

PFRS Commentary

Job 19:25-27

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Job 19:25-27 NKJV

25 For I know that my Redeemer lives, And He shall stand at last on the earth;
26 And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, That in my flesh I shall see God,
27 Whom I shall see for myself, And my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!

Job 19:25-27 Our Literal Translation

25 For I myself know that my Redeemer lives, And He shall stand up on the last day on the dust of the earth;
26 And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, That in my flesh I shall see God,
27 Whom I shall certainly see for myself, And my eyes shall behold, but not as a stranger. How my heart yearns within me!

This passage in Job is the oldest declaration we have of the blessed hope, the coming of our Redeemer to this planet to raise us up bodily from the grave and to dwell among His people in His Kingdom. Not only does this passage seem very plain in its meaning, but it was also understood this way by the early church. A contemporary and disciple of the apostles, Clement, who became an elder in the church at Rome, wrote in the first century:

"Do we then deem it any great and wonderful thing for the Maker of all things to raise up again those that have piously served Him in the assurance of a good faith, when even by a bird [referring to a previous illustration he had given of the resurrection] He shows us the mightiness of His power to fulfil His promise? For [the Scripture] saith in a certain place, 'Thou shalt raise me up, and I shall confess unto Thee;' and again, 'I laid me down, and slept; I awaked, because Thou art with me;' and again, Job says, 'Thou shalt raise up this flesh of mine, which has suffered all these things.' Having then this hope, let our souls be bound to Him who is faithful in His promises, and just in His judgments." (Clement of Rome, Epistle to the Corinthians, xxvi)

In agreement with this ancient witness, the following is our interpretation.

For I know that my Redeemer lives... (veani yadati goeli chay)

The Hebrew verb here "I know" carries the first person singular pronoun "I" with it. However, the pronoun "I" (ani) is also used emphatically. The sense is, "I myself

know" or "I know for myself"). What Job so emphatically knows and declares is that his Redeemer lives. The word for Redeemer is found in Exodus 6:6 where Jehovah describes Himself as the Redeemer of Israel.

And He shall stand at last on the earth... (ve'acharon al-aphar yakum)

The word "stand" actually means "to arise" or "stand up." The word "at last" means "at the last" or "at the final" day. This corresponds to Christ's words in John 6:39, "I will raise him up on the last day." The word for "earth" is peculiar. It is "aphar" rather than the usual word for earth which is "aretz." "Aphar" means "dry, fine particles of dirt; dust; loose soil, rubble." The imagery is of the very dust and dirt with which man's decomposed body becomes mingled with burial. It is this very dirt and dust upon which the Redeemer will stand on the last day.

And after my skin is destroyed, this I know... (va'achar ori nikfu-zot)

"This I know" is supplied by the translators but is not in the Hebrew. It is needed however because the following clause refers grammatically back to the verb "For I know" at the beginning of verse 25. This does not refer to Job's present illness from which he hoped to be healed. The skin is destroyed through the process of decomposition after death - corruption - having been buried in the dirt.

That in my flesh I shall see God... (umibasari echeze elohai)

Job expected to see God with his own eyes. That this refers to vision with the eyes of the body is proved from the following verse. Objections to this interpretation will be dealt with later in this article.

Whom I shall see for myself... (asher ani echeze-li)

The first person pronoun "I" "me" occurs three times in this short clause and could not be more emphatic. The word for "see" is the same as in the previous clause.

And my eyes shall behold, and not another... (ve'eynai ra'u velo-zar)

"Eyes," that is the physical eyes of the body, is in the emphatic position. Job is not simply declaring but repeatedly emphasizing that he will see his Redeemer with his own two physical eyes. The expression "and not another" means "not as a stranger." However Job or his friends may have interpreted his present circumstances and tribulations, Job was certain that he would behold his Redeemer as a friend and not as one estranged from Him.

How my heart yearns within me... (kalu kilotai becheki)

The word "yearns" means "become weak, be consumed, waste away." Compare with Psalm 143:7, "my spirit fails." "Heart" means the inmost and most secret part of man. Compare with Jeremiah 11:20. "Within me" means in my lap or bosom, that is, the lower part of the body where one clasps one's beloved children.

With those comments as a foundation, we can offer the following as a suggested translation.

*For I myself know that my Redeemer lives,
And He shall stand up on the last day on the dust of the earth;
And after my skin is destroyed, this I know,
That in my flesh I shall see God,
Whom I shall certainly see for myself,
And my eyes shall behold, but not as a stranger.
How my heart yearns within me!*

There are those however who oppose this interpretation. In particular, Preterists today flatly deny this interpretation since they do not believe in the resurrection of the flesh. They will therefore point to the American Standard Version translation of verse 25 which reads, "Then without my flesh shall I see God." ASV

That is clearly the opposite meaning as found in the NKJV. Here are the ways this verse is rendered in other translations.

"yet in my flesh I will see God" New International Version
"yet from my flesh I shall see God" New American Standard Bible
"yet in my body I will see God" New Living Translation
"yet in my flesh shall I see God" King James Version
"yet in my flesh I shall see God" English Standard Version
"yet from this body I will see God" Contemporary English Version
"Then from my flesh I see God" Young's Literal Translation

Should it be translated IN, FROM or WITHOUT? Which translation is correct?

The Hebrew preposition is "min." It means "from" in the sense of "source, starting point, or origin." This preposition is often prefixed to the noun it is associated with. When it is a prefix, it either becomes "mi + the noun" or "min + the noun." For example, when prefixed to the noun "Ha'aretz," ("the earth"), it becomes "MinHaAretz" which means "from the earth." "MiMitsraim" would mean "from Egypt." Thus, the translation "from" is the most literal.

In Job 19:26, the sense is "from my body" because his (resurrected) body would be the source of the sight. Here is the explanation of a modern commentary, Jamison, Fausset and Brown:

Rather, though after my skin (is no more) this (body) is destroyed ("body" being omitted, because it was so wasted as not to deserve the name), yet from my flesh (from my renewed body, as the starting-point of vision, "looking out from the windows") "shall I see God." Next clause (Job 19:27) proves bodily vision is meant, for it specifies "mine eyes."

If Job meant to express the concept of "without" in the sense of bodiless, non-physical, non-material existence as demanded by Preterism, then he could easily have used a more explicit preposition to say so of which there are several in Hebrew to choose from. Here are five such prepositions that unambiguously mean "without" along with examples of their usage in Scripture. All of the examples are in the book of Job except for the first because that Hebrew word does not occur in Job.

Biladey

Genesis 41:44 "...without your consent..."

Ephek

Job 7:6 "...without hope..."

b'lee

Job 6:6 "...without salt..."

Job 24:7 "...without clothing..."

31:39 "...without money..."

33:9 "...without transgression..."

Job 35:16 "...without knowledge..."

Eyn

Job 9:10 "...without number..."

Job 31:19 "...without covering..."

lo

Job 12:25 "...without light..."

Job 26:2 "...without power..."

Preterists and others who deny the resurrection respond to this by quoting Job 11:15 where the preposition "min" occurs and can be translated "without." In the NKJV Job 11:15 reads,

*"Then surely you could lift up your face without spot;
Yes, you could be steadfast, and not fear."*

These words were spoken by Zophar the Naamathite, one of Job's three friends who came to "comfort" him in his tribulation. This would seem at first glance to be strong evidence for the meaning "without" in Job 19:25. Or is it?

The expression "without spot" or "without blemish" is found 53 times in the Old Testament. In the vast majority of cases, it refers to the sacrificial animals, and the reason that they must be without any physical blemish is that this is a

metaphor for the sinlessness and innocence of the Savior. That is, "spot" is being used metaphorically for "sin."

Of these 53 occurrences of the expression "without blemish," Job 11:15 is absolutely unique in using the preposition "min." Forty-nine of these occurrences use the construction "tamim." Two have the construction "eyn... mum" and one uses the construction "lo... mum." The one remaining reference is Job 11:15 where the construction is "mimum," literally, "from blemish." Young's Literal Translation is the only one I know of that translates this with the word "from."

"For then thou liftest up thy face from blemish, And thou hast been firm, and fearest not."

In any case, the construction is not merely unusual, it is absolutely unique. And since it is, perhaps there is a shade of meaning that we are missing in the English translation. So let's look at it in its context. For this verse to support the position that Job 19:25 should be translated "without my flesh" as in the ASV, the expression "without spot" must mean "not having any spot." And of course, "spot" is again being used metaphorically for sin.

Well, how much of the context do we really need to explore to understand that Zophar the Naamathite could not possibly have meant that Job would be "without (not having) any sin"? The whole point that Job's three friends sought to make was that Job could NOT be guiltless. As Zophar himself said in this very same chapter,

6 "Know therefore that God exacts from you less than your iniquity deserves."

And listen to what Eliphaz said in chapter 15:

*14 "What is man, that he could be pure?
And he who is born of a woman, that he could be righteous?
15 If God puts no trust in His saints,
And the heavens are not pure in His sight,
16 How much less man, who is abominable and filthy,
Who drinks iniquity like water!*

So it is absolutely inconceivable that Zophar was giving Job a prescription for sinlessness. What Zophar does is exhort Job to repent of the wickedness that brought about his suffering. And he says that if Job would simply do this, and begin to reform his wicked ways, then his misery, suffering and disease would be removed. He would be able to look back at his misery, and having come from

that position of wickedness, despair, and misery, he would be able to lift up his face. Here is the context (NKJV).

13 *"If you would prepare your heart,
And stretch out your hands toward Him;
14 If iniquity were in your hand, and you put it far away,
And would not let wickedness dwell in your tents;
15 Then surely you could lift up your face without (from) spot;
Yes, you could be steadfast, and not fear;
16 Because you would forget your misery,
And remember it as waters that have passed away,
17 And your life would be brighter than noonday.
Though you were dark, you would be like the morning.
18 And you would be secure, because there is hope;
Yes, you would dig around you, and take your rest in safety.
19 You would also lie down, and no one would make you afraid;
Yes, many would court your favor.
20 But the eyes of the wicked will fail,
And they shall not escape,
And their hope--loss of life!"*

One of the first things to note about verse 15 is that Zophar is alluding to Job's own words from chapter 10. Job had said,

*15 If I am wicked, woe to me;
Even if I am righteous, I cannot lift up my head.
I am full of disgrace;
See my misery!*

To which Zophar replies that if Job would admit and repent of his iniquity, he could lift up his face from blemish, that is, having come from such depths and in remembrance of those depths. "Min" denotes origin. That is the real force of Zophar's words. In no case could he have been implying that if Job would repent, he would then be free from, without, and not having any sin. Neither the theology of Zophar, the context of the passage, nor the meaning of "min" will support that conclusion. Therefore, this verse does not support the Preterist interpretation of Chapter 19.

Conclusion

The bottom line is Job, like all the other Old Testament saints, looked forward to a physical resurrection and renewal of the body. This was the hope he expressed in the midst of extreme physical suffering. This was Job's hope. It was Enoch's hope. It was Paul's hope. And it remains the hope of His saints today until He returns.