

Job 19 — I Know That My Redeemer Liveth — The Estranged Man, the Iron Pen, and the Vindicator Who Stands at the Latter Day

Job 19: Job answers Bildad a third time. Worn thin by the friends' relentless words and stripped of glory, kin, servants, and wife, he protests that God himself has fenced up his way — and then, from the very bottom of that isolation, cries for his testimony to be graven in rock forever and lifts the book's great confession: 'I know that my redeemer liveth... and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.' The dialogue of Job, wisdom literature of uncertain date (traditionally set in the patriarchal age, c. 2000–1800 BC; composed and edited across a longer span).

Three friends came to sit with Job in silence for seven days, and that was the last kind thing they did. Ever since, they have been talking — Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar, taking turns, each cycle a little more certain that Job's suffering is the receipt for some hidden sin. Job 19 is Job's answer to Bildad's second speech, and it opens with a man who has simply had enough of being counseled. The words that were meant to comfort have become their own affliction. He is being ground down not only by boils and loss but by the theology of his visitors, who keep handing him the one explanation that is not true.

Hebrew Word Studies

dakah (H1792) (דָּכָה) — **to crush, to break in pieces, to pulverize v. 2.** Job chooses a violent verb for what his friends are doing to him. *Dakah* is not "to disagree with" or even "to hurt" — it is to crush, to beat to powder, the word for grinding something under a weight until it is dust. And its object here is not Job's body but his *nephesh*, his soul, his very self (H5315, the same soul-and-breath word that runs through the Old Testament from Adam's first living breath). The friends imagine they are administering doctrine; Job feels them administering a millstone. It is worth sitting with the fact that the same root becomes, elsewhere, a word of tender divine restoration — "a broken and a contrite (*dakah*) heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Ps. 51:17), and Isaiah's Suffering Servant who was "bruised (*dakah*) for our iniquities" (Isa. 53:5). The identical crushing that friends inflict carelessly, the Servant would one day bear redemptively. Job is being pulverized by words; the Redeemer he is about to name would be pulverized by our sins — and that difference is the whole distance between a friend who wounds and a Savior who saves.

zur (H2114) (זָר) — **to be a stranger, to be estranged, to turn aside; an outsider, an alien vv. 13, 15, 17, 27.** One Hebrew root stitches this section together, and tracking it exposes the chapter's hidden architecture. *Zur* means to become foreign — a stranger, an outsider, the person who does not belong. It surfaces in the acquaintance "estranged" from Job (v. 13), in the household that counts him "a stranger" (v. 15), and — cutting deepest — in the wife to whom his very "breath is strange" (v. 17). Everyone in Job's world has become *zur* to him; he has been made an alien in his own house. Now watch where the same root lands at the chapter's summit: "Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not *another*" (v. 27) — *not another*, the identical word. It is a deliberate, aching turn. Every relationship in Job's life has gone strange, foreign, *other* — and the one face that will not be *another*, the one presence that remains truly his own, is God's. When Job finally sees his Redeemer with restored eyes, it will not be through a stranger's mediation or a substitute's report; it will be *for himself*, no longer estranged. The word that measures his total abandonment becomes, at the end, the word that measures his total belonging. Isaiah promises the same reversal to all the covenant's outcasts: "The sons of the stranger... even them will I bring to my holy mountain" (Isa. 56:6–7). Estrangement is never God's last word.

chaqaaq (H2710) / chatsab (H2672) (חָקַק / חָצַב) — **to inscribe, engrave, decree / to hew, cut, quarry out of rock vv. 23–24.** Two verbs of permanence stand behind Job's wish. *Chaaqaaq* (rendered "printed") is not our modern printing — it means to *inscribe*, to cut in, and it is the same root behind the word for a *decree* or a *statute*: a law "engraved" so it cannot be revised. Job wants his testimony to have the fixity of a royal edict. Then *chatsab* (v. 24, "graven") is the mason's word — to hew, to quarry, to cut stone; it is what you do to carve a cistern or a tomb out of living rock. Isaiah uses it of the "rock whence ye are hewn" (Isa. 51:1). So Job asks for his words to be at once *decreed* like a statute and *quarried* like a monument — inscribed and then chiseled into permanence, lead poured into the letters so time cannot wear them smooth. There is a deep fittingness that the confession he wanted cut into rock is a confession about resurrection, because the language of *chatsab* is the language of the hewn tomb — and the tomb where the Redeemer would one day lie was itself "hewn in stone" (Lk. 23:53). Job wanted his hope cut into rock forever. It was: it was cut into an empty tomb.

go'el (H1350) (גֹּאֵל) — redeemer, kinsman-redeemer; the near relative who ransoms, restores, and avenges v. 25. This is the load-bearing word of the whole chapter, and its background makes the confession blaze. A *go'el* (the participle of *ga'al*, "to redeem") was not an abstract savior but a family obligation with a face. Under the law he did three concrete things: he *ransomed* a kinsman sold into slavery, paying the price to buy him back (Lev. 25:47–49); he *restored* the family inheritance, redeeming forfeited land so the line was not cut off (Lev. 25:25 — the office Boaz fills in Ruth 4:1–10); and he *avenged* a slain relative, the "avenger of blood" who saw justice done (Num. 35:19). Ransom, inheritance, vindication — the *go'el* is the one who will not let his blood be lost, enslaved, or unavenged. Now hear Job. Estranged from every earthly kinsman (vv. 13–14), he confesses a *go'el* who "liveth" — and the Restoration will name him: Christ, who "gave himself a ransom" (1 Tim. 2:6), who redeems the forfeited inheritance of a fallen family, and who at the latter day will rise to vindicate the wrongly accused. Isaiah pours the same word over God again and again — "thy Redeemer (*go'el*), the Holy One of Israel" (Isa. 41:14; 44:6; 54:5) — and the Book of Mormon prophets breathe it as a name: "I know that my Redeemer liveth" is the confession Job hands forward, across two millennia, to every soul who has run out of earthly rescuers and needs a Kinsman who cannot die.

chay (H2416) / basar (H1320) / chazah (H2372) (חַי / בָּשָׂר / חָזַה) — living, alive / flesh, body / to see, to behold, to gaze upon vv. 25–27. Three words carry the resurrection weight of the confession. First *chay*: "my redeemer *liveth*" — living, alive, present and permanent. Job binds his whole hope to a Redeemer whose defining attribute is that he is not dead; against a world where everyone Job loves has withdrawn and his own body is dissolving, the one fixed fact is a *living* Kinsman. Second *basar*: "yet in my *flesh* shall I see God" — not spirit only, not memory, but *basar*, the physical stuff of the body, the same word for the flesh God clothed Adam in and the flesh the risen Christ invited Thomas to touch. Job's hope is stubbornly, gloriously bodily. Third *chazah*: "in my flesh shall I *see* God... mine eyes shall behold." *Chazah* is the verb of a seer's vision, to gaze directly upon — and Job insists on it with restored eyes, "for myself... and not another." Put the three together and you have the resurrection in a single verse a thousand years before the empty tomb: a *living* Redeemer, seen in restored *flesh*, *beheld* with our own eyes. It is exactly the reunion the Book of Mormon promises — body and spirit "restored one to the other" (2 Ne. 9:12; Alma 40:23) — and exactly the sight promised to the pure: "they shall see God" (Matt. 5:8). Job did not merely believe he would survive death; he believed he would *see*, in the body, the face of the One who redeemed him. That is not consolation. That is victory.

From the Chapter's Architecture

I will not force a chiasm here; Hebrew poetry of this kind rarely folds into one, and this chapter's power is in its trajectory, not its symmetry. But there is one deliberate verbal hinge worth naming, because it holds the two halves together: the word zur, "strange / another" (H2114). It marks the descent — his acquaintance "estranged," his house counting him "a stranger," his breath "strange" to his wife (vv. 13, 15, 17) — and then it reappears, transfigured, at the summit: "mine eyes shall behold, and not another" (v. 27). Everything human went strange; the one face that will not be strange is God's. The chapter closes, tellingly, not with the confession but with a return to the friends: "Be ye afraid of the sword... that ye may know there is a judgment" (v. 29). Even at his highest, Job has not forgotten there is a reckoning coming — and he warns the men who prosecuted him that the Judge he trusts is a Judge they too will answer to.