

Job's Advocate: A Tempting Suggestion

MICHAEL D. OBLATH
GRADUATE THEOLOGICAL UNION
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA AT BERKELEY

An analysis of the Advocate Passages in the book of Job indicates that Satan may be proposed as that advocate. This, in turn, opens the door to another look at the prologue of this text. With an analysis of the roll Satan plays in Yahweh's heavenly court, a different translation is proposed for Job 1:5, 11, and 2:5, rendering the root בָּרַךְ as "blessing" rather than the euphemistic "curse." The resulting revision of the relationship between Yahweh and Satan also leads to an interpretation of Job as a human at the mercy of an indifferent God and world.

Key words: Advocate, witness, protector, messenger, hagatan, oath formula, indirect question, divine retribution, literary construct

This investigation developed out of a somewhat light-hearted comment made during a discussion of the Advocate Passages in Job (9:33-35; 16:19-22; 19:25-29). The initial question was: how to approach a search for the identity of Job's advocate? The only method which seemed reasonable as a starting point was a detailed analysis of the passages themselves. This analysis involves a thorough understanding of the pertinent Hebrew texts: definitions and relationships of words, phrases, and sentences within the context of their verses.

When working with the book of Job, and in particular when dealing with Satan, we must peel away the centuries of biblical interpretation that cover and influence most analyses. As much as possible, it is of primary importance to permit the text to speak for itself, out of its own historical and contextual period. It is assumed that, although the book of Job may be the work of several authors/editors/contributors, the final text was arranged in the postexilic period. In addition, the composition of the Advocate Passages may have originally had absolutely nothing to do with the basic framework of Job. Nevertheless, in the final text we are presented with a unified story. The individual parts are assumed thus to be connected to the same overall narrative.

The possibility of identifying the advocate is very interesting. The possibility of rendering new understandings of the prologue are, in addition, fascinating.

THE TEXTS

(a) 9:33-35

32. For there is not a person like me to whom I could answer:
"let us come together in judgment."
33. Would that there were a מוֹכִיחַ between us
who would lay his hand on the two of us,
34. Taking from upon me His rod
and not allowing His dread to terrify me.
35. I would speak and not be afraid of Him,
for I am not like that to myself ("in my own thinking").

(b) 16:19-22

19. Moreover, behold, my witness (עֵד) is in heaven,
my witness (שֹׁהֵד) is in the heights.
20. מַלְאֲכֵי are my neighbors;
to God my eyes are weeping.
21. For he (the witness) will decide, for the man with God
and between a man and his neighbors.
22. For a few years will come,
and I will walk the path of no return.

(c) 19:25-29

25. And I, I know that my נִשְׁלַח lives:
and finally he will stand upon the earth (dust) . . .

(d) 33:23-28

23. If there be for him a מַלְאֲכֵי,
a מַלְאֲכֵי, one of a thousand
to declare what is right for the man. . . .

Within the literature focused on the identity of Job's "umpire" (9:33),¹ or "witness" (16:19), or "redeemer/protector" (19:25), conclusions appear primarily to fall into two broad categories: either the character in question *is* God, or is *not* God. Irwin,² as well as the general commentaries on Job, offer clear presentations and references for the background material surrounding this discussion.³

1. A different understanding of מוֹכִיחַ will be proposed further on.

2. W. A. Irwin, "Job's Redeemer," *JBL* 81 (1962) 219-20.

3. Edouard Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job* (Nashville: Nelson, 1967) 144, 239-40, 282-84. Samuel Rolles Driver and George B. Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Job* (New York: Scribner's, 1921) 1.95, 96, 148, 149, 171-75. Robert Gordis, *The Book of Job: Commentary, New Translation, and Special Studies* (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1978) 110-11, 178-79, 204-8. N. H. Tur-Sinai, *The Book of Job: A New Commentary* (Jerusalem: Kiryath Sefer, 1967) 172, 269, 3041-6. Slight variations on the two major models: Irwin suggests that the advocate is to be identified as an aspect of the divine. There is little difference between his proposal and those who identify the advocate as God. John Briggs Curtis ("On Job's Witness in Heaven," *JBL* 102 [1983] 549-62) proposes that Job is rejecting Yahweh and accepting his own personal god.

Beyond the general arguments, however, Irwin suggests an interesting addition to the advocate references—that is, Elihu's comment beginning at 33:23:

אם יש אליו מלאך
מליין אחד מני אלף
להגיד לאדם ישרו

Unless he have by him an angel,
an advocate, one out of a thousand
to tell of the man's uprightness. . . .

Irwin recommends this as the fourth allusion to an advocate. Taken together, each adds to a progressively more complete awareness of the character in question.⁴ The author proceeds from the simplest conceptualization to the most complex: from an insignificant flight of fancy (the מוכיח of 9:33), to a heavenly witness who pleads Job's cause before God (the עד of 16:19), to the redeemer/protector (the גאל of 19:25), to the messenger/angel who will intercede on Job's behalf (the מלאך of 33:23).

Arguing against the acceptance of this passage is the observation that, of the Advocate Passages, it is the only one not spoken by Job. Nevertheless, as a commentary (see below) by the Elihu author on the idea of an advocate, it could prove useful in identifying the character. Irwin's suggestion is attractive, even considering the possible late arrival of the Elihu speeches in the text. For had these speeches been part of the original narrative, their image of the messenger/angel as intermediary would fit nicely as part of the original story. If the Elihu speeches are later additions to the text, the presence of an intermediary could represent the author's awareness of the advocate motif and its evolving development in the story. He could be adding his own interpretation to the image, perhaps coming closer to the advocate's identity than any commentaries since.

Irwin's developmental scheme would appear essentially correct. Further, with any of the possible understandings of the Elihu chronology relative to the main text (whether contemporaneous with, or later than, the original text), one can assign to the author an understanding of the "advocate" concept. In addition, and for whatever reason, this author chose not to identify Job's advocate. This is also the case for the other three passages, which presumably refer to the same concept.

Why the advocate is not clearly identified within the text is not at all clear. Perhaps this character was indeed clear to the author(s), his identity, therefore, being withheld (intentionally or unintentionally).

4. Irwin, "Job's Redeemer," 218.

Perhaps it was, throughout, a case of an "insignificant flight of fancy" leading scholars on a centuries-old "wild-goose chase" for something which never was important for the arguments of this narrative. It is possible, however, to propose that, since the advocate was important enough for the Elihu author to include in his speeches, it has therefore maintained a critical position within the text.

There is one detailed presentation (by Day) of the role of *הַשָּׂטָן* (The Satan) in the Hebrew Bible which offers a rather unique solution to this question.⁵ She would identify Job's advocate as The Satan, a uniquely ironic answer to Job's requests. It is the purpose of this presentation to support her identification, while suggesting a more positive role for Satan than that proposed by Day. It will be possible to analyze the pertinent texts in combination with the general narrative setting of the story. Thus we may then speculate on Satan's possible identification as the advocate.

מוֹכִיחַ THE ADVOCATE, JOB 9:33-35

The first indication of a third party, who will come to Job's defense, is found in 9:33-35:

32. For there is not a person like me to whom I could answer:
"let us come together in judgment."
33. Would that there were a מוֹכִיחַ between us
who would lay his hand on the two of us,
34. Taking from upon me His rod
and not allowing His dread to terrify me.
35. I would speak and not be afraid of Him,
for I am not like that to myself ("in my own thinking").

When the verses preceding these comments are read in context it is clear that Job refers to God (*אלוה*) in the third person. Moreover, the text reads (v. 33): *לֹא יֵשׁ בֵּינֵינוּ מוֹכִיחַ*. Two comments:

1. *לֹא* is normally vocalized *לֹא* ("there is not"). It is plausible to read *לֹא* ("would that there were") revoicizing as would also seem feasible for 1 Sam 18:12 and 19:7;
2. Job's request for a מוֹכִיחַ to come *בֵּינֵינוּ* ("between us") is a clear indication that this "advocate" is separate from God. As is apparent in 16:21, Job's "witness" is also to testify for Job against God.

It is, therefore, correct to remove God from consideration as Job's advocate. This would appear to be a consistent reading of the Advocate Passages with which we are concerned.

5. Peggy L. Day, *An Adversary in Heaven: Satan in the Hebrew Bible* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988).

But can we elaborate further on the role this advocate will play in this apparent trial format? To do so requires a more precise understanding of the term מוֹכִיחַ. The root כַּח occurs over 80 times in the Hebrew text and is usually translated with the general meaning of "to reprove." Within Job it occurs frequently (17 times), and on one occasion in reference to the "witness" of 16:21.

In the participial form, מוֹכִיחַ, the root occurs within the contexts of truthful instruction (Prov 9:7), of speaking the truth (Isa 29:21, Prov 24:25) and, most importantly, in parallel with "speaking the truth" (Amos 5:10) and "speaking wisdom" (Prov 25:12). The meaning of the root appears to be within the general semantic field of "truth-saying," whether it be to correct someone (Pss 38:2; 105:14), to teach (Ps 94:10; Prov 10:17; 12:1; 13:18) or to "reprove" (Prov 25:12; 28:23). In any case, within the Wisdom texts we see a general context of speaking the truth. This meaning is also suggested by the references within Job (6:25; 13:3; 10:15; 15:3; 16:21; 23:4, 7). We may thus apply that context to 9:33 and understand the מוֹכִיחַ as an advocate who will "stand" between Job and God. The advocate will vindicate Job by speaking the truth. In order to accomplish this the advocate must be aware of the relevant circumstances.

IV THE WITNESS, JOB 16:19-22

Enter Job's witness. Although the Hebrew text is problematic, the pertinent verses can be clearly understood:

19. Moreover, behold, my witness (עֵדִי) is in heaven,
my witness (שֹׁהֵדִי) is in the heights.
20. מַלְאֲכֵי יְצִי are my neighbors;
to God my eyes are weeping.
21. For he (the witness) will decide, for the man with God
and between a man and his neighbors.
22. For a few years will come,
and I will walk the path of no return.

A few initial comments are necessary. In v. 19, עֵדִי is parallel with שֹׁהֵדִי. Although שֹׁהֵד is rare within Biblical Hebrew (occurring again only in Gen 31:47 as Aramaic שֹׁהֵדוּתָא = עֵד), its usage here in parallel indicates its meaning as "witness."

I have chosen not to translate מַלְאֲכֵי יְצִי (usually rendered "my scorers"), as its meaning here is unclear.⁶ Interestingly, it is used again in apposition with מַלְאֲכֵי, the messenger/angel of 33:23. This alludes to a more positive understanding of מַלְאֲכֵי יְצִי, perhaps as a synonym of מוֹכִיחַ, and somewhat approaching the meaning of "an advocate."

6. N. H. Richardson, "Some Notes on לִיָּץ and Its Derivatives," *VT* 5 (1955) 169.

Perhaps also the *גל יץ* can be both a "scorner" in one context and an "advocate" in another.⁷

In any case, the author presents an awareness, through Job's mouth, that a witness exists in heaven. Verse 19 begins with *גם עתה* ("Moreover . . ."), two very common words used in combination only four other times in the Hebrew text (Gen 44:10; 1 Sam 12:16; 1 Kgs 14:14; Joel 2:12). The context of its usage is that of assurance and confidence: Job is somehow assured in his own mind that his witness is in the heavenly court. And the role a witness plays in the biblical literature is also critical to his identity in this text.

Briefly, it is well known that the one who bears false witness is condemned in the biblical tradition (Exod 20:16; 23:1; Deut 19:18, 19), especially in the Wisdom Literature (Prov 6:19; 14:25; 19:5, 9; 21:28; 25:18). The biblical tradition further requires the testimony of two witnesses to establish anyone's guilt (Deut 19:15-19 + others). Throughout, a witness is understood as anyone who would have firsthand knowledge of a particular event, or series of events.

Once again, Job calls for someone who would speak the truth concerning his circumstances. He looks for someone in the heavenly court who will speak in his defense and speak the truth as a witness to what has unfolded upon him.

גאל THE PROTECTOR, JOB 19:25-29

Enter Job's redeemer. This text is also quite problematic and does not translate easily or smoothly. The verse in which the *גאל* is mentioned is the most easily translated:

25. And I, I know that my *גאל* lives:
and finally he will stand upon the earth (dust). . . .

It would be helpful if the remaining four verses were as "clearly" rendered. They would assuredly help in understanding the context of the term *גאל*. For it appears in Biblical Hebrew in quite different contexts. The *גאל* can be God (Isa 47:4; 49:7; 59:20; Jer 50:30; Ps 19:15), the "blood vindicator" (Num 35:19; Deut 19:6; Josh 20:5 + others), or even a "kinsman" (Lev 25:25; Ruth 3:9). In general, as indicated by Johnson, the root *גאל* can be translated "to protect."⁸ Hence, a *גאל* would be a "protector," and it would seem reasonable to understand Job's *גאל*, as his protector.

7. The use of homonyms can perhaps be well demonstrated in the Hebrew text. One example is the root *חסר*, as found in Ps 23:1 (*יהוה רעי לא אחסר*), which can be translated as both "Yahweh is my shepherd, I shall not want" and ". . . I shall not be lost." In this verse, however, the *גל יצ* appears only to carry the meaning of a scorner.

8. A. R. Johnson, "The Primary Meaning of *גאל*," *Congress Volume*, 1953 (VTSup 1; Leiden: Brill, 1953) 67-77.

Nevertheless, whether as a "protector" or a "redeemer," Job could easily be speaking of God in this verse. If we are to accept that particular interpretation, this passage would thus not be included as one of the Advocate Passages, because the Advocate Passages are adversarial between Job and God.

If, on the other hand, we choose to accept these verses as one of the Advocate Passages, then the **מַלְאָךְ** would be Job's protector. This individual would come to earth to release Job from his suffering condition (cf. Pss 69:19; 119:154), perhaps as the result of a victory on Job's behalf in the heavenly court. In the scenario of 19:25-29 it would be the protector's role to stand with Job and free him.

מַלְאָךְ THE MESSENGER/ANGEL, JOB 33:23-28

Enter the messenger/angel. As previously discussed, the Elihu speeches are controversial in terms of their chronological entry into the text of Job. In any case, they reflect very early comments on the story itself. This is true particularly as it pertains to Job's advocate. It is perhaps possible to identify the advocate without the Elihu speeches. The pertinent verses do, however, serve as evidence for the advocate's identification, evidence from an early source. The verse on which to focus is 23:

אם יש עליו מלאך
מליין אחד מני אלף
להגיד לאדם ישרו

with my translation:

If there be for him a **מַלְאָךְ**,
a **מַלְאָךְ**, one of a thousand
to declare what is right for the man. . . .

This **מַלְאָךְ** here translated as "advocate," then speaks forcefully in Job's defense, pleading for his return to his previous status (vv. 24-28). And this advocate is a **מַלְאָךְ**, a messenger/angel. Either translation is appropriate for **מַלְאָךְ**; either is acceptable here, for all that the Elihu speech has done is to pinpoint, without name, that the advocate is an angel who, as a messenger, will release Job from his agony and pain.

ENTER JOB'S ADVOCATE

As mentioned above, there are a number of different interpretations of the advocate's identity. Admittedly Day's suggestion, which is compelling, is speculative. It can indeed be argued that the narrative points strongly in the direction of identifying the advocate as a participant in the heavenly court; not God, but one of the **בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים**, the "divine beings" (or the "sons of God") who had presented themselves

before God in 1:6 and 2:1. This advocate can speak the truth of the events which occurred, can serve as a witness for Job, for he knows the events. He can protect Job, for he has the courage (and function) to be prosecutorial before God. The only candidate for the role of Job's advocate is Satan.

Perhaps it has been too difficult (theologically and doctrinally) to identify Satan in any supportive role for Job. Perhaps it is too difficult to overcome centuries of "bad press" in order to understand Satan as a messenger/angel of God, capable of honesty. But the book of Job should afford us that opportunity.

The root שׂטן does not occur frequently in the biblical text. Most often it is translated "adversary" or "to oppose" or "to accuse." These translations would appear to presuppose a prior image of Satan as the fallen angel. This image colors many interpretations and translations of the Joban narrative, shading our objectivity.

Day has indicated that שׂטן is a term denoting a member of the בני אל הים, the divine assembly. The word שׂטן should not be construed as the personal name of a particular angel but, rather, the title of one of the divine beings.⁹ Since the earliest extant reading of the actual name "Satan" does not occur in texts until ca. 168 BCE, she suggests that the text of Job (written some 2-3 centuries earlier) also may not be referring to an angel named Satan.¹⁰ Thus, in accord with Joüon and Muraoka, שׂטן would be understood here as "a certain accuser."¹¹

Where Satan appears as a divine being (only in Zech 3:1-2, here in Job, and in 1 Chr 21:1) he seems to be an accuser (Zechariah), or an instrument of God's anger (1 Chronicles). The Chronicler, interestingly, replaces God's anger (as is found in 2 Sam 24:1, upon which the Chronicles account is based) with שׂטן. In Job, Satan appears to be the instrument of God's will.

Hurvitz has shown that in occurrences of the root שׂטן outside of the context of a "living being," it generally means "to stumble."¹² He argues convincingly that a definite image of "The Satan" is postexilic in biblical texts. We find the emergence of the figure of The Satan (with or without the definite article) only in Zechariah, Job, and 1 Chronicles. Moreover, 1 Chr 21:1 is a clear indication of a transition in biblical thought which took place between the pre- and postexilic periods (see comment above regarding 2 Sam 24:3).¹³

9. Day, *An Adversary*, 34.

10. *Ibid.*, 128-30.

11. Paul Joüon, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew: Translated and Revised by T Muraoka* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1996) §137m—o.

12. Avi Hurvitz, "The Date of the Prose-Tale of Job Linguistically Reconsidered," *HTR* 67 (1974) 18-20.

13. *Ibid.*, 19-20. Hurvitz points out that the presence of named angels is exclusive to Daniel. Even though there is a large amount of information about angels in early biblical

Moreover, in order to understand Satan's role as it pertains to Job's misfortunes, we must have a clear picture of the events occurring in the prologue to our text. Satan's function there is to be understood within his context as a member of the divine assembly. A question naturally arises: what actually occurs in the prologue, particularly within the conversation between God and Satan? God initiates the exchange ("From where have you come?"). Satan responds truthfully ("From going to and fro on the earth . . ."). God then initiates the challenge ("Have you considered my servant Job . . .?"). Satan responds within his nature and role, as God knows he will respond ("Does Job fear God for nothing? . . . send forth your hand . . .").

Satan only fulfills his particular role within the divine assembly. He is instructed and carries out his orders, only to be challenged by God once again. But in performing his received orders he becomes the only visible witness to God's actions. He then is the only one in a position to argue Job's case to God in the heavenly court.

Can there be an objective reading of this heavenly dialogue? Are Satan's conversations with God (1:6-12 and 2:1-6) oppositional in tone? Are we to perceive God and Satan as antagonists in a contest or wager? Perhaps the dialogues are more casual: two divine beings calmly plotting the misfortunes of one unsuspecting human. A proper understanding would appear to turn on the correct translation of only a few words.

"BLESSINGS AND CURSES":
JOB 1:5 בָּרַכּוּ, JOB 1:11 AND 2:5 בָּרַכְךָ

Why would Job offer burnt offerings on his children's behalf following their feast (vv. 4-5)? He fears "they may have sinned" (אָוֵלִי חַטָּאוּ). Thus he responds with a physical action. As we learn in v. 1, Job is blameless, upright, fears God and shuns evil. He repents from sin by offering sacrifices—external acts which receive divine approval (as, in v. 8, God reiterates the words of v. 1 verbatim). Job is thus rewarded for his outward worship and loyalty to God. At least, Job *perceives* a connection between his worship and his well-being.

Job believes he lives under a system of divine retribution, of reward and punishment. Repentance is offered by physical, external acts. Thus, when he fears that his children have sinned, his concern is not that they "cursed" God in their hearts. We must leave the text

literature, they do not at that time have either definite jobs or proper names. Hurvitz further notes that the late appearance of the name "Satan" would suggest that it stems from a "reflex of post-exilic angelology" rather than from early Near Eastern mythology.

as written and translate "they blessed God in their hearts," that is, not outwardly, but only inwardly. This reading would coincide with the notion of the heart as a place of secrets (cf. Job 10:13) and thus removed from the external and visible realm of a retributive system. Job then retains his perceived security by completing for his children the external sacrificial rites they should have performed.

In thus maintaining the integrity of the text (unless as a last resort), **יְבָרַךְ**, (1:11; 2:5) should also remain as written. Support for this reading may be seen in the pattern **אִם לֹא . . . אִוְלַם**. The syntactical patterns of these two verses are nearly identical to that of 1 Kgs 20:23.

Together they appear as follows:

<u>עַל פְּנֵיךָ יְבָרַכְךָ</u>	<u>אִם לֹא</u>	<u>בְּכָל אֲשֶׁר לּוֹ</u>	<u>שְׁלַח נָא יָדְךָ וּגַע</u>	<u>וְאִוְלַם</u>	Job 1:11
<u>עַל פְּנֵיךָ יְבָרַכְךָ</u>	<u>אִם לֹא</u>	<u>אֵל עֲצָמוֹ וְאֵל בְּשָׂרוֹ</u>	<u>שְׁלַח נָא יָדְךָ וּגַע</u>	<u>אִוְלַם</u>	Job 2:5
<u>נְחֹזֵק מֵהֶם</u>	<u>אִם לֹא</u>	<u>אַתֶּם בַּמִּשּׁוֹר</u>	<u>נִלְחַם</u>	<u>וְאִוְלַם</u>	1 Kings

These are the only occurrences of the pattern **אִם לֹא . . . אִוְלַם** in the Hebrew Bible. The pattern appears quite clear. The verbal forms accompanying **אִוְלַם** are in the imperative: those following **אִם לֹא** are in the imperfect. The remaining components of each verse also coincide quite uniformly.

And yet, when these verses are mentioned in Joüon/Muraoka they are considered in different categories. In presenting a discussion of **אִם לֹא** as part of an oath which reinforces an affirmative statement J/M (§165j) refers to the Kings passage "surely we shall overpower them." On the other hand, when commenting on indirect questions (§161f) the reference is to Job: **אִם לֹא** implying the presence of an "understood" verb. Job 1:11 and 2:5 would then be translated: "(we shall see) if he will bless you to your face."

Because the pattern of the verses is the same, they should be translated with consistency:

1. either as an oath formula—that is,
 - 1 Kings—"However, let us fight them . . . surely we shall overpower them"
 - Job—"However, send forth your hand . . . surely he will bless you to your face" (in which case Satan must be speaking with irony); or,
2. as an indirect question—that is,
 - 1 Kings—"However, let us fight them . . . (we will see) that we will overpower them"
 - Job—"However, send forth your hand . . . (we will see) if he will bless you to your face."

In either case, the meaning for Job is the same. But more importantly, the verb בָּרַךְ need not be read as an intentional rewriting of "to curse." As well, there is no indication that the mood of the heavenly conversation is anything but a casual dialogue.¹⁴

To attempt an objective reading of the prologue is not easy. Nevertheless Satan, as an angel whose role happens to be a stumbler, a prosecutor perhaps, has a certain function within the divine court. It is somewhat reminiscent of 1 Kgs 22:19-22, in which Satan is not identified, but his role is perhaps carried out by the one who answers God's request. In these particular verses, God initiates a dialogue with the heavenly host. God selects one of them who volunteers to perform the requested action. It is a simple, casual dialogue:

I saw Yahweh sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing beside him on his right hand and on his left: and Yahweh said, "Who will entice Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth Gilead?" And one said one thing, and another said another. Then a spirit came forward and stood before Yahweh saying, "I will entice him." And Yahweh said to him, "By what means?" And he said, "I will go forth, and will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets." And Yahweh said, "You are to entice him, and you shall succeed; go forth and do so."

In the book of Job, however, Job is not the real target of the accusations. Rather, the target is the retributive system by which, it is believed by many, God operates the world. Job is simply the illustration by means of which Satan wishes to argue his point: an illustration brought to the discussion by God.

By reading the Advocate Passages as irony, Day is presupposing evil intent on the part of Satan.¹⁵ To paraphrase her reading of these passages:

"Job, you wish for a מוֹכִיחַ, an עַד, a גֹּאֵל, a מַלְאָךְ? Well, look who is in heaven, look who will speak for you . . . the one who has been trying to send you to Sheol in the first place."

There exists no indication in the prologue that Satan's intent is evil and directed toward Job. The apparent reason for Job's prosperity is

14. David Penchansky comments (*The Betrayal of God: Ideological Conflict in Job* [Louisville: Westminster, 1990] 57), "Hostility towards Yahweh and towards Yahweh's prized servant is barely concealed. His contempt for Yahweh's judgments lies just below the surface, and the ease with which he manipulates God to do his will is a marvel of subtlety." His reading of Satan's motives is quite typical. Even Day, who tends to be quite objective, still comments (p. 43): "Thus it is a certain unspecified accuser who finds fault with Job's piety." Her presupposed bias is also evident (on p. 94), as paraphrased further on in this paper. See also Gordis's comment on Job 1:7 (p. 15) and Dhorme's comments on his p. xxviii for further representations of a presupposed evil intent for Satan.

15. Day, *An Adversary*, 85-104.

his uprightness and fear of God (1:1). This identification is repeated verbatim by God when he tempts Satan with this world system (1:8)—that is, ". . . see, it works . . . and Job is the proof." Satan simply responds as a stumbler (of God). He asks God to alter the apparent workings of the system. He wants God to separate for the reader (and Job) the coincidence of the apparent link between Job's righteousness and his good fortune. God quickly complies with the request and agrees to reveal the real workings of the world to Job.¹⁶

Since there has been no wager between God and Satan, thus Job does not prove Satan wrong when he responds in 1:21,

Yahweh gave and Yahweh has taken away:
blessed be the name Yahweh.

He is simply showing that even the righteous may bless God when they suffer. Satan is not proved wrong because his agreement with God is meant to reveal that the world does not operate within the context of a retributive system. As Day says, "It is precisely to this conception of an inevitably retributive universe that the Joban satan objects. . . . The book of Job rings the death knell for personal retributive justice, at least for those who subscribe to its message."¹⁷

This is exactly what God can tell Job:¹⁸ that the system does not work the way Job expected it to work, nor has it ever. But Job repeatedly demands a divine explanation in order to comprehend his woe-ful condition. Only one other being could stand before God and argue Job's case with any compelling force. And therefore I would posit that Satan can indeed be understood as Job's advocate in heaven, and not in any ironic sense whatsoever. If God's whirlwind speeches vindicate the challenge Satan has proposed, then should we not also view God and Satan as working together to create the entire Joban scenario?

With that in mind, it is perhaps clear why Satan never reenters the story after the prologue. For he and God have proved their point. It is now God's responsibility to approach Job, which is after all, what Job has demanded all along (cf. 10:1, 2). It is God's turn to explain the divine responsibility for what has happened and why: Satan need not be present.

The author of Job is using the setting of the story to indicate the nonvalidity of a retributive system. As Job finally learns, the world has never operated that way; God has never operated that way. God

16. *Ibid.*, 43, 80, 81. At the same time that Day assumes evil intent for Satan, she maintains that "the satan is not accusing Job, or at least not directly. He is attacking the problem at its source, by accusing the creator of perpetrating a perverse world order."

17. *Ibid.*, 105.

18. See Matitiahu Tsevat's discussion in "The Meaning of the Book of Job," *HUCA* 37 (1966) 73-106, especially pp. 96-106.

and Satan have just used Job as an example to illustrate their point. It could be posited that Job is not only rewarded at the end but even portrayed as correct (42:7), because as the literary persona for the suffering righteous human he has correctly called upon God to explain the "rules" (thus God vindicates him). Finally, having been a not-so-willing "volunteer" (actually he was "volunteered" by the author), he was rewarded for his troubles. This may perhaps be only poetic justice, but because Job was a literary construct from the beginning, poetic justice may be totally appropriate.