RESTORATIVE JUSTICE IN THE BOOK OF JOB: AN EXEGESIS STUDY OF JOB 19:23-27 AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE TO THE CONTEMPORARY KIKUYU CHRISTIAN IN KENYA

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A THESIS SUBMITTED TO GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD
OF DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN DIVINITY (BIBLICAL STUDIES)

PAN AFRICA UNIVERSITY

MARCH 2026

DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented to any college or university for academic credit

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DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to my family; my wife Jane Murimi and our two wonderful sons Kendrick and Maleek Murimi. Our mother, Maryrose Karoki and my brothers, Kevin, Favour and Victor for their enormous support on my journey in pursuit of this noble accomplishment.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I wish to thank the Almighty God for enabling me to undertake this research work. May all glory and honour go back to him. The Lord, having called me to this noble responsibility, has not left me amidst all family, pastoral and agribusiness engagements. I wish to sincerely thank my wife Jane for her unending support and encouragement in this academic journey. She has made numerous sacrifices for me to pursue this academic award and I am forever grateful. May the Lord who sees it all bless you richly my darling. To my sons, Kendrick and Maleek, I was pressed hard to complete this study for you. I did this to be a role model for you, to never give up even when the odds are against you. I wish to thanks all my lectures who have laboured hard for our success. I particularly wish to mention, Prof. Nathan Chiroma, Dr. Richard Bariu, Dr. Kamande Thuo, Dr. Joshua Rutere, Dr. Kyama Mugambi and Dr. Isaac Kibuthu who went out of their way to encourage and support our MDIV Class with everything they had. To my supervisor; Dr. Micah Moenga, I am extremely grateful for your guidance and grace in writing this research paper. To my classmates and friends; Samuel Wanyoike, Rebecca Njihia, Hellen Mueni, Kenneth Koskey, Kenneth Mungai, Joel Mboni, Pamela Munyi and Beryl Andere, May the Almighty God bless you for being a pivot in this journey. Finally, I wish to thank the CITAM Thika Town family for their endless prayers, ministry training and moral support. Over this period of my academic Journey, I have been supported immensely by Rev. Justus Mugambi, Rev. Dr. Stanely Mungathia, Dr. Florence Mungathia, Rev. J. Kimacia, Rev. Grace Waceke and Rev. Joshua Nyamu. Thank you for believing in me. To all other I may not have acknowledged by name, thank you for the specific role you played to make this work a success.

ABSTRACT

In theology, God is just and He administers justice in the world. This study looked at divine justice as seen by the person who suffers beginning with Job. The study carried an exegetical analysis of Job 19:23-27 to find the original meaning of the text as seen by the first audience. To mine the meaning of the text, the study used the social scientific methodology. This helped the researcher to find the social construct of the people of the Ancient Near East and how they interpreted suffering in their time. The study then carries this to the contemporary Kikuyu Christian and help them come to terms with the issue of underserved suffering. The study explores the question of undeserved suffering and what should constitute the attitude of Kikuyu Christians when they face trials in life. The findings on this research reveals that Kikuyus understanding of suffering as retributive justice greatly influences how they interpret the Bible and understand the principles of God. The righteousness of man should go beyond this system of wrong and right. Biblical restorative justice goes beyond punishing the wrong doing with focus on reconciliation, repentance, and taking responsibility. The research finds that there is a correlation between the justice of God and his executive authority in governing the world. God acts in his judicial authority when he is rewarding the righteous and punishing the wicked. At the same time, He acts in his executive authority when he allows even the righteous to go through moments of suffering. For the contemporary Kikuyu Christian, one needs to have faith in God if they are to carry the proper attitude when suffering. The person who suffers may not fully comprehend the reasons why they are suffering but they should hold on to faith and trust in the Lord.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

NIV New International Version of the Bible

ESV English Standard Version of the Bible

MT Masoretic Text

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Restorative Justice

Biblical restorative justice in the Old Testament is a vision of justice centered on repairing harm and restoring right relationships within the community. Marshall, (2001, p. 36) argues that in books such as Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy, wrongdoing is often addressed through restitution rather than imprisonment. Those who stole, damaged property, or caused loss were required to repay what they took, sometimes with additional compensation, so that victims were made whole and social harmony was restored.

This approach reflects the Old Testament understanding of justice, often expressed by the Hebrew word מִשְׁפָּט (*mishpat*) as setting things right. According to Zehr, (2015, p. 193) laws limited revenge through proportional consequences, protected vulnerable groups such as widows, orphans, and foreigners, and emphasized communal responsibility. This thesis employs a restorative justice lens to argue that biblical justice extends beyond punitive measures to encompass the restoration of equilibrium, the maintenance of covenantal integrity, and the communal reflection of God's holiness and mercy.

Executive Authority of God

The executive authority of God is defined as His sovereign prerogative to govern the universe and ensure the efficacious fulfilment of His divine will. Dodsworth, (2011, p. 198) argues that uunlike human executive power, which is often derived or restricted by external checks, God's authority is presented as inherent to His status as Creator and Sustainer of all existence. This thesis looks at this authority as fundamentally "executive"

in that it involves the active wielding of power to perform, enforce, and maintain the moral and natural laws He has established. Scriptural tradition depicts God as the ultimate King whose executive functions include managing human history, directing the hearts of leaders, and providing for the preservation of His creation.

Social Scientific Criticism

According to Elliot, (1993, p.7) social-scientific criticism of the bible is that phase of the exegetical task which analyses the social and the cultural dimensions of the text and its environmental context through the utilization of the perspectives, theory, models, and research of the social sciences. The method aims at investigating biblical tests as a meaningful configuration of the language that is confined to both the audience and the author. This research uses the social scientific methodology to find the basic information that is produced in the text of Job 19:23-27. For example, in this research, we are not just focusing on the existence of Job as a historical character, but more on viewpoints of both Job and his friends that speak to their reason, judgements and actions. This research looks at the book of job from the response of Job to the social views that are held by his friends as informed by their community. The research digs into the social construct of the people of Ancient Near East.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Introduction

When people are going through tough times, it is not uncommon for them to turn to the Bible and more so to the book of Job to try and find some answers. The challenge is that they find this book very poetic and to a great extent unsatisfying. Walton, (2015, p. 15) argues that the book of Job does not provide answers as to why our loved ones are suffering or why we are going through so much pain. In this research I will demonstrate that this is not entirely true, the answers are not as direct as we would expect. Suffering has punctuated the life of man throughout history and every man who lives encounters it. In broad terms, the current study will explore the particular resonance that the Book of Job has with the contemporary man and specifically the Kikuyu people in Kenya. Specifically, I will examine the representation of suffering and restoration in the book of Job and the discourse surrounding the justice of God as woven through the text in Job 19:23-27

Human suffering cannot always be interpreted in the system of reward and punishment despite the covenant of Yahweh with the people that set two ways- life through obedience, or death through disloyalty. Both Andersen (2011, p. 89) and Habel (1985, p. 65) view retributive justice through a lens of simple correlation of cause and effects as recited from Leviticus 26, Deuteronomy 27-30. Our understanding of suffering as retributive justice greatly influences how we interpret the Bible and understand the principles of God. With this in mind, the righteousness of man should go beyond this

system of wrong and right. Looking keenly, the prosperity of the wicked does not translate to his happiness. His material prosperity does not decree an oversight on God's part either. The rich are often miserable and so much so due to the insecurity and transient nature of material wealth. Similarly, ill-gotten wealth comes with fear and dread in one's conscience on the day of reckoning. That notwithstanding the righteous have inward joy that is not destroyed even when they face an outward misfortune as well highlighted in Psalms 73.

Background of the Study

Why does God allow suffering? Why do bad things happen to good people? Is God just when good people are suffering and is he still in control? Poverty, oppression, diseases and community conflict is common here in Africa. According to Mburu, (2019, p. 53) an African will relate to suffering from a lens of relationship. What that means is that Africans carry the worldview that some relationship must have broken down for there to be suffering. For the Kikuyu people, when the community suffers, for instance through a pandemic, drought, famine, locust invasion and so on, there is a common believe that a sin has been committed against the spirits. The Kikuyu are keen not to offend anyone within the circle of relationships as it would automatically offend God and bring about judgment. To them, the spirit and the physical world are connected and are one. Therefore, actions carried out in the physical world, carry an impact in the spirit world (Mbiti 1970, p. 45).

For majority of Africans, whether Christians or not, believe that suffering is a punishment for disobeying God. Therefore, the first response they make when they are facing suffering is to examine their lives for any sinful attitudes or behaviour. Evans (2000, p.

399) contends that this response to retributive justice comes from the African worldview of a transactional approach to religion. Therefore, the contemporary African man will interpret his suffering experience mainly in terms of sin and punishment. When we come to the book of Job, the Kikuyu can easily understand the perspective of Job's friends. This is because the friends of Job maintain that Job must have sinned, because a good person always prospers while a wicked person suffers. The challenge here is for an African to question this assumption. To think more deeply about the suffering of the righteous people in light of God's justice and love amidst what appears to be unfair treatment (Mburu, 2019, p. 14).

The focus of this study will be on the justice of God in the midst of suffering. Habel (1985 p. 76) makes a pessimist argument when it comes to the justice of God in the book of Job. In his introduction he argues that the central theme in the book of Job is centred on the conflict between God and Job; the integrity of God as the creator and the integrity of the mortal man Job. The conflict is signalled in the opening scene where the character and the goodness of Job are portrayed in hardly believable terms (Job1:1-5). However, the way God agrees to test Job raises serious doubts about his integrity. The creator of both man and Satan appears to fall vulnerably to the incitement of Satan in the heavenly council. Two times, God succumbs to the wager of afflicting Job. Habel (1985 p. 76) argues that following this scene the authority of God to rule justly is thrown into question.

Following this argument and thought, Satan not only raises doubts about the integrity of God but also that of the mortals. According to Schaper (1974 p. 37), Satan proposes that man, only worships God out of self-interest and they are righteous only because they

want a reward. The integrity of man according to this argument is only as good as the reward he will receive. If you remove the reward, man will abandon integrity! Therefore, an innocent man has to suffer in this context to prove otherwise. In the context of the traditional law of retributive justice according to Andersen (2011, p. 98), God's integrity is clearly in question. He is supposed to bless the righteous, not afflict them. Job's friends support the integrity of God while at the same time challenge it. In their perspective, God out of his virtue as the cosmic ruler and out of his nature, acts righteously in all things and upholds the principle of retributive justice in his dominion. Therefore, the righteous are rewarded and the wicked are punished. In principle, those who are suffering affliction must be sinners who deserve to suffer.

Similarly, Seow (2013, p. 88) posits that Job is not contented with the arguments of his friends. He is not satisfied with their disputation. He keeps protesting his innocence while bewailing his miserable state as a mortal man. The argument makes Job explore a bold alternative for resolving the conflict between him and God. Job seeks litigation and ends up seeking various legal arbiters who could help him argue his case and assure him of a fair trial (9:32-35, 16:18-21, 19:23-27). Job believes that if he is brought before an impartial court, whether when he is alive or when he has died, he would be vindicated. Job resolves to keep his integrity to the bitter end. In his protests, Job can hardly hold his humility and firmly defends his innocence. His firm grip on self-righteousness passionately inflames his zeal for vindication. He is ready to defend his integrity at all costs to a point where (Habel, 1985, p. 87) argues that Job is ready to defy God rather than deny his integrity and out of that fact he is a true hero! Habel argues that Job wants the unthinkable, to see God face to face. According to Job 19:26-27, Job looks for a

confrontation with God and calls out the “Seeing” God. Job is daring God to come out and here he challenges the ancient tradition where the invisible God is too holy for the eyes of the wise and the righteous mortals.

Problem Statement

Poverty, conflict, pandemics and diseases are familiar to many Africans. At times this is taken as part of life. However, we see a retribution theory in play as many believe that suffering is a punishment for displeasing God or the spirits who are agents of punishment. Therefore, more often than not when suffering comes, our first response is to examine our lives for sinful attitudes and behaviour (Mburu, 2019, p. 79). This reflects the transactional approach that many Africans and especially the Kikuyu people have towards religion. We are looking at sin and punishment as the other side of the coin when we go through suffering.

The problem of underserved suffering then remains a puzzle for many Kikuyu people. They look at it from both Christian and traditional perspective. Underserved suffering is viewed as an attack by evil spirits which comes as a result of witchcraft or an act of demons for the Christians. The problem lies on our understanding of God’s justice when we face underserved suffering. This research aims to bridge the gap in interpreting the justice of God from a judicial perspective, retributive justice, with the executive authority of God. Therefore, the deduction of God’s action in carrying out His actions can simply be interpreted as his exercise of executive authority. When a Kikuyu looks at the book of Job, they can easily relate with his friends on retributive theology, but hardly can they see the relationship of God as one who allows all kinds of suffering for his own reasons.

This research looks at the relationship of God with Job. Job is seeking vindication for his suffering and is calling out to God to see and administer justice. His friends are convinced that Job must have sinned and he needs to recommit his life to God him for him to enjoy traditional blessings of peace, prosperity and good health. The researcher foresees a challenge in reconciling the love of God amidst what appears to be unfair treatment for a Kikuyu. To counter this, the research will look into the worldview that shapes the Kikuyu people and the restorative justice in the book of Job as seen in Job 19:23-27.

Research Questions

1. What is the meaning of the selected text in Job 19:23-29 originally intended by the author?
2. Which theological issues of contemporary relevance are raised in the selected text in Job 19:23-2 through the social scientific methodology approach?
3. What practical significance of the biblical truths from the selected text of Job 19:23-29 can be applied to the contemporary Kikuyu Christian in Kenya?

Significance and the Scope of the Study

This is an exegetical analysis of the biblical text of the Book of Job 19:23-27. The exegesis of the text will be carried out using the historical-grammatical approach together with insights from the social scientific approach. The periscope in this study is the selected text of Job 19:23-27 and the text is chosen as it carries the correlation between suffering and justice as debated by Job and his friends.

The significance of this study is to address the existential problem of suffering; what am I to do when am suffering? the book of Job and more so the text in Job 19:23-29 shows the attitude that should constitute the sufferer. Job does not attempt to suppress his hostility towards God (Alden, 1993, p. 56). Job speaks freely from the anguish of his soul (Job 7:11). What makes this a model for sufferers is not only because the sufferer directs himself to God as the one responsible and one who offers remedy both immediately and ultimately for his suffering but also because the sufferer at the end is satisfied by his encounter with God for only in this encounter is the tension of suffering resolved.

By tracing the discussion and cycle of debates between Job and his friends, this study aims at finding solutions to the fundamental questions of justice especially when a Christian is suffering. The study will give insights to ministers of the gospel who need to communicate hope and faith to their congregants. Consequently, the conclusions of this study will help in reassessing the theological approaches in effectively dealing with loss, grief and the general sense of hopelessness that comes upon Christians in their lives.

The Research Objectives

1. To determine through biblical exegesis the author's intended meaning of Job 19:23-27 to the original audience.
2. To discuss the social-cultural and theological issues of contemporary relevance raised in Job 19:23-27 discourse through the applied research methodology
3. To find the practical significance of the biblical truths from the selected text of Job 19:23-27 to the contemporary Kikuyu Christian in Kenya.

Research Approach

The approach that is used in this research is the social scientific method. The methodology will look into the historical, cultural and grammatical areas of the text to mine the meaning of the author's original intent in writing the text. The approach also takes into consideration the meaning of the text to its original audience. The researcher will carry an exegetical analysis of the text, in key areas such as the literal genres, analysis of the grammar and the syntactical features used in the selected text of Job 19:23-27. The social scientific methodology helps this study to look into three main areas; the social aspect of both form and context of Job 19:23-27 the correlation of linguistic, theological and social dimensions of the text and finally how this textual context played out in its communication in a specific social setting. The social scientific criticism carries an analysis of the text by seeking to understand what the author said to the original audience within the contours of their environment.

Chapter Summary

Chapter One has provided the background and the introduction of the study. This highlights the general area and the reasons for the study of the Book of Job. The chapter has also clearly spelt out the significance, scope and objectives of the study which carry the research gap and the possible solutions that can be derived from the selected text of Job 19:23-27. The parameters of the study are demonstrated by the research questions; the highlight of the research methodologies and the statement of the problem being addressed.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

In this chapter, the study reviews the scholarly works that relates to the Book of Job. The historical, social and cultural context of the book of Job has been examined. The study also looks at the background of the authorship, date and time of the writing of the Book of Job. An investigation into the relationship between suffering, justice and the authority of God as seen in the debate of Job and his friends is also discussed.

The Background of the Study

The justice of God as highlighted by various theologians falls mainly under retributive justice. In general God rewards those who are obedient on one hand while punishing the sinners on the other hand. This model can be justified from numerous books of the Bible. The book of Job seems to counter the boundaries of retributive justice and leaves more questions than answers. Where is the justice of God when a righteous person suffers? Is the justice of God only limited to reward and punishment? Where is divine justice in the Book of Job? Suffering is a common problem that is not just central in the lives of Africans but the world at large. Suffering is a puzzling problem that affects man's relationship with God, a moment when the faith of a Christian is tested. It becomes tough to comprehend that a just God will allow a righteous person to suffer. Therefore, the justice of God is questioned when a righteous Christian goes through suffering. According to Walton (2015, p. 133), the sufferer wants to believe that God suffers with them and will alleviate pain and anguish in their lives. The person who is suffering looks

at God as one who redeems them from pain and anguish. God is also to show justice to the Christian by punishing the devil while at the same time rewarding the sufferer with joy and restoring their lives. The redemption of God is central to the Christian who is suffering. Here the person believes that although they may suffer, they will receive a reward for keeping their faith in God. The justice of God prevails to the suffering Christian

Muganda, (2012, p. 15) asserts that when a person suffers, especially when one is in extreme suffering, it is hard to comprehend that God is with them. People seek God for immediate help when they are suffering. They are seeking a God who can suffer with them and who is quick to alleviate their pain. In times when people go through hard times, there are many questions left unanswered. Allen (2011, p. 65) holds a similar view where he argues that a suffering heart keeps on pondering on the relevance of God in times of pain and suffering. The sufferer keeps asking, where is God? Why does a just God allow this to happen? Why does God seem so capricious in his care? Why will God heal one person's illness, but not another's?

Aleke (2023, p. 350) contends that in our world today and especially in Africa it is difficult to picture the concept of an impotent God who stands silent and apathetically above as the people suffer. In African countries such as Kenya and Zimbabwe, the citizens suffered greatly due to post-election violence. The Rwanda genocide of 1994, and the civil war conflict in Sudan and Democratic Republic of Congo, have left thousands of people homeless and dead. According to Rasmussen (2017, p. 49), Africa has more serious challenges with sickness than any other continent. In his argument, he

asserts that it is not that Africa is alone in facing sicknesses and suffering, rather the response is often dualistic and fragmented.

Byamukama (2024, p. 247), affirms that African theologians' response towards suffering is torn between the debates of Christology that look at the suffering in the person of Jesus Christ and the traditional Christian theology adopted by missionaries who introduced Christianity in Africa. The challenged missionary approach is criticized for not allowing a dialogue between the African traditional religion and Christianity. The missionaries' approach introduced the concept of a deity of a God who was perceived as different from the one the Africans worshipped. Idowu, (1970, p. 17) asserts that the African view of deity is always present and felt by humanity. The African view of God is integrated into the Africans' physical and spiritual worlds. Therefore, suffering and pain are not just physical but also spiritual.

The challenges that Africans face such as poverty, racism, and other social injustices often push the people to fall back to their traditional beliefs for help. Paul (2017, p. 58) affirms that Pope Francis called for African solutions to African problems; social, political, economic, theological, and cultural as the only way to help Africans. The African Synod Department (1995, p. 26) commented that "African Christians live in two separate worlds: the world of the traditional religion and the world of the Christian faith." Truly, there is a need for this gap to be bridged if Africans have to endure suffering like Job and hope in God at all times. Before the Lord speaks in the whirlwind, Alden (1993 p. 56) argues that Job complained that God was apathetic, blind to injustice, hidden, and unresponsive. Job's friends spoke of the justice of God from their perspective of retributive justice, rewarding the righteous and punishing the wicked. God was part of

their theology of sovereignty. Job's arguments with his friends look at sin as pardonable and not incurable. Redemption is also available to sinners through repentance and atonement.

The Meaning of Job 19:23-27

The passage of Job 19:23-27 is highly debated by scholars. The text is notoriously difficult and mainly it depends on how a writer interprets its central affirmation "My Redeemer Lives." According to Andersen (2011, p. 176) the statement is followed by other unintelligible lines that offer such a bewildering range of interpretations. Adeyemo (2010, p. 1261) posits that this part of Job should be understood first in its context. He argues that Job has come to a point of spiritual maturity where he recognizes the troubling possibility that he might die before he is vindicated. Job has grown in his understanding from his arguments in (Job 7:7-10) where he thought of hades, the world of the dead and the final destination of all men, as just an 'impersonal suspension between worlds'. However, Job progressed to hope that some traces of his personhood would remain, and even dared to suggest that God would miss him (7:21). However, it is not until Job touches the bottom of the pit of humiliation and desperation do we see his eyes open wide and embrace faith in God despite of his suffering.

According to Larrimore (2020, p. 85,) Job is facing annihilation of death without any hope of vindication in his present life. Adeyemo (2010, p. 1261) supports this argument and adds that Job has matured both emotionally and spiritually to the point of postponing his immense desire for instant answers, and is ready to face his reality. Job cries out, "Oh, that my words were recorded" (Job 19:23). On this, you can note the increasing intensity of his desire for a permanent record of his words. He moves from "written on a scroll, to

inscribed with an iron tool on lead, to engraved in a rock forever" (19:23-24). Adeyemo puts a contrast to this statement by indicating that this is Job's response to Bildad that he would be forgotten or remembered only with horror (18:17-20). Job desired to leave a written record for posterity. On the same note, Andersen (2011, p. 177) supports this by showing that Job argues for a written record to safeguard his honour and seeks justification by providing a permanent written record of his innocence. The argument here shows the anguish of the man Job in carrying on with hope and quest for vindication. It is not clear whether the writing on this *book* would be on a scroll, a tablet of clay, metal or even stone. However, the use of the word "inscribed" points out that some work would be carved on something more permanent like a stone or monument (Andersen, 2011, p. 177).

The question of which words did Job want to be inscribed remains unanswered. Job may be referring to the following verses as the words that he would like to see in scripted to show his innocence. Job 19:25-27;

> "For I know that my Redeemer lives,
> and at the last he will stand upon the earth.
> And after my skin has been thus destroyed,
> yet in my flesh I shall see God," ESV

These two verses show the man Job leap with faith and argue from a deep conviction that he would be vindicated. Job uses the expression "I know" in a forensic context to mean, "I have a strong conviction" or "I firmly believe." According to (Habel, 1985, p. 304), the man's job is to convince him that he has someone to defend his case despite his worry and plea that God is devious and would not vindicate him. This conviction revolves

around his hope for a redeemer **גֹּאֵל** (*gō'ēl)*. The meaning of **גֹּאֵל** in the secular sense would show an idea of a kinsman redeemer who would bring redemption from slavery or bondage (Leviticus 25:47-49), redeem the property (Leviticus 25:25, Ruth 4:4, 6), marry a childless widow of a deceased husband and brother, (Ruth 4:4-7) and also avenging the brother of a family member who has been murdered (Deuteronomy 19:6). Adeyemo, (2010, p. 1262) asserts that although the above meanings of **גֹּאֵל** speak of a redeemer that Job is talking about; it is clear from the context that Job is not speaking basically of a human redeemer. The argument then brings out the question of who would Job be referring to when he speaks of a redeemer.

The Meaning and Interpretation of Goel גֹּאֵל (*Gō'ēl)*

Job's responses are not so much about his sufferings but the continued confrontation that he has with his friends. The arguments on his defence as a righteous man seem to fall on deaf ears and this angers him. The situation that Job considers unjust becomes unbearable when his friends are ready to justify it with their witty theological arguments. According to Gutiérrez, (1985, p. 80) The argument of Job and his friends leads to a spiritual struggle for Job. Job is pushed to demand that God ought to come forth and give him an audience. Both Gutiérrez and Walton (2015, p. 14), hold to the argument that although Job has trials, he is not the one on trial. Therefore, Job not only holds his integrity in his arguments but also has complete trust in God.

Job's trust in God and his hope in him is marked by three key passages. These passages carry the stages of Job's struggle and petition for God to intervene. These passages are 9:33 on the need for an arbiter; 16:19 on the presence of a witness to the discussion; and 19:25 on the hope of a defender or liberator **גֹּאֵל** (*gō'ēl)*. Job ascribes these roles to God in

progression as the debate builds. These functions are faces of the same God as experienced by Job as he suffers. Although we will not dive deep into Job 9:33 and John 16:19, Job is convinced that the arbitrator in the first passage and the mediator in the second passage will bring justice and restoration to his life.

Date and Authorship of the Book of Job

According to Dillard (2006, p. 225), the Book of Job does not claim any author nor date of its composition. The Book of Job does not follow the historical events in Israel's history that would help us fit its time and period of writing. These events include the call of Abraham, the exodus, the conquest and the exile. In light of this, Andersen (2011, p. 60) argues that the book does not point out the institutions of Israel as well such as the temple, the monarchy or the prophets.

Balentine (2006, p. 388) welcomes the argument that the author of the book suppressed the national background of the book to provide a more inclusive and universal setting that welcomes the Gentiles. This suppression is supported by the debate of whether Job and his friends are Israelites. While accommodating this neutral perspective the author according to Andersen (2011, p. 61) is quick to point out that the characters may not necessarily be Israelites but they are not pagans. Their beliefs and ideologies support their concept of God, sin and ethics. It is an enormous work, much of what can be inferred about the time and its composition is from outside sources.

Clines (2015, p. 35) postulates that the Book of Job is better placed in the patriarchal era depicted in Genesis. Cline's argument is that the wealth of Job like that of Abraham is counted in terms of cattle and servants (1:3; 42:12; cf. Gen 12:16). Job also stands out as

the head of his family who freely offers sacrifices without the help of a priest (1:5) which is similar to Abraham (Genesis 12:16). When the Levitical priesthood was instituted at Mount Sinai, offering sacrifices without the priest would be a violation against the Mosaic Law. Similar to the patriarchs who lived and died at the age of Abraham175, Isaac 180, and Joseph 110 years, Job lived for 140 years which was more than most of the patriarchs (Genesis 42:16). Both Adeyemo (2010, p. 1238) and Dillard (2006, p. 226) supports this argument that without doubt the plot of the book is early and Job is best understood as having been before the Abrahamic covenant which narrows the covenant community to a particular family.

The Genre of the Book

Larrimore (2020, p. 27) affirms that the genre of the book informs us how to read it. In most cases, genres have their conventions and come with their assumptions. However, genre identification allows us to place the literal work of the author among those who similarly share its nature. The genre of the book looks at the form, content and even the rhetorical theme and thereby we get to know the author's communicative intentions. Nevertheless, we are removed from the time and culture that informed the composition of the Book of Job. Walton (2015, p. 36) contends that the composition of the Book of Job is without uncertainties since there lies the possibility of other genre categories that may not be in correspondence with the current and modern categories we have today. In other words, since we have an incomplete understanding of the genres of ancient literature, there is an increased possibility that we may currently impose our genre label on the work resulting in distortion.

Despite the arguments made by Walton being well founded, the Book of Job is without doubt in the genre of wisdom literature as opposed to any other historical literature. According to Clines (2015, p. 14) the book makes no claims about the nature of events but rather it points to the reader on various philosophical events that bring to life the themes of wisdom such as suffering. The wisdom literature found in the book of Job lies more on wisdom debate where the language is poetic (for the most part) and leads the reader to question where is the true source of wisdom. The selected text Job 19:23-29 falls in the category of wisdom literature. Guzik (2020, p. 11) asserts that wisdom literature helps us unfold the mystery of God. It seeks to guide us in understanding the appropriate foundations of how both God and the world work.

Restorative Justice in the Executive Authority of God

Central to the understanding of the meaning of Job 19:23-27 and the message of the book of Job lies the topic of divine justice. According to Marshall (2012, p. 12), biblical teaching on justice is in no way easy. The depth of data in both Old Testament and New Testament that speak explicitly on justice is very diverse as well as the different positions that biblical scholars take over the same topic. The restorative justice of God in Job 19:23-27 is of a God who reaches out at the lowest point when one is alone and in misery. When people go through suffering, there are all sorts of questions and few answers. Larrimore (2020, p. 23) asserts that the argument of why people suffer follows the philosophical clarity that: If God is all-powerful and good then why does he allow the existence of evil, violence and diseases? Therefore, following this argument, God must be limited in his abilities to control evil and prevent everything that happens. On this same note, God's inability to curb the wrongs that happen means that He does not see

anything wrong with them and so he is not good or righteous. Such an argument is close to polytheism where each god has his limited domain. According to Kaufmann (Sept 1951), polytheism arguments follow dualism in which evil exists over good. A close thought that carries the naturalistic view that; "*a god who does nothing, that "God is dead."* (Aimers, 2012, p. 34) looks at these two views from a dualistic view where the removal of God as the creator of the universe and his creation would create a drag of deism and would deny not only His power to create the universe but his consistent influence and work in it. The Book of Job does not suggest any of these limitations. Alden (1993, p. 56) affirms that the Book of Job does not offer complicated theology. All the prayers are offered to one true God, not to just one of the many gods or an impersonal supreme force.

According to Scholnick (Dec 1982, p. 521), the word justice (*misphat*), as used by the author of the book of Job, keeps changing and helps the reader understand the quest that Job has in the search for the meaning of Justice. The argument here is that Job's friends argue for the meaning of justice from a juridical perspective whereas God brings out the executive sovereignty of Justice in his ruling. The debate of the meaning of justice builds as a drama about these two differences.

Job as well as his friends, view the loss of his family, wealth and even his health as punishment from God due to an offence that is unspecified to them. Evans (2000, p. 399) postulates that Job looks at his misery as one who suffers innocently and calls for litigation with God to charge Him with specific offences. In this, it is clear that Job is seeking justice from God through formal judicial proceedings of his case with God. God's response at the end is perceived as His acceptance of this challenge of litigation.

However, in His response, Yahweh neither presents a defence nor does he press charges against Job nor his friends. God focuses primarily on the essence of what constitutes divine justice. There seems here a clear distinction between the system of God and that of man. God responds and boldly illustrates His authority over the universe. According to Ross (2014, p. 67) God takes Job through what would be referred to as a teaching on the meaning of justice that goes beyond a man's legal system to show divine kingship which Yahweh labels as (*misphat*) מִשְׁפָּט Job 40:8. On the other hand, Job accepts this as divine power and authority from his response in job 42:2 and consequently, he retracts his lawsuit in 42:6.

Scholnick (Dec 1982, p. 521) contends that the author of the Book of Job brings out the meaning and the nature of justice in the use of the word מִשְׁפָּט from the beginning of the conversations to the end of the discourse of God and Job. The author dramatizes the education that Job goes through from understanding divine justice as judicial to Yahweh's executive authority. The word מִשְׁפָּט is used right from the first speech of Bildad (Job 8:3) to the elongated speech by God (Job 40:8) by every other character in the dialogues except for Zophar. The use of the word מִשְׁפָּטin the juridical category is seen in the speeches of Eliphaz (22:4) and Elihu (34:12) to show the "divine justice" as a system of moral recompense. In the discourse of Job (9:19, 14:3, 19,7) and also Elihu (32:9), the juridical category rises in the form of "litigation in a man's court of law. On a similar perspective the word is used by Job in (13:18, 23:4, 27:2, 31:13) and Elihu in (34:4,5,6; 35:2) as a "case."

God in Job 40 uses the executive authority to show his unquestionable dominion over His subjects. Throughout the book, Job consistently appeals to God for an understanding of

divine justice. He challenges God to justify his sufferings as an innocent man and echoes similar cries that were made by Abraham in his intercession of Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham in his pleas for the innocent and the destruction of both the righteous and the wicked asks, “Shall not the judge of all the earth deal justly?” (Genesis 18:25). In the Genesis narrative, God agrees to save the righteous from the wicked in carrying out His judgement. On the other hand, in the prologue of the book of Job, we see God allowing Satan to test the depth of Job’s integrity. The devil deprives Job of not only his property but also his family and later his health (Okello, 2003, p. 109). Therefore, the deduction of God’s action in carrying out His actions can simply be interpreted as his exercise of executive authority. In the prologue, the way God describes Job before Satan and the heavenly beings he is portrayed as “a blameless and upright man who fears God and shuns evil.”

Despite the arguments of Job in his search for justice, God acknowledges his statements as truthful in the epilogue (40:8). According to Gyekye (1987, p. 124), the error that Job makes in his pursuit of justice is to believe that the fate of man rests only in the juridical justice of God alone. The author of the book of Job brings a broader understanding of justice as perceived by Job to show the limitless authority that God has in executing justice. Yahweh’s decision may reflect his use of executive authority in removing the property and family of his subject, as he deemed it necessary for the proper running of His realm just as a human king would act (Scholnick, Dec 1982, p. 522). Looking at 1 Samuel 8: 14 “He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive orchards and give them to his servants.” ESV. In the case of Job, the author is helping the reader

understand that God is acting as a ruler to test His subject as opposed to acting as a judge to punish him for his wrongdoing.

In their attempt to grasp and contemplate the misfortunes of Job, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar argue for the conventional philosophy that God acting as a supreme judge rewards the innocent and punishes the guilty Seow (2013, p. 877). When the friends see the kind of loss that Job has suffered, they immediately conclude that he must have committed a commensurate offence. Both Eliphaz and Bildad argue for this divine retribution as justice that must prevail over those who have eroded in their path. In Job 8:3 Bildad asks, “Will God pervert justice?”

Chapter Summary

The Chapter has reviewed the relevant literature related to the study. It has discussed the literal meaning of the text. The chapter has also explored the authorship, date and time of writing of the Book of Job. The chapter explored the significance of Goel (*Gō’ēl)* concerning justice and further discussed the restorative justice of God in the text. The research gap carries the significance of this study at the end.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology of this research study. The researcher uses social scientific criticism for the study. The chapter focuses on the social construct of the Book of Job. Social scientific method looks into the historical, cultural and literal findings of the book. The chapter gives details of the social-scientific approach and how the approach bridges the gap in discovering what the author said and intended to say to the first audience.

Social-Scientific Approach

Luomanen (2010, p. 1) argues that the research or discipline we refer to, as 'biblical and related studies' is originally a historical discipline that relies on the same kind of historical research as all other antiques. These methods include source criticism, textual criticism, and redaction criticism among others. They are basic historical- criticisms that were commonly used until the late 1970s. Afterwards, there developed various other humanistic approaches and methods in an attempt to complement the basic historical-critical research. Among these methods is the social scientific research. Therefore, biblical social scientific criticism is a basic approach that applies the social scientific methods using the basic information of conventional historical-critical research.

According to Elliot (1993, p. 7), social-scientific criticism of the bible is that phase of the exegetical task which analyses the social and the cultural dimensions of the text and its environmental context through the utilization of the perspectives, theory, models, and

research of the social sciences. The method aims at investigating biblical tests as a meaningful configuration of the language that is confined to both the audience and the author. In his argument this methodology looks into three main areas; the social aspect of both form and context of the text, the correlation of linguistic, literary, theological and social dimensions of the text and finally how this textual context played out in its communication in a specific social setting. According to Elliot (1993, p. 7), social scientific criticism complements the conventional historical-grammatical analysis of the Bible by seeking to understand what the author said and meant to understand the audience within the contours of their environment (Bhattacharjee, 2012, p. 16)

Social scientific criticism will be used to analyse and interpret the data so that it can be applied to the contemporary setting. According to Sneed (2008, p. 3), this criticism helps establish the original meaning of the text in its life setting - the *sitz im leben* of the text. Only then will the text be applied to the contemporary perspective. The Social scientific criticism attempts to place the text of the biblical text of Job 19: 23-27 into the social and cultural context of the Ancient Near East. This is in order to guard against an attempt by the researcher to interpret issues concerning the biblical text from their own frame of reference which would amount to ethnocentrism. Such an attempt would be assuming that our own contemporary social system is similar to that of the ancient world.

Luomanen (2010, p. 2) posits that in order to understand biblical social-scientific criticism one needs to bear in mind that biblical scholars who apply social scientific models usually do that in the context of the basic information that is produced with the conventional historical-critical methods. For example, in this research, we are not just focusing on the existence of Job as a historical character, but more on viewpoints of both

Job and his friends that speak to their reason, judgements and actions. This research looks at the book of job from the response of Job to the social views that are held by his friends as informed by their community. The research digs into the social construct of the people of Ancient Near East.

Is Job a Historical Book?

While looking at the social construction of the book of Job and the composition of the book of Job, the question of whether Job was a real character comes up. The debate about whether the Book of Job is a historical or fictional writing is relevant. Dillard (2006, p. 223) argues that a book may have a historical core without necessarily carrying it at the same time historical precision. Dillard further affirms that this is simply historical fiction. Historical fiction would lean towards generic intention as opposed to an actual historical event. The debate further pushes with some of the renowned authors and contributors such as Clines (2015, p. 39) and Anderson (2011 p. 47) arguing that we cannot assume that Job is a real person simply because the narrative is in the Bible. Walton (2015, p. 37) supports this by evoking some of the texts in the New Testament and warns that simply because we read the narrative of the Good Samaritan in the New Testament does not mean that the person existed.

When looking at wisdom literature the truth of the text is not lost even if the book does not carry a historical reflection of the events. I agree with Dillard (2006, p. 233) who clarifies this debate and argues that Job is not pure fiction writing. Looking at the first lines of the prologue in the book of Job, are similar to the opening lines of 1 Samuel 1 and Judges 17. These passages open the narratives in a way that shows the historical events similar to the Book of Job.

Second, Job is mentioned in various other writings of the bible. In the book of Ezekiel, Job is mentioned twice (Ezek. 14:14, 20). In this book and text, Job is noted as a paragon of righteousness and lines up with other great men such as Noah and Daniel. In the New Testament, Job is noted and used by James in his epistle to teach patience while suffering (James 5:11). James emphasizes the patience of Job and his perseverance. The audience in both Ezekiel and James are familiar with this character and James recollects their memory by implying that Job is someone they have heard. “You have heard of the steadfastness of Job...” (James 5:11 ESV)

Therefore, Job may as well be a character that once existed in a given time and suffered. From both the perspectives of Ross (2014, p. 11) and Walton (2015, p. 35) there is no way to prove or disapprove his existence both from the book and outside the book. Dillard (2006, p. 33) takes it further and argues that so far there is little archaeological data substantive to support the argument on either side of the divide. For a start, the arguments of Job and his friends are written in a poetic language. Since people do not normally speak to one another using poetic language according to (Kushner, 2021, p. 22) and Dillard (2006, p. 33) especially when people are in distress. In this regard, there are no transcripts available today to tell us how the conversations of the characters were carried out.

The literary work of the speeches in the Book of Job are carefully constructed pieces of literary expression. According to Walton (2015, p. 36), one would not expect to find a stenographer on the scene recording these conversations. Therefore, the wisdom literature hides from us the real and spontaneous conversations that we would have expected from the book. The question of whether Job existed; this man who was vastly wealthy, godly

above any other person who ever lived, who suffered the loss of all but his life and had all restored by God remains. From the perspectives of Mathewson (2006, p. 10) the evidence given by the literal construction of the wisdom literature leaves the reader to certain points without offering full proof. In his argument, the author of the Book of Job points to places such as Uz, Buz and Taman and real groups of people such as Sabaeans and Chaldeans. Walton (2015, p. 37) counters this argument and points out these are remote places that are too far removed to be used literally. Walton is convinced that these pointers can also be used in a fictional setting. Therefore, the book carries a historical record of a time without necessarily being precise.

The structure of the Book of Job informs this study in several ways. First, the narrator of the Book of Job right from the beginning creates a perspective of how all the characters in the Book of Job speak and gives the reader a predisposed view of the book again at the end of the book the narrator's perspective is uppermost in the reader's mind. Second, Job in many cases initiates the conversations. Here Job speaks and then his friends respond. The cycle of debates runs up to the third speech where Bildad speaks and the friends do not make a reply. Job then speaks three times and the friends do not make a response. They seem to fall short of a comeback as alluded to by Elihu who speaks four times and no one, not even Job responds. These rounds of speeches end before Yahweh speaks. According to Clines (2015, p. 17) Job is silent when Elihu responds as if he is waiting on someone else to make a response. Job acts as if he has had enough from his friends and he is no longer listening to their responses.

Finally, when Yahweh speaks, it is him and not Job who takes the initiative. Although Job up to this time has been petitioning God to speak, Yahweh's speech comes with very

little reply and feels like a new approach. According to Gutierrez (1985, p. 95), the response by God to Job satisfies the deepest desire of Job who has been yearning and desiring the presence of God. Third and finally, the speeches move to silence. Job, who had a lot to take with God and validate himself before his friends, puts his hand in his mouth (Job 40:4-5). The friends by this time have all run out of steam and no one is making a response. We are left with a big question; what has all this talk achieved? Was the solution to what Job was ailing a verbal one? When it was all silence, God acted on behalf of Job and restored his health and wealth.

The Social Setting of The Book of Job

Andersen (2011, p. 25) observes that many similar writings compare to the Book of Job in Ancient Near East. Finding these similarities is not surprising and Dillard (2006, p. 231) supports this argument by stating that; Job is a wisdom literature writing that has an international flavour. The argument here is that caution should be taken while reflecting on the uniqueness of Israel's life, especially its religion. The revelations of the word of God should not be taken as those cut off from the rest of the world. Anderson warns that some scholars are afraid of relating and recognizing the affinity that rests between the Old Testament and the pagan writings. By so doing, the interpretation of the Bible is solely limited to itself.

Although this writing will not take a bold step to authenticate this argument, the methodology used in writing this paper calls for the embrace of the Near East culture that informs the writing of Job. Mathewson (2006, p. 45) believes that the culture of the ancient Near East is sometimes viewed as if it were uniform from the Persian Gulf to the upper reaches of the Nile. Dillard (2006, p. 232) supports this and builds that analogous

writings that can be used as "comparative" studies of the rituals and myths show similarities between gods and institutions of the people in the region. Andersen (2011, p. 45) thus argues that scholars are left with the impression that Israelites borrowed more from the nations and communities around them. Just like the Hebrew alphabet is perceived to have been borrowed in the region.

There is some truth in the proposition of Anderson and one has to look into this truth by carefully examining the book of Job and other "borrowed" pieces of writing. How far the comparison goes depends on how detailed, a scholar takes the comparison of Job with each such companion piece. The arguments of both Walton (2015, p. 37) and Clines (2015, p. 38) call for one to embrace the wisdom literature outside the biblical world to have a proper perspective of the book. This study will briefly look at some of these comparisons.

The Book of Job and Similar Ancient Near East Narratives

A similar narrative borrowed from the Egyptian culture follows the narrative of Job. The narrative is often titled, "The Dispute over Suicide" otherwise known as "Dialogue of a Man with His Soul." The narrative according to Martin (2018, p. 19) has it that the man carries out a series of arguments with himself to ascertain whether, in his present predicament, he should consider suicide. The extract of the poem from Allen (2011, p. 21), "To whom can I speak today? I am laden with wretchedness for lack of an intimate… Death is my sight today like the odour of myrrh, like sitting under an awning on a breezy day." The Egyptian literature is close to Job in that the man expresses his longing for someone who would step in for his case and mediate for him in the heavenly council. The other Egyptian text that relates to Job is The Protest of the Eloquent

Peasant. According to Clines (2015, p. 39), the writing is about an appeal by a man who was suffering social injustice for his crimes and was seeking the intervention of the Chief Steward. The man makes similar appeals to Job and prefers death as opposed to the oppression and the injustices he is facing. However, there is a key distinction on who is addressed in making the appeals when compared to Job. The peasant only makes his appeals to the steward and not to heaven.

The oldest and closest comparison to the narrative of Job is from the Babylon texts called *Ludlul be*μ*l ne*μ*meqi* "I will praise the God of wisdom" commonly referred to as the 'Babylonian Job' (Kaaks, 2011, p. 36), The text was first made in 1906 and its evidence has gradually accumulated (Kaaks, 2011, p. 36). It is a hymn ascribed to Marduk by *Subsimesre-Sakkan* (the sufferer) for recovery from his illness. The man is mocked by friends as a wrongdoer while his family is hostile towards him. Unlike Job who stands his ground in his innocence and righteousness, *Subsimesre-Sakkan* in the hymn believes he has sinned. *Subsimesre-Sakkan* believes he suffers out of his sins and is troubled by his human inability to comprehend the actions and motives of the gods. According to Dillard (2006, p. 231) *Subsimesre-Sakkan* suffers and complains bitterly because he believes that his problems arise due to his devotion to both god and the king. While complaining he states "What seems good to one, to a god may be evil… Where has mankind learned the way of a god?" Similar to Job, he describes his suffering in vivid detail and seeks deliverance from it all (Lenzi, 2010, p. 3). Again just, like Job, he is restored to good health.

Although the hymn on "Babylonian Job" is the closest to the parallel narrative of the biblical Job, there is another from the same literature. It is much older and goes by the

title; “Man and His God.” Despite the title showing a close comparison to the Book of Job, it differs from the Book of Job in several accounts. Clines (2015, p. 39) affirms that, the one who suffers complains that he is made to suffer by God while at the same time he is being scorned by friends. “You have doled out to me suffering ever anew.… My friend gives the lie to my righteous word.” Unlike Job, this man acknowledges that he has sinned and is begging God for forgiveness. “My god, you who are my father who begot me, lift my face.” Similar to the tale of Job, the man has a happy moment where God turns his suffering into Joy.

The Source for the Book of Job

The consideration of the Ancient Near East is crucial in determining the social context in which Job lived and how it might have influenced the author of the book. According to Dillard (2006, p. 233), the Book of Job was not the first attempt to address the question of suffering. More so when a righteous person suffers. From the close examination of the narratives below, the question was highly debated among the scholars of the day. Guzik (2020, p. 12) observes that the issues raised by the Book of Job were not by themselves unique to Israel. This analogy is supported heavily by scholars who believe that the tale of Job was a common one before the book of Job was written. The author of the Book of Job may have known of the existence of various Ancient Near East and may have written this text with their audience in mind but of which we cannot ascertain (Dillard, 2006, p. 233).

The Ancient Near East does not yield another “Job.” Andersen (2011, p. 31) affirms that there is a considerable number of writings in this region and further on from the Near East that show some parallel thoughts and discussions. These writings remind us of Job

in one way or the other but none of them come close to Job when examined as a whole. The argument of Anderson is followed by Fox (2018, p. 8) who considers the Book of Job to be outstanding with none to rival or come close as a possible source or model for Job. Andersen (2011, p. 31) writes “The doleful Israelite in the grip of calamity did not have to read a Mesopotamian or an Egyptian work to raise the question of why God sends such experiences to men” Andersen (2011, p. 31). The writing of the book of Job stands out and the parallels examined only come close in comparison to the common background of the wisdom tradition.

Assumptions of the Methodological Approach

The social scientific approach that has been adopted in this study is mainly concerned with description, analysis, interpretation as well as the arguments made by both Job and his friends as highlighted in the study. This is an assumption to figure out the authors point of view by looking at the dialogue of Job and his friends. The first assumption is that despite the poetic language used in the context of Job 19:23-27, is reliable in deducting the biblical meaning of the text. Therefore, this study does not carry out the text or form criticism of the text.

The methodology of social scientific approaches is essentially comparative (Sneed, 2008, p. 2). In this case it compares the ancient Near East setting with the contemporary Kikuyu community today. The second assumption is that the two social constructs can be studied to bring about an informed comparison and perspective. Therefore, the practical significance of the text is limited to its application among the Kikuyu people which serves as an example of the contemporary application of the text.

Justification for the Approach

In this study, the socio-scientific approach is treated as a sub-discipline of exegesis and will not be separated from other exegetical operations of the text in this research. In turn, this methodology will be a reflection and response to the social and cultural settings in the book of Job and the selected text in Job19:23-29. The significance of this methodology to this exegesis writing is to close the gap in exegesis on issues both on the level of the text and those of the social context. The methodology seeks to determine the meaning(s) of the social and cultural settings of both the author and the audience of the Book of Job.

According to Elliott (2011, p. 1), biblical texts, like many other kinds of texts carry elements of social and cultural systems from which they were produced. With this in mind, it would mean that the text carries the genre, context and structure of both the social and culture from where it was derived. At times, the culture and the social structure of the text are explicit and can be easily determined. However, in most cases, it is often left unexplained and it is presumed to be understood by the readers or the intended audience. This brings out the challenge of understanding the text from both the author and the audience. I support this argument because it does not limit the attention taken in this study while connecting both ideas and theological concepts. The social scientific method connects beliefs with behaviours. The beliefs carry the social perspectives that inform the behaviour of the people in question. It also carries the relationship between the ideologies and the nexus of interests and ideas that come out dramatically both within the text and the world around the text. The book of Job shows clearly this relationship as the

beliefs and other social parameters dramatically unfold in the debate of Job and his friends.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented the methodologies adopted in the study. The chapter focused on the historical and the socio-cultural findings of the book of Job. The chapter has focused in detail on the socio-scientific approach and how the approach traces the history of the book of Job, the relation of the book of Job to Near Eastern Literature and finally how the book of Job relates in social construct to other similar writings

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Introduction and Background of Chapter 19

This chapter focuses on the interpretation of the meaning and significance of Job 19:23-27. This is an exegetical analysis that looks into the theological significance of the mentioned text. The social scientific methodology is used to reflect on the historical and cultural relevance in the discussions below. As such, this chapter fulfils the three objectives outlined in this research.

Background of Job Chapter 19

Job 19:1-5

Chapter 19 is arguably the most famous chapter in the book of Job. According to Seow (2013, p. 792), the chapter carries the reference of Job's redeemer, words made famous by George Friedrich Handel's in his music compositions. The chapter begins with Job complaint on how his friends have treated him in their continued discussion. Job addresses Bildad in response but not him alone but his friends in general, as the Hebrew plural verbs indicate. In the first five verses, Job laments of how they have tormented him, crushed and humiliated him in a shameless way. It is clear that the friends of Job view his suffering as a result of something he had done, even if inadeptly. However, Job comes out strong that if indeed he has erred, the error should lodge with him (verse 4), implying that Job should be able to discern what is it that he has done wrong. Job argues that his friends cannot point to any specific error but keep on making generalizations and innuendoes.

Job 19:6-12 the siege imagery

From verse 6-12 job takes a stand as one under siege. Although Job does not rule out the possibility that he could have erred in some way, despite the fact that his friends and even he himself cannot point to any specific thing, he argues that the one who is on the wrong is not him but God. According to Seow (2013, p. 795), the difference between Job's error ("I have erred," "my error" verse 4) and God's wrong ("acted perversely" verse 6) is stark. He argues that Job looks at his "error" as inadvertent or accidental. God on the other hand carries a premeditated error in dealing with Job. Bildad (Job 8:3) had defended the divine justice of God by asking rhetorically, "Does God pervert justice?" Elihu (Job 34:12) would later reiterate the same theological understanding by declaring that God does not act wickedly nor does he pervert justice.

In support of this daring argument, Job speaks of God enclosing a net **מָצוֹד** around him (verse 6). In the ancient Near East, the net was a symbol of power and sovereign control. The metaphor is drawn originally from hunting and fishing and later came to be applied in military power as well. The deities are often depicted as wielding nets in combat. According to Barton (1929, p. 27), a king of the Sumerian City of Lagash claims; "Over the people of Umma, I, Eannutum, threw the great net of god Enli" to symbolize the great military victory he had over his enemies. This mythological tradition lies in the background of Ezekiel's oracle against the Pharaoh of Egypt (Ezekiel 32:2-3). "You are like the dragon in the seas, thrashing about in your rivers… thus says Adonai YHWH: 'But I will spread my net over you.'" In Habakkuk 1:15, the military conquest is compared to a fisherman's catch. "(God) brought them all up with a hook, dragged them

up in his net, and gathered them in his seine." One may then assume that Job means that God has captured him in his net and he has become an adversary of the divine warrior. In Job's defence, the Lord has treated him like a monster though he is innocent. Seow (2013, p. 796) contends that Job has made similar statements before; "Am I Sea or Dragon that you should set a watch against me?" (Job 7:12). Perhaps this response is triggered by Bildad in the previous chapter who argues that: "(the wicked) their feet send them into a net," that is, they themselves walk into such nets (Job 18:8-10).

In the book of Psalms (18:2-3, 31:4,71:3, 91:2) God is confessed as a מְצוּדָה "stronghold" or "refuge." God in these texts is portrayed as a reliable stronghold where one can run for protection. But to Job in this case, God is not acting as a מְצוּדָה "stronghold" but in hostility as one who throws מָצוֹד a net against his enemies. Therefore, Job cries, חָמָס "injustice" (verse 7). According to Seow (2013, p. 797) the term חָמָס is commonly found in the individual laments where false charges are brought by enemies over the innocent (Psalms 7:17, 11:5, 25:19,35:11 55:10, 140:2). In these cases, the helpless victims of such injustices are portrayed as creatures who are being hunted (Psalms 7,11, 35, 140). In these laments, cries are made to God who is seen as refuge for those who suffer such kind of injustices. God is the one who is supposed to hate those who bring injustice (Psalms 11:5). Yet in this case, God is acting on the contrary as one who has brought the net on Job.

In verse 8, Job complains about not getting justice and he uses the image of a way that is blocked (fenced) אָרְחִי גָדַר. Similar to Lamentations 3:9 where the one suffering, his ways are blocked by God and his paths are confused: "God has blocked my ways with dressed stones; he has made my paths crooked." Here God blocks the pathway with dressed

stones, the kind of stones found in building a palace or the temple (1 Kings 5:31, 6:36). Looking back at verse 6, the casting of the net imagery is used as a metaphor to capture the helpless victims in a siege. Therefore, the blockade of the pathway can be taken as a similar metaphor that shows prevention of those who would attempt to escape in a siege. Job also laments that God has set "darkness" חֹשֶׁךְ on his path. The precise expression "set darkness" is compared to an unnatural darkening of the sky as envisioned on a solar eclipse. Seow (2013, p. 798) observes that an eclipse was viewed as an ominous event in the bible (Amos 8:9; Joel 2:10, 3:4; Micah 3:6). According to Seale (Mar 27, 2024), in the ancient Near East eclipses frequently portend the downfall of a king. The Assyrian kings would even choose a substitute king to step in for them during this time of the eclipse to escape the bad omen. The substitute king is killed shortly after to complete the ritual. Therefore, in light of this imagery Job views, the setting of darkness and God blocking his path as perversion of divine justice.

The language of God tearing down in verse 10 suggests the destruction of a city's encircling wall similar to the siege of Jerusalem in Jeremiah 39:8, 52:14. The idiom "to tear down" יִתְּצֵנִי סָבִיב is continuous with the siege imagery so far in the narrative. Job looks at the divine attack that is lodged before him as a hyperbole of a city's destruction. Verse 10 continues to speak of Job's hope that is uprooted like a tree. The hyperbole of a city siege can be compared to this as it shows destruction of city defences with the uprooting of city gates and their posts. To Job, God is not only ruthless in destroying the wall, but also in uprooting the gates and posts. In verse 11 God is furious in his rage towards Job and has made him one of his adversaries. The rage is not from God alone but also from his "troops" in verse 12. These troops, whether celestial or terrestrial, plan for a

massive attack. One cannot help but think of a siege ramp. With such elaborate preparation, a massive attack is one the view. Troops are preparing their attack on Job.

Job 19:13-22

Job laments that God has brought his alienation. From verse 13 he lists a catalogue of those who have disintegrated from the social fabric in his life. Job reflects of this from his outer circle coming to his inner circle of family and close confidence. In verse 13, he looks at his acquaintances while in verse14 relatives, intimate friends, household servants and tenants. In verse17 he speaks of his immediate family, his wife and children. Job does not only feel isolated but also despised even by the young. Those who are closest to him regards him as abominable while those that he loves turn against him (v.19). The only thing that is left is himself.

Verse 20 speaks of the disintegration of Job. His skeleton hangs together only by a mere hold of both his flesh and his skin. This part and formulation in writing is unique and surprising. In similar writings about the sufferer's deteriorating body is found in *ludlul Bel Nemeqi*: (Kaaks, 2011, p. 489).

> My flesh is waste, my blood has run dry,
>
> My bones are loose, covered (only with skin,
>
> My tissues are inflamed, afflicted with gangrene.

This complaint is severe for the sufferer laments of the disintegration of his body. "From breaking down, my joints are separated, my limbs are splayed and pushed apart" the image is interpreted by Clines (2015, p. 36) as one of inner decay as opposed to

emaciation. “My skin is rotting under my skin.” In this sense, verse 20 is interpreted together with the proceeding verses. The absence of friends, close relations, and the deprivation of human intimacy have thoroughly destroyed Job’s sense of self and caused him to fall apart completely (Seow, 2013, p. 801). The alienation from one’s familiar setting and from those who would be considered close and a community is often experienced as a loss of cohesion in every sense of the term. This kind of disintegration affects the very core of one’s being.

Job cries out “pity me, pity me, O you, my friends!” in Verse 21. This cry for mercy is ironic. Job has earlier on painted a picture that he is in complete isolation from both his family and close friends. He is going back to his friends whom he has accused of tormenting and humiliating him (Verse 2-3). Seow (2013, p. 802) argues that Job implores on his friends to take pity on him knowing too that his plea is futile.

Job sees his friends as being completely aligned with God. In verse 22 Job looks at his friends as those who have joined hands with God to persecute him. The friends believe they are speaking for God and are devout followers of God. They also see themselves as being like God in pursuing the enemies of God. Therefore, Job asks if they will ever be satisfied with his flesh verse 22. This portrays animal savagery. The friends are out to get Job’s flesh and are part of those who are tearing his body apart. According to Seow (2013, p. 802), Job’s argument is similar to the idiom “to bite flesh” which is popular in Ancient Near East of slander. “To bite flesh” means “to accuse” or “to slander.” In this case the friends look for wrong in him in order to justify his pain and suffering while at the same time defend their faith in divine justice.

Job's Desperate Longing for Justice

Verse 23

מִי־יִתֵּן אֲפוֹ וְיִכָּתְבוּן מִלָּי מִי־יִתֵּן בַּסֵּפֶר וְיֵחָקוּ

"Would, then, that my words be written!

Would that they were inscribed in a record,"

Verse 23 begins with the interrogative pronoun **מִי** who? (as who?) The pronoun of **מִי** is rarely used on things but on people. However, here it is used in the rhetorical sense (especially when it is used in a repeated manner) to show a desire or express a wish. "Would, (Or in other translations "Oh! that") then, that my words be written." Now putting

together, the pronoun**מִי** and verb **נָתַן** to give, brings the emphasis of the expressed wish or desire. The construct **מִי יִתֵּן** carries the deeper meaning of a longing desire "*O that* one would give me." Therefore, Job here carries a deep desire and longing to see his words written. Job does not shrink from his insistence on justice. His disintegration and alienation have pushed him to cry out in deep desperation for his words to be put in writing. The verb **כָּתַב** to write, with the waw-conjunctive **וְיִכָּתְבוּן** brings the imperfect tense "and be written down." The noun **מִלָּה** meaning word or utterance is derived from the verb **מָלַל** to speak, utter or say. The piel verbal pattern which is characterized by the doubling of the second radical in all its inflections. The piel verb here carrying the intensive meaning to show repeated or the numerous words that Job speaks. The intensity goes hand in hand with the action of the debate and discourse that Job engages with his friends. (Seow C. L., 1995, p. 174)

Job wants his words to be inscribed; the וְיֵחָקוּ according to Seow (2013, p. 822) the initial וְ indicates the purpose. It carries an exegetical purpose as a conjunction to expand the idea of what was written and what is inscribed. "Would then that my words be written" would they on a rock be inscribed. The verb חָקַק (to cut or inscribe) should be parsed as Qal Passive. According to Clines (2015, p. 455), Job does not only wish that his words be written but on permanent record. Job believes that his vindication is likely to be so long delayed that his testimony to himself would take a more durable form. In agreement with this argument, the word verb כָּתַב to write in its general sense is specified by the verb חָקַק (to cut or inscribe) and the verb חָצַב (to hew out or cleave) in verse 24. In בַּסֵּפֶר the word סֵפֶר should not be read as "book" (pages bound together to make a volume) as we know it. Seow (2013, p. 822) further argues that books were not known till the first century and the word "scroll" would be more likely. However, the use of a scroll would be unlikely out of the use of the word "engrave". Therefore, the term סֵפֶר should carry the idea of any written text of any sort, a document or even an inscription.

Verse 24

בְּעֵט־בַּרְזֶל וְעֹפֶרֶת לָעַד בַּצּוּר יֵחָצְבוּן׃

בְּעֵט־בַּרְזֶל וְעֹפֶרֶת

With an iron stylus and with lead,

Etched forever on a rock.

Job does not only want his words to be written and inscribed, he wants them to be etched "with an iron stylus and with lead". The process described here is the chiselling of words into a rock and then filling the grooves that have been made with molten lead. According

to Seow (2013, p. 802), this method would preserve the inscription from erosion by the elements. Jeremiah 17:1 also mentions בְּעֵט בַּרְזֶל"iron stylus," which is a sharp writing or engraving. The argument here is that though lead is too soft as a metal to be used as "stylus," lead here refers to the molten metal poured into the grooves of the characters. The lead made the inscriptions more legible as well as preserving them. Such a practice in the ancient near east is seen by the Bisitun inscription. Sanducci (2022, p. 99) posits that the Bisitun inscription was commissioned by Darius I around 515 BCE. The inscription was carved about 300 feet above the ground on a cliff. The characters are curved and inlaid with lead. These characters are permanent and bear a public testimony to the triumph of Darius. According to Balentine (2006, p. 296), what Job needs and envisions is for his testimony to be "written" כָּתַב "inscribed" חָקַק and "engraved"חָצַב . How Job envisions this process to take place is not clear but his choice of verbs, each one signifying a means of preservation more permanent than the last, indicates that wishes that his testimony cannot be erased.

It is to last "forever" beyond his friends' consistent rebuke; beyond the silence he feels over his vindication and beyond his persistent plea for justice. The word לָעַד shows advancing time in perpetuity. Therefore, it is better translated as "forever." However, Seow (2013, p. 803) contends that this Masoretic word also comes with a possible meaning of "a witness." According to Job 16:8, Job speaks of his physical condition as a hostile "witness" acting against him. His condition causes him to suffer and his friends conclude that he has brought this great suffering upon himself. With this in mind, Seow argues that the witness described in Job 19:24 is a "counter witness" in heaven. This counter witness now acts for him. Therefore, Job makes a personified cry to this witness

right from Job 19:20. Although this idea of a counter witness is not very common with many of the other translations, it holds the hope that Job has of vindication in Job 19:24. Job is seeking justice and he feels that his cry may not be sufficient to ensure that justice is done. In this regard, Job calls for a tangible assurance of permanence. He focuses on an indelible rock inscription that would stand as an everlasting witness for him. It is without a doubt that with such a permanent and public witness, then, justice will somehow be possible, even when Job is no longer alive to see to it.

Divine Justice as Restorative Justice

Verse 25

וַאֲנִי֮ יָדַ֪עְתִּי גֹּאֲלִ֫י חָ֥י וְאַחֲר֑וֹן עַל־עָפָ֖ר יָקֽוּם׃

But I know that my redeemer lives,

And the last will rise over the dust

The opening **וַאֲנִי** "but" in verse 25 seems to indicate some kind of contrast between what Job wishes ("would that" v.23) and what he emphatically says he "knows." However, one must ask what Job means by "knowing" in this context. In his responses to his friends, Job has used the phrase **יָדַ֪עְתִּי** "I know" a number of times. According to Balentine (2006, p. 296), Job had earlier on asserted that he *knew* that human beings could not win against God in a lawsuit (Job 9:2) simply because he *knew* that God could not exonerate him. Job had also claimed that he *knew* he could win in a lawsuit, if only he was accorded a fair hearing (Job 13:18). At some point in making argument with his friends, Job would say that he *knows* their thoughts, and their schemes (Job 21:27). Out of this argument, there rises a debate of whether what Job says he *knows* is out of a profound inner conviction

and firm or is it just a mere claim. Looking closely at the text, Job here, unlike the other times when he makes this assertion, is confident and lifts up more than just a consideration.

Job states clearly "I know my redeemer lives." The word redeemer גָּאַל is a social-legal term referring to one's nearest of kin who has the right to stand up for one's right and look out for one's well-being Seow (2013, p. 823). Accordingly, גָּאַל as may be expected to carry out the following obligations as seen in the Torah. According to Leviticus 25:25-26, Numbers 5:8; Ruth 2:20; 3:9, 12 He steps in to redeem a family lost members or property. In Provers 23:11, he shows support to a family member who is caught up in a legal case. Numbers 35:12,19 and 21 shows his capacity to exact revenge in the case of unfair or unjust death. Looking at just those examples from scriptures, the word has been translated to carry various meanings including; "redeemer", "vindicator", "defender", "avenger", and "champion".

As for the identity of גָּאַל, interpreters have come up with various possible conclusions. Christian interpreters right from Clement of Rome (at the beginning of the second century CE) have interpreted these words of Job to mean the promise of Christ and his resurrection. According to Balentine (2006, p. 296) this is the quintessential "redeemer" for Christians. Balentine argues that this "sudden outburst of faith" by Job in this verse is as a result of the faith that rises to its crescendo in this trying time. Following this thought, it is without doubt that Job holds a deep- seated conviction in the ultimate benign nature of God who will eventually vindicate him. The understanding of this, does not negate the fact that in previous arguments, Job has presented a vitriolic and doubtful belief in God, whom he sees as the one who has withheld his justice. Seow is sceptical

about this firm stand by Christians and Jews and argues for a pessimistic approach. Seow (2013, p. 804) argues that Job has so far not shown any hint on giving God the benefit of doubt. This view by Seow is not a popular opinion. Gutiérrez (1985, p. 80) and Walton (2015, p. 14) hold to the argument that although Job has trials, he is not the one on trial. How Job responds is ultimately important so that we can consider the divine justice of God and how he runs the world.

The other proponents of a redeemer and divine justice look at the tension raised by the Babylonia Theodicy as parallel when reflecting on the ancient Near East culture. In the Babylon texts called *Ludlul be*μ*l ne*μ*meqi* "I will praise the God of wisdom" commonly referred to as the 'Babylonian Job' (Kaaks, 2011, p. 36), God the enemy is also God the redeemer. The sufferer in the narrative then accepts his predicament and goes back to God for mercy. In other words, God the prosecutor from whom Job flees is the God to whom Job must return. Walton argues that when it came to placing blame in the ancient Near East, then, there was nowhere to turn. Gods could not be blamed for their capriciousness or their fickleness- that was just who they were (Walton, 2015, p. 31). This is a traditional approach and very similar to the retributive justice. The friends of Job and in particular Eliphaz, counsel Job to accept his suffering as divine chastisement (Job 5:18-20). Retributive justice follows the assumption that restoration whether from deity or otherwise can only come only upon repentance on the part of the guilty. Job throughout his dialogue has been protesting against this model of retributive justice.

Therefore, what Job knows is based on an inner conviction of vindication and a justice that arises to his defence. However, Job does not mention the name of God directly in reference to his redeemer. Job only asserts that his redeemer, whoever this may turn out

to be, “lives” חָיָה. The idea of a dormant God comes after an evaluation of two poetic words in the sentence, “live”, and “rise” קוּם. According to Seow (2013, p. 806), the way Job treats his redeemer with anonymity is out of a call to remind God of a role abandoned that must be taken up again. To assert that God has forsaken his role is far-fetched. However, Job refers to the redeemer with attributes only given to God in Israel. גֹּאֲלִי חָי “my redeemer lives” or “my living redeemer.” This is well related to the epithet “the living God” (Daniel 621; Deuteronomy 5:26; Jeremiah 10:10 and numerous other scriptures in the bible). The relationship here is parallel and since the living God takes the attributes of a redeemer, then, the anonymity comes to rest on YHWH as the redeemer for Job. The living God saves one from the unsavoury power of death (Hosea 13:14, Psalms 103:4), rescues people from their enemies (Exodus 6:6; Psalms 69:19) and finally he champions just causes for his people (Lamentations 3:58, Psalms 119:154)

According to Balentine (2006, p. 296), verb קוּם “to arise” refers to the stance of a judge rendering a verdict or a witness giving a testimony as in the case of Job 16:8 where a witness stands to give a testimony. The verb קוּם “to arise” parallels the verb “lives” חָיָה. This parallelism is suggestive, Seow (2013, p. 807) since “live” and “rise” are a poetic pair that have to do with restoration as well as revivification. This parallelism follows the work of Barré (1979, p. 109) who calls attention to the parallelism of חָיָה and קוּם elsewhere in the bible. He argues that the sequence of these two verbs whenever they are used in the Bible always point out to the issue of resuscitation or restoration of life. In other terms the words call out to the dormant deity to rise and act. Therefore, the use of the verb קוּם “to arise” is here interpreted as one rising from dormancy to render justice.

Job is calling to God to "rise" and respond because God has ordained justice and is able to vindicate the innocent.

The identity of the redeemer as God builds steam with the use of the phrase "the last will rise over the dust." the term **וְאַחֲרוֹן** has been interpreted adverbially, as if referring to an eschatological event, "at last" in some versions. However, looking at the work of (Clines, 2015, p. 36) the term is used as substantive, meaning "the last." With this in mind, Andersen (2011, p. 31) and Seow (2013, p. 807) look at this use as one that carries a divine epithet. The argument here is that "the last" is the opposite of the "the first" which conveys a sense of divine sovereignty; God as the beginning and the end of all time and history. I agree with this argument following the combination of the words to refer to God as a redeemer. The phrase "the last" and "redeemer" is so frequently used of God even in other scriptures (Isaiah 44:6; Psalms 44: 24-27). It would seem difficult here to assume that the poet is not gesturing towards God in a similar way.

The term **עָפָר** "dust" carries more than just the original meaning of loose soil, ground or surface. According to Driver (1969, p. 73), the phrase **עַל־עָפָר** should be interpreted as a construct "upon the grave." Since the grave is where human bodies are laid and by extension, identified with the realm of the dead. This follows a resurrection approach that has been held by both Christians and Jews over the years. Here it has the meaning of frailty and insignificance since it is the stuff out of which human bodies are made (Job 4:19, 30:19, 34:15). This view is contrasted by those who argue that a legal issue is at stake here. Therefore, the phrase**עַל־עָפָר** would carry the meaning "on earth" (KJV, RSV, NRSV). The argument follows that Job is looking for a legal vindication here "on earth" as opposed to anywhere else. Considering the two views above, the term **עָפָר** "dust" here

has the meaning of frailty and insignificance since it is the stuff out of which human bodies are made (Job 4:19, 30:19, 34:15). It is also without any doubt associated with death. Therefore, the hope that Job carries of vindication by his redeemer rises above his frailty as a mortal man. The redeemer carries justice that goes beyond the grave.

Verse 26

וְאַחַר עוֹרִי נִקְפוּ־זֹאת וּמִבְּשָׂרִי אֶחֱזֶה אֱלוֹהַּ׃

Even after my Skin has been flayed thus,

Even without my flesh, I will see God

It is out of this stern belief in justice and restoration that Job can speak of his own demise in verse 26. There arises a challenge when it comes to the phrase **וְאַחַר**. It can be interpreted adverbially to mean "back" or "again" as seen in the Latin Vulgate. However, the Masoretic Text retain it as a preposition "after" (Clines, 2015, p. 461). Job wants to convey the idea of the disease eating him up. Therefore, the preposition meaning makes more sense and carries the parallelism of the following verse. Job then speaks of the **עוֹרִי נִקְפוּ־זֹאת** "flaying of his skin". **נִקְפוּ** is parsed as Piel perfect. 3mp of **נָקַף**. Which carries the meaning of "slashing" of the skin. Job regards the disease as one that is consuming his skin. The disease is spreading sores all over his skin and body. It would be prudent to imagine this as "stripping or flaying" of the skin. Clines argues for "destruction of the skin" as in the case of death where the whole body is destroyed through decay. Simply because Job expects his vindication to only come after his death. However, for this research I have maintained the meaning as "flaying" of the skin, since the subject here would be his friends as well, hence "they flayed my skin." The Hebrew word **נָקַף** has the

same root meaning with the Arabic word *naqafa* which means to "break" or "split" (Driver, 1969, p. 73). The passive form carries the meaning of "circle in or enclose". If this then can be used in the context of Job, he feels that his friends and God have closed him in.

In sharp contrast to what Job expects is his desire. He would like to see his restoration and vindication while he is still alive. **וּמִבְּשָׂרִי** is loosely translated as "from my fresh" in some versions. Seow (2013, p. 826) argues that "away from" should be read in its context to carry the meaning of separation or to be free from something. Hence the proper translation would be "without." "Without my flesh" raises the question of how will Job see vindication when he is already dead. That is how will Job "see" if he has no body? However, the point here is not that Job will, either in life or after he has died, somehow see God but that he will still see God despite of his disembodiment.

Job insists that he will **חָזֶה** "see" God even despite his disembodiment. This is unique and calls for attention. Job speaks as though he will continue to see, even if the rest of him is no more. Looking at his earlier conversation in Job 16:20 "… my eye is alert to God…" Job is relentless to see God even when his physical body is falling apart. The language is common in Biblical texts (Exodus 24:11; Numbers 2:4; Psalms 27:4; Psalms 46:9 and more in particular Psalms 17). In Psalms 17, the Psalmist calls for vindication after he has been persecuted by his enemies. The enemies have engulfed him and trapped him in like an animal (Psalms 17:10-11). At the end, the Psalmist helps us acknowledge that the individual who has been wronged will eventually be vindicated and will see God (Psalms 17:15). Job is emphatic that it is he who will see: "I will see." Job sees more of his

vindication than the suffering he has to endure. He is resolved to see justice despite his embodiment.

Verse 27

אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי־אֶחֱזֶה־לִּי וְעֵינַי רָאוּ וְלֹא־זָר כָּלוּ כִלְיֹתַי בְּחֵקִי

Whom I, I will see for myself,

My eyes will see, and not someone else;

I will indeed be fulfilled within my limit.

The phrase **אֲשֶׁר** is interpreted as "whom" acts as a sign of relational that brings the clause introduced by it into relation with an antecedent clause. Therefore, as a rule **אֲשֶׁר** is a mere connection link that requires to be supplemented with something else in order to make the nature of the relation specific. Therefore, the sentence should read as **אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי־אֶחֱזֶה־לִּי** "whom I, I will see for myself." The phrase **אֲנִי־אֶחֱזֶה־לִּי** emphasizes the first person three times. According to Clines (2015, p. 461), the imperfect verb **אֶחֱזֶה** conventionally translated as "I will see" should be translated as a cohortative expressing a will or desire rather than a simple prediction. Looking at a cohortative translations it would read as "my desire is to see God." Habel (1985, p. 84) translates it as a model imperfect, "I would behold God while still in my flesh" to carry the meaning of "I would see God." Perhaps it is out of the numerous times that Job speaks of seeing God that call for so much debate in this translation. Job has nowhere previously said in so many words that he wants to "see" God. Job yearning to face God comes to a climax here after making numerous calls in his previous engagements. For instance, in Job 9:32, Job expresses his desire to come to trial with God. His desire is to have an arbitrator with God (Job 9:33) and for him to speak

with the Almighty (Job 13:3). Moreover, Job once stated that he would like to defend his behaviour before God's face (Job 13:15) and also promises to not hide his face from God's face (Job 13:20). I concur with Clines, (2015, p. 462) who looks at this from the perspective of a lawsuit. He argues that the metaphor of the lawsuit is sufficient to account for the language of "seeing" God. The Old Testament carries a widespread belief in the danger of seeing God (Exodus 33:20 and Judges 13:22 are good examples). However, in wisdom literature especially when looking at the Psalms, the aspect of "seeing God" is desirable and vindicative (Psalms 17:15; Psalms 63:3). Therefore, "seeing God" and more so for the righteous is upheld as it comes with relief, justice and restoration when they are suffering.

The next line carries the "I" in an emphatic manner, "for myself," "my eyes" and "no other." It is without doubt that Job wishes to settle this with God him alone. It has to be God's vindication if it is to be a vindication at all. Then there is no doubt that it has to be Job himself who experiences this vindication and not another. Job has to witness God vindicating him, Job himself has to be alive. Clines (2015, p. 462) posits that Job makes this cry in an emphatic manner simply because everybody else, including his family and friends have all made themselves strangers to him. This argument is fuelled by the meaning of "no other" to carry the idea of Job being the only person here who get to see God. Andersen (2011, p. 194) argues differently and concludes that this can only mean that Job will no longer be a stranger before God or that God will no longer treat Job as a stranger.

The last line in verse 27 is notoriously difficult in translation. Job's desire for justice carries an emotion that is confusing when it comes to the interpretation of this part. Job

says, כָּלוּ כִלְיֹתַי בְּחֻקִּי which Andersen (2011, p. 185) interprets as "my kidneys have ended in my chest." Although, Anderson argues that this means that Job is emotionally exhausted and physically drained by the intensity of his feelings, it does come out as anticlimactic. It is without doubt that the "kidneys" are a sensitive part of anatomy and in them would seat intimate feelings and affection, it would not convey the strong iteration of what Job must see for himself, the vindication he has called out for in the previous passages (Clines, 2015, p. 462). However, for consistency in keeping to meaning of the text in its context, this research borrows the interpretation of Seow (2013, p. 827) which states "I will indeed be fulfilled within my limit." In this Job has a resolve to be fulfilled within his 'limit," as if the disintegration of his body would not be the end of his existent, his "limit."

Summary of the Section

Many interpreters argue that one should not read too much on what Job says in Job 19:23-27. However, looking at the larger picture of how the narrative unfolds at the end, the text is clear on restorative justice that Job seeks. Job seeks vindication and the book of Job ends with God finally vindicating Job (Job 42:7). At the end, the narrator depicts what he knows and gives it clear meaning. Job says "I know that you can do everything and that nothing that you propose to do is impossible for you." This latter "I know" goes hand in hand with the one in Job 19:25-26. Again, this restoration and vindication at the end shows that God is his vindicator. Therefore, it is right for us to read faith in what Job hopes for in seeking divine justice. Therefore, the living God is the final vindicator who ushers in justice. Job is right when he calls out for a resurrection hope. Despite of all the signs that show his imminent death and disintegration, there is fulfilment of hope at the

end of the narrative. In deed death will not have the final word, for Job is restored at the end. Therefore, Christians and Jews who carry this text with a deeper meaning of resurrection are equally justified.

The Justice of God in the African Worldview

According to Mburu (2019, p. 27), the worldview of Africans is shaped by their ultimate reality. The ultimate reality for Africans is defined as the Supreme Being. The African thinking of God is holistic. Therefore, there is no need to question whether God exists! The supreme being is assumed to be present everywhere in the sense that anyone can call on him for help from anywhere. The concept of God in Africa is understood by the fact that He is both transcendent and holistic. Transcendence in this case is seen in some cultures where the Supreme Being cannot be fully known or comprehended since he is too far away. Holism on the other hand takes the belief that life is interdependent and integrated and is governed by a law of harmony (Turaki, 2006, p. 54). Therefore, the African perspective of God is not of one who is isolating himself from his creation, rather He is present and uses lesser spirit beings to interact directly with humanity. God is both near and far. This nearness is God's immanence and is seen with his continued interest with the affairs of humankind. Therefore, God relates to people through worship as well as the ancestors who bring about his justice to the people when they don't walk in his ways.

The African worldview has some similarities to the biblical worldview. According to Richard (1990, p. 190), the biblical worldview also assumes the existence of a Supreme being and there is no need to prove his existence. This comes out clearly in Genesis 1:1 "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." The biblical worldview also

affirms the transcendence and immanence of God. God desires a relationship with his creation. However, just like the African worldview, any such relationship is based on the understanding that God is both separate from his creation as well as present within it (see, for example, Psalms 19). In the book of Job 33:14, Elihu argues that God speaks to man in many ways including dreams and visions. In the discourse of Job and his friends, it is clear that God is not remote.

The traditional African worldview includes belief in a creator and in a host of other supernatural powers and spirit beings, some of which are non-human and others who came as ancestors. According to Leeming (2010, p. 292), these spiritual beings can be ranked according to importance. For some of the African communities that believe in divinities, these spiritual beings were involved in the creation of the world and rank slightly below the Supreme being whom they serve. Then following these divine spirits come the ancestors, or the living dead who share this third rank with other nature spirits. Mburu (2019, p. 32) shares an example of the Agikuyu of Kenya. She argues that the Agikuyu acknowledge at least two supernatural powers. The first and most important is the high god known as Ngai. He is the creator and giver of life. All creation works are attributed to him. He acts on Justice; retributive justice, where those who obey him are rewarded while those who do wrong, are punished. The other powers are the ancestral spirits, who are not worshipped like Ngai. These spirits serve Ngai and live in communion with the people. Ritual acts of communion link the people to these spiritual beings who act on behalf of God and man.

The Bible acknowledges the presence of spirit beings, who are commonly referred to as angels and demons. Angels and demons are affiliated to either God or Satan. They are

also associated with either good or evil. We see the activity of demons receiving more attention especially in the gospels. Despite the demons being affiliated to Satan, the Bible shows clearly that God has authority over them all. The narrative of Job makes this crystal clear that Satan could not touch Job without the permission of God. According to Turaki (2006, p. 26), the ancestral spirits also work under the authority of the Supreme being. However, the African world is a mono-sectional reality. What this implies is that there is an assumption by Africans to take God, the spirits, ancestors, human beings and objects to inhabit one world. Therefore, there is no separation of a spiritual world with the physical one. In fact, Turaki argues that there is only one reality for Africans, where everyone is involved in the lives of others in one way or another. This holism perspective dictates that there are no boundaries between the physical and spiritual dimensions. Mburu (2019, p. 33) add that there are blur lines of distinction between what is considered secular and religious activities. What an individual does, affects the whole community. Therefore, one must be keen to live in harmony with the spiritual world as this affects not just him but the community at large.

For many Africans, according to Okello (2003, p. 64), the spiritual realm is as real, if not more real, than the physical world which they live in. The Africans see little conflict between faith and nature, what would be considered sacred as opposed to what is secular. In this respect the assumption here is that what happens to a person especially in times of crises must have a spiritual answer. Mbiti (1994 p.204) states that, “In nearly all African societies, it is thought that the spirits are either the origin of evil, or agents of evil.” What Mbiti argues here is that evil, like the one that come upon Job, is an independent and external object that must be intended by human or spiritual agents. Gyekye (1987, p. 124)

has done an extensive work among the Akan people of Ghana on the problem of Evil. Gyekye argues that there is a deep conviction among the Akan people of Ghana that evil is not a creation of God. Rather, this evil comes from lesser spirits and humanity's free will. These two are the basic entities that provide the sources of evil. Gyekye notes that when a person is facing failures, pain and other kinds of sufferings, whether out of their actions, desires or out of activities of supposed evil forces. Such a person will more likely than not do something about it by visiting a priest or a diviner. In this case, the thought of an African carries the idea that evil does not just happen, there must be a spiritual meaning to it.

Restoration Justice as Divine Justice in the African Worldview

The scripture gives a graphic picture of how the devil went about attacking Job's wealth. The devil begins by attacking his donkeys as they are grazed (Job 1:14-15). The devil in this case used the Sabaeans to attack and only spared one of the servants to convey the sad news to Job. The raid left Job without five hundred donkeys and with dead servants. The second servant that comes while the other is telling his tale, says "The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants and consumed them, and I alone have escaped to tell you" (Job 1:16).

While the second servant narrates of the fire, another comes and speaks of another raid by Chaldeans who for three groups, raid on the three thousand camels and put all servants to death except the one who comes with the sad report. Still, as if this was not enough, the last servant comes and narrates of how Job lost his sons and daughters. "…a great wind came across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young people, and they are dead, and I alone have escaped to tell you" (Job 1:19). We see

Job respond here with deep mourning for his children and loss of property. He tears his robes, shaves his head and prostrates himself in worship. He acknowledges that he came into this world with nothing and he will not take anything with him to his grave. He worships God as the one who gives, and the one who has taken away and glorifies the name of the Lord.

The narrative of Job does not end here, as it turns out. The devil will again present himself before the Lord a second time. The Lord once more points to the devil that Job was an upright and a blameless man. Job had maintained his integrity even after losing his children and property. The devil was not satisfied with this and suggested that if God allowed him to attack Job's health, Job would curse God to his face. Confidently God allows the devil to attack Job's health but warns the devil to spare his life. The devil afflicts Job with painful sores that run from his head to his feet. Job takes a piece of broken pottery and scrabs himself as he sits upon the ashes (Job 2:3-10).

According to Okello (2024, p. 111) Job got to hear the "how" aspect, namely the exact ways in which he experienced the various devastating attacks as narrated by his servants. However, the "why" aspect of these events remained unanswered. For an African reading the book of Job, they would find the answers and solutions given to Job by his friends unsatisfying. The question of where are the spirits? or why is it that these events are not linked to natural evil would linger consistently in an African mind. This spiritual awareness brings light into what an African would see when looking at the Justice of God in the book of Job. To an African, the devil is a non-human free-willed agent who causes mischief in the lives of God's people (Mburu, 2019, p. 33). The book of Job shows the influence of Satan which would be easily understood and upheld by an ordinary African.

Boyd (2014, p. 320) affirms what is commonly accepted by many Africans is that supernatural entities do cause natural evil. The view here Satan falls under the category of these non- human free-willed agents that cause evil. The book of Job clearly shows that this agent is already behind the scenes causing this kind of havoc. According to Okello, 2024), it is important to note that the book of Job does not attribute the cause of this evil to God. Despite the fact that a character states that "The fire of God fell from the sky and burned up the sheep." Not even the staunch African traditionalist would be willing to trace this kind of a natural evil all the way to God. Many African societies would hesitate to attribute to God any occurrences of evil. Mbiti (1994, p. 204) asserts that African people locate the source of the problem of evil elsewhere than in their relationship with God. The African does not hold that evil is a creation of God. On the contrary, the lesser spirits and human free will are the ones that provide the sources of evil.

Therefore, the justice of God in an African perspective is restorative. The aattributes of God, do not have any relationship with evil. Toren (2004, p. 169) contends that God is transcendent and the intermediary beings between the Supreme God and humanity are more or less close to the creator and divine. Since evil is as a result of human free will and the intermediary beings, the justice of God then becomes restorative. When human beings are punished for their evil deeds, the punishment is rendered through these unique spirits; retributive justice. Therefore, the intervention of God, then becomes restorative since God can only act by being good and not evil. When an African is sick and gets well, praise and adoration is attributed to God. God is the one who has restored back good health and not another.

Summary of the Section

Despite the intrusion of the western culture and worldview in Africa today, the spiritual realm remains very real for many of Africans today. The activity of angels and demons is a reality as they continue to seek solutions to the numerous challenges that face them. Undeserved suffering is sometimes viewed as an attack by the evil spirits, set upon us by witchcraft. It is no wonder for a Christian to visit a witchdoctor in confronting these powers other than relying on God. Poverty, conflict, pandemics and diseases are familiar to many Africans. At times this is taken as part of life. However, we see a retribution theory in play as many believe that suffering is a punishment for displeasing the spirits who are agents of punishment. Therefore, more often than not when suffering comes, our first response is to examine our lives for sinful attitudes and behaviour. Therefore, the African relationship with the spirits is transactional and solely in terms of sin and punishment.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Introduction

In this chapter the researcher presents a summary of the findings, synthesizing the results of the study with reference to its objectives. The researcher makes recommendations for each of the objectives before proceeding to make conclusion in answering the research questions and providing suggestions for further research.

Findings and Recommendations Under Objective One

The first objective of this research was to determine the meaning of the selected text in Job 19:23-29 as originally intended by the author through an exegetical analysis. This research finds that Job, as seen in Job 19:23-27, has come to a point of spiritual maturity in his quest for justice. Job recognizes the troubling possibility that he might die before he is vindicated. Job has grown in his understanding from his arguments, from a man who had even dared to suggest that God would miss him (Job 7:21). He reaches the bottom of the pit of humiliation and desperation where we see his eyes open wide to embrace faith in God despite of his suffering. Adeyemo (2010, p. 1261) observes that Job has matured both emotionally and spiritually to the point of postponing his immense desire for instant answers, and is ready to face his reality.

Job cries out, "Oh, that my words were recorded" (Job 19:23). On this, you can note the increasing intensity of his desire for a permanent record of his words. He moves from *"*written on a scroll, to inscribed with an iron tool on lead, to engraved in a rock forever" (19:23-24). Job desired to leave a written record for posterity. Andersen (2011, p. 177)

supports this by showing that Job argues for a written record to safeguard his honour and seeks justification by providing a permanent written record of his innocence. Job in carrying on with hope and quest for vindication is not clear whether the writing on this *book* would be on a scroll, a tablet of clay, metal or even stone. However, the use of the word "inscribed" points out that some work would be carved on something more permanent like a stone or monument (Andersen, 2011, p. 177).

Just like an epiphany, Job shifts from looking at himself and focuses on a redeemer.

Job states clearly "I know my redeemer lives." Job holds a deep- seated conviction in the ultimate benign nature of God who will eventually vindicate him. The hope that Job carries of vindication by his redeemer rises above his frailty as a mortal man. The redeemer carries justice that goes beyond the grave. Job states in an emphatic manner, "for myself," "my eyes" and "no other." It is without doubt that Job wishes to settle this with God alone. It has to be God's vindication if it is to be a vindication at all. Then there is no doubt that it has to be Job himself who experiences this vindication and not another. Job has to witness God vindicating him, Job himself would get to see this while he is still alive.

Recommendation

Job 19:23-27 is clear on restorative justice that Job seeks. Job seeks vindication and the book of Job ends with God finally vindicating Job (Job 42:7). At the end, the narrator depicts what he knows and gives it clear meaning. Job says "I know that you can do everything and that nothing that you propose to do is impossible for you." This latter "I know" goes hand in hand with the one in Job 19:25-26. Again, this restoration and

vindication at the end shows that God is his vindicator. Therefore, it is right for us to read faith in what Job hopes for in seeking divine justice. Therefore, the living God is the final vindicator who ushers in justice. Despite of all the signs that show imminent death and disintegration, there is fulfilment of hope at the end for those who seek and hope in God. In deed death will not have the final word, for Job is restored at the end.

Findings and Recommendations Under Objective Two and Three

The findings of objective two and three have been taken together because the action of the two were carried out simultaneously. These were to find out theological issues of contemporary relevance raised in the selected text in Job 19:23-27 through the social scientific methodology approach and how they can be applied to the Contemporary Kikuyu Christian in Kenya.

Finding one: Underserved suffering which has been a puzzle for many Agikuyu is an opportunity for them to deepen their faith. Underserved suffering is commonly viewed as an attack by evil spirits which comes as a result of witchcraft or an act of demons for the Christians. What is commonly accepted by many Africans is that supernatural entities do cause natural evil. Satan falls under the category of these non- human free-willed agents that cause evil. The Book of Job clearly shows that this agent is already behind the scenes causing this kind of havoc. Choosing faith in the midst of suffering leads to an intimate relationship with God. Job did not know how far his sufferings would lead him, he would find himself in great illumination of the deity and openly confess, “I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted (Job 42:2 ESV). Therefore, faith in God comes out as a crucial element when one is facing all kinds of suffering. The

Kikuyu Christian has to trust God and his plan over his life. God is not out to curtail his or her freedom but rather to mould and shape him or her.

Recommendation.

Looking closely at the book of Job, there is no paradigmatic explanation that is offered for why suffering takes place. Job's pain and anguish lead to a debate as to why he suffers. His friends have their opinions about the reason for suffering and keep arguing on what Job can do so as to get relief. In the book of Job, all the friends including Job present themselves as wisdom teachers. They claim wisdom and undermine the wisdom of others. Therefore, we do not have to understand Job's suffering but rather his righteousness and give us reasons for our own righteousness. Job maintains his righteousness to the end, without fully comprehending why he is suffering. Therefore, the Kikuyu Christian community needs to focus on their righteousness as the most significant part in relating to God. One cannot fully comprehend the reasons why they suffer, but one can tell when they are in wrong and when they are pleasing the Lord.

Findings two: God has executive authority that is beyond his judicial attributes of justice.

The research finds that it is not enough to interpret the justice of God from a judicial perspective only, which is the retributive justice. The retributive justice becomes detrimental to the development of true righteousness because it sets up an ulterior motive: the anticipation of gain. Satan argues this in the premise by suggesting that Job worships God because God has rewarded him with material blessings and good health. The friends of Job hold to the retributive justice as they seek answers as to why Job is suffering. By

so doing, Job argues that if the principle were to apply for his life, then God had allowed a righteous person to suffer and as a result God becomes unjust. Therefore, the deduction of God's action in carrying out His actions can simply be interpreted as his exercise of executive authority. When a Kikuyu looks at the book of Job, they can easily relate with his friends on retributive theology, but hardly can they see the relationship of God as one who allows all kinds of suffering for his own reasons.

Recommendation

The Kikuyu Christian community should look at the purpose of the book of Job as how to think well about God when they go through various kinds of sufferings. This means that when life is going wrong, we should know that God is in control and we should rely on his wisdom as to how he governs the world. This takes away our attention from the idea that we know how he governs his justice in the world. What comes out clearly is that the justice of God is not the foundation of how the world operates. We are not in a position to explain exhaustively how God governs. Even when we are clear in explaining the rewards of righteousness and the punishments that come upon the wicked, we should learn to trust God to bring his justice as he sees fit. Therefore, we are to rely more on his wisdom and supremacy in executing governance, than our own understanding of his ways.

CONCLUSION

This research was aimed at establishing the restorative justice as seen in the book of Job 19:23-27. The research sought to critically interpret the above-named text so as to find the original and intended meaning, as well as the theological and practical significance to the contemporary Kikuyu Christian. The research finds that there is a correlation between the justice of God and his executive authority in governing the world. God acts in his judicial authority when he is rewarding the righteous and punishing the wicked. At the same time, He acts in his executive authority when he allows even the righteous to go through moments of suffering. It also draws a conclusion to the issue of suffering and what should constitute the heart of the one who suffers. For the contemporary Agikuyu Christian, one needs to have faith in God if they are to carry the proper attitude when suffering. The person who suffers may not fully comprehend the reasons why they are suffering but they should hold on to faith and trust in the Lord.

The research was conducted using the Social- Scientific approach to understand the social construct of the Ancient Near East by looking at similar narratives as well as the wisdom literature of the time. The social scientific method also was used in the exegesis to evaluate the historical and cultural dimensions that surround the meaning of the text. The research finds that the social construct of the people in the Ancient Near East held to retributive justice as the main mode of divine justice. The arguments of Job's friends although taken from different approaches, leads to the same unified conclusion on retributive justice. Out of their failure to know what the deity requires, these friends all come to the conclusion that offending God is inevitable and that sin is pervasive. In this, no one can claim to be innocent. The retributive justice was understood as logical

syllogism where God has power to punish or recompense out of evaluating his subjects. This research finds this analogy inadequate in evaluating divine justice. The research concludes with restorative justice as a mode to explain both the judicial authority of God as well as his executive authority in governance.

There arises a need to carry more exegetical studies using the socio-scientific method as applied in this study in Ancient Near East wisdom literature. There are plenty of studies on wisdom literature, however, there are few that are focused on the social construct of the people in the Ancient Near East that have a biblical studies approach. The research in this area would strengthen the biblical perspective especially in mining the meaning of the text and the social world behind the text. Since most of the wisdom literature is poetic, further research would bring to light more knowledge and applications from a biblical perspective. Further studies on the book of Job in particular can be done to establish restorative justice as divine justice in the book of Job.

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