

## Job 19: 25–27

By Sigurd C. Ylvisaker

The passage is, of course, important both doctrinally and spiritually. We may well imagine what the words meant to Job himself, who lived at the time of the patriarchs and in outward and spiritual conditions that by no means excluded real afflictions. There came a time in his life, too, when the spiritual was his only comfort, and his turning to the Redeemer of his soul and body was no sham. But there was agony of soul there; that is clear. And the time comes in the life of every Christian when the comfort that God gave to Job is eagerly sought after and caught up by the believer wherever and whenever he is. This comfort is timeless; or, rather, it is for all time and for every place.

But is this comfort certain or only imagined? This paper offers a series of translations of this one passage, chosen more or less at random. Does it not seem from a closer study of these versions as if the content slips by without a sound of real, lasting worth for him who is in need? Review the situation again, and it will appear that here, too, unbelieving scholars long since with no true understanding of the text have tried to remove solid ground from under our feet. Instead comfort is made to rest on the shifting sands of “opinion” at best, or of so-called “better knowledge” of the Hebrew.

That we may see and know the difficulties I offer first the list of translations, and then certain notes for a better understanding of the text which, I hope, will help to make the Word and Promise of God in this remarkable passage, not more clear and established in themselves, as if that were possible, but clear and established for us who so easily are affected by every contrary wind that blows.

The Hebrew text reads:

וְאֲנִי יָדַעְתִּי גֹאֲלִי חַי וְקַיָּוִן עַל־עֶפְרָת יְקוּם: <sup>25</sup>  
וְאֲחַר עוֹרִי נִקְפּוּזֹתַי וּמִבְּשָׂרִי אֲחַזְּקָהּ אֱלֹהִים: <sup>26</sup>  
אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי אֲחַזְּקֶהָ לִּי וְעֵינַי רָאוּ וְלֹא־תָר בָּלוּ בְּלִיְתִי בְּחַקִּי: <sup>27</sup>

The Septuagint: οἶδα γὰρ ὅτι ἀέναός ἐστιν ὁ ἐκλύειν με μέλλον ἐπὶ γῆς. ἀναστήσαι τὸ δέρμα μου τὸ ἀναντλοῦν\* ταῦτα, παρὰ γὰρ κυρίου ταῦτά μοι συνετελέσθη, ἃ ἐγὼ ἐμαυτῶ συνεπίσταμαι, ἃ ὁ ὀφθαλμός μου ἑώρακεν καὶ οὐκ ἄλλος, πάντα δέ μοι συνετετέλεστοι ἐν κόλπῳ.

Targum: “Ich weiss, dass mein Erlöser lebt, und hernachmals wird seine Erlösung über dem Staube (in den ich aufgelöst werde) erstehen (in Wirklichkeit treten), und nachdem meine Haut wieder genesen ist ... wird dies geschehen, und aus meinem Fleische werde ich wiederum Gott schauen.” (Delitzsch offers this note: “Die Rabbinischen Ausleger ignorieren dieses Targum und bieten hier überhaupt wenig Nutzbares.”)

Jerome: Scio enim quod redemptor meus vivit et in ultimo die de terra resurrecturus sum et rursum circumdabor et in carne mea ...”

Vulgate: Scio enim, quod redemptor meus vivit, et in novissimo die de terra surrecturus sum: Et rursum circumdabor pelle mea, et in carne mea videbo deum meum. Quem visurus sum ego ipse, et oculi mei conspecturi sunt, et non alius: reposita est haec spes mea in sinu meo.

Luther: “Aber ich weiss, dass mein Erlöser lebt; und er wird mich hernach aus der Erde auferwecken; und werde darnach mit dieser meiner Haut umgeben werden, und werde in meinem Fleische Gott sehen ...”

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\* The Rahlfs edition of LXX has ἀνατλῶν

Kautsch: “Ich aber weiss, dass mein Erlöser lebt, und als letzter wird er auf dem Staube sich erheben. Und nachdem dem meine Haut also zerschlagen ist und ledig meines Fleisches werde ich Gott schauen! Ich werde ihn schauen mir zum Heil; ja, meine Augen sehen ihn, und nicht als Gegner.”

Schwarz: “Und ich weiss mein Schutzzeuge ist am Leben und als Letzter über dem Erdboden wird er sich erheben; nach meiner Haut (nachdem meine Haut vergangen ist) wird man zerfetzen dies (meinen Leib—3rd pl.—unbestimmter Täter) und von meinem Fleische ledig werde ich schauen Gott ... ”

German revised translation: “Aber ich weiss, dass mein Erlöser lebt; und als der Letzte wird er über dem Staube sich erheben. Und nachdem diese meine Haut zerschlagen ist, werde ich mir sehen, und meine Augen werden ihn schauen, und kein Fremder. Danach sehnen sich meine Nieren in meinem Schoss.”

Fuerbringer: “Aber ich weiss, mein Erlöser lebt und als Letzter wird er auf dem Staube stehen. Und hinter meiner Haut, welche sie so zerfetzt haben, und aus meinem Fleische, schaue ich Gott. Welchen ich sehen werde mir, und nicht ein Fremder.”

Keil: “I know: my Redeemer liveth and will rise up as the Last One upon the dust. And after my skin thus torn to pieces, and without my flesh shall I behold Eloah, whom I shall behold for my good, and mine eyes shall see Him and no other—my reins languish in my bosom.”

Menge: Ich aber, ich weiss, dass mein Erlöser (oder: Erretter-Rechtsbeistand) lebt und als letzter auf dem Staube (d. h. hier auf der Erde) auftreten wird; und danach werde ich, mag jetzt auch meine Haut so ganz zerfetzt und ich meines Fleisches ledig (oder: beraubt) sein, Gott schauen, den ich schauen werde mir zum Heil und den meine Augen sehen werden und zwar nicht mehr als einen Entfremdeten (Gegner), ihn, um den sich mir das Herz in der Brust abgehärmt hat.

English (St. James) version: “For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.”

English (Standard Revised): “For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at last he will stand upon the earth; and after my skin has been thus destroyed, then without my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see on my side, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. My heart faints within me.”

Moffat: Still, I know One to champion me at last, to stand up for me upon earth. This body may break up, but even then my life shall have a sight of God; my heart is pining as I yearn to see him on my side, see him estranged no longer.

An American Translation: But as for me, I know that my Vindicator lives; and as the next-of-kin he will stand upon my dust; and as the next-of-kin he will rise and my eyes will see to be no stranger. My emotions are spent within me!

Revised Standard Version: For I know that my Redeemer<sup>1</sup> lives, and at last he will stand upon the earth<sup>2</sup>; and after my skin has been thus destroyed, then without<sup>3</sup> my flesh I shall see God,<sup>4</sup> whom I shall see on my side,<sup>5</sup> and my eyes shall behold, and not another. My heart faints within me!

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1 *Vindicator*.

2 Or *dust*.

3 Or *from*.

American-Jewish Translation: But as for me, I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he will witness at the last upon the dust; and when after my skin this is destroyed, then without my flesh shall I see God; whom I, even I, shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another's My reins are consumed within me.

### Notes on the Text

וְ —the adversative, “but”.

יָדַע —a sure and blessed knowledge. No mere surmise. It is the conviction of faith. Rom. 8:38; II Tim. 1:12.

אֲנִי —emphatic.

הִי —either 3rd person singular of the verb, or the adjective. See Dan. 12:7.

גָּאֹל —to redeem. Used more than one hundred times in the Old Testament. The גֹּאֵל in Israel was one who in behalf of his relatives had the obligation of redeeming someone. If someone became a slave, his goel had to buy him free, Lev. 25:27f. If someone had been murdered, another became his goel, i.e. avenger or redeemer of his blood. God is often designated a goel as the one who redeems the good name of an innocent person, then one who redeems, saves from suffering, in general a Redeemer. Is 59:20 “The angel which redeemed me”—Gen. 48:16. Job lived at the time of the patriarchs and knew the promises that came to them. Gen. 3:15. Gen. 5:29. Gen. 22. They all lived in these hopes. Job 33:23f. Job is dying, will die; but this Redeemer does not die. *My* is a word of faith. Job 16:20: his eyes look to God. But this God is here described as גֹּאֵל, a near relative, flesh and blood as himself, sprung from these as he. In other words, the God-man Jesus.

A synonym of גָּאֹל is פִּדְיוֹן, used of saving Israel out of Egypt—Exod. 6:6; Ps. 106:10; 107:2; of the returning of Israel from exile and salvation through the Messiah, Ps. 72:14; Hos. 13:14. גָּאֹל means more specifically “to buy back,” “to redeem.” It is significant that גָּאֹל is used here and not simply יָשַׁע (from which is derived מוֹשִׁיעַ, a helper, saviour). גָּאֹל implies a near relative, and death could not change that relation of Job to his Redeemer.

אֲחֵרֶיךָ —“the last,” an adjective. Cf. Rev. 1:8, 11, 17.

יָקוּם —“arise” to do something, here to stand for the purpose of redeeming.

עַל-עָפָר —“upon the dust”—local. Dust, not simply earth, the dust of disintegration, death. Dust of death is, however, not the last (אֲחֵרֶיךָ), but Christ shall stand upon it as the Last One victorious to help and save. Dust stands here as a hostile power, a power from which the גֹּאֵל will demand the body of Job. The גֹּאֵל comes not only to vindicate the honor, reputation, good name, innocency of Job; for note the following verse.

אַחֵר —“after,” as a preposition.

עוֹרִי —“my skin.” This is referred to specially because of the peculiar disease which was afflicting Job.

נִקְפוּ —Piel from *nāqaph* I, with the accusative, “beat down,” “cut down,” “ear off” the hide, “rip off or up,” “tear asunder.” Arabic, *naqapha*, “to smite the head”; late Hebrew, Jewish Aramaic, “to hit,” “to beat”; Ethiopic. “to peal”; Assyrian, *naqpu*, “crippled” as of a finger. There is another *nāqaph* II, “to enclose,” used in the Qal and Hiphil. If we derive the word from this stem, the translation would give no sense. Fuerbringer accepts the form as Piel from *nāqaph* I and translates: “Und hinter meiner Haut, welche sie so zerfetzt haben.”

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4 The meaning of this verse is uncertain.

5 Or *for myself*.

זאת —as feminine, direct object of נִקְפּוּ, either by way of neuter idea, pointing to his body, or referring to a feminine noun (עֲצָם)—see verse 20, “bone,” for the whole body, here “skeleton,” to be emphasized after the passing of the עוֹר.

מִבְּשָׂרִי —“out from my flesh.” The meaning “without,” which some scholars advocate, is very questionable and uncertain. In this case it cannot replace the strongly emphatic “I shall see for myself,” “my eyes shall behold.” Compare the passages listed for this translation as found in Ges.-Buhl dictionary.

וְלֹא־זָר —refers to the subject of the foregoing, “I”. In other words, I, as a stranger, and in that sense, “another” than myself. It is the self-same person that shall see.

כָּלֹו בְּלִיְתֵי בְּחֻקֵּי —“my reins yearn passionately in my inwards.” The reins were looked upon as the seat of the emotions, here of longing for something to come to pass.

Then the literal translation of the passage would approximate the following: “But as for me I know that my redeemer is living and as the last one shall he arise upon the dust. And after my skin they shall destroy this, and out from my flesh shall I behold God; whom I myself shall behold for myself, and mine eyes shall see and not a stranger; my reins ardently long in my inwards.”

Paraphrased, it would read thus: “But as for me I know assuredly that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall arise victoriously to stand upon the dust of battle. And though my skin is destroyed in my present sickness, so my body, too, shall succumb to the enemy of us all; yet out from my flesh shall I personally see God. Whom I shall behold for myself, and mine own eyes shall see, and that not as a stranger. I long passionately for the fulfilment of this as my sure hope.”