 322. Althann believes that looking forward to a beatific afterlife is suggested in 19:25-27.
27. R.E. Friedman and S. Dolansky, "Death and Afterlife: The Biblical Silence," in *Judaism in Late Antiquity*, Part 4, op. cit., pp. 36-37. The authors say, "We know that there was belief in an afterlife in Israel. The combination of archeological records and the references that we do have in the text leave little room for doubt." They note the funerary archeological findings in Megiddo, Gezer, Tel Abu Hawam, Beth Shemesh, Sahab (Trans-Jordan), and Dothan.
28. H.C. Brichto, "Kin, Cult, Land, and Afterlife – A Biblical Complex," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 44 (1973) 29. Brichto notes "not only does this verse [Deut. 26:14] attest to the practice, as late as the time of Deuteronomy, of offerings made to the dead; it attests that normative biblical reli-

gion accorded them the sanction of toleration."

29. Johnston (2005), 110-111. Johnston believes that Israel's national experience served as a catalyst in developing the concept of resurrection. He says that the Lord's "proclaimed power to renew life, its occasional experience in life and in vision, his authority over the underworld, and the desire for unending communion with him all contribute to Israelite belief in resurrection."

30. D.K. Wohlgelemler, "Death wish in the Bible," *Tradition* 19, 2 (1981) pp. 137-140. Wohlgelemler contends that the death wishes of Elijah, Jeremiah, and Jonah were motivated by mental anguish while those of Job by extreme physical suffering.

31. D.L. Smith, "The concept of death in Job and Ecclesiastes," *Didaskalia* 4,1 (1992) p. 5.

32. Johnston, (2002) pp. 209-214. Johnston provides an extensive discussion of Job 19:25-27.



The *American Friends of the Jewish Bible Association* has received a special grant to cover the cost of subscriptions to Volume 35, 2007. Thus, you will **not** receive a subscription renewal form in October – November 2006. You will automatically receive a (paid) subscription for Volume 35, 2007. We hope our loyal subscribers will enjoy their free subscription for 2007.

The ancient Egyptians believed that, at death, your heart would be weighed against a feather, to determine if it was fit to enter the underworld. A heart heavy with mis-deeds would be fed to a demon. Christians may envision Saint Peter, waiting at the pearly gates to welcome you into heaven, unless your name doesn't make his list. Now, the 21st century has its own perspectives on death. And one might be best described as a kind of philosophical FOMO. Contemporary American philosopher Thomas Nagel points out that some people dread death because they'll miss out on things that they want to experience. If you died right now, you'd never get to finish the video game you're in the middle of, or read the next George RR Martin book, or see humans land on Mars. Which would suck, yeah.

Psychological perspectives on death. +273. Robert Kastenbaum and Paul T. Costa, Jr. DEATH PERSPECTIVES 227. The voluminous output of psychiatric writings from the later years of the past century onward include a number of scattered references to death, but one could not say that it was considered a core problem either in theory or therapy. With the exception of anthropology then, the new social and behavioral sciences had but fitful and peripheral contact with one of humankind's most ancient concerns. The latest volume in this multidisciplinary series on key topics in evolutionary studies, *Evolutionary Perspectives on Death* provides an evolutionary analysis of mortality and the consideration of death. Bringing together noted experts from a variety of fields, the books emanate from conferences held at Oakland University, and are dedicated to providing wide ranging and occasionally provocative views of human evolution. The volume on death covers topics from biology, anthropology, psychology, sociology and philosophy, with contributors addressing how evolution informs the process of comprehend Academic journal article *Jewish Bible Quarterly*. *Job's Perspectives on Death*. By Pinker, Aron. Read preview. Academic journal article *Jewish Bible Quarterly*. *Job's Perspectives on Death*. By Pinker, Aron. Read preview. It is thus not surprising that this perspective on life would logically rule out suicide and lead to wishes for death, in particular in dire circumstances (3). Man has to accept the good and the bad in life (2:10), he cannot terminate his own life, but he can wish for death. Job makes many death wishes (3:11, 21-22, 6:8-9, 7:8-10, 15, 20-21, 10:1, 18-19, 14:13, 17:13-16). How does he perceive death? What does he want to achieve by dying? What role does death play in his scheme of argument?