

THE HOPE FOR RESURRECTION IN THE BOOK OF JOB

„But it is written that he will rise again with those whom the Lord raises up“ (Job 42,17a LXX)

With this sentence the additions at the end of the Greek Book of Job begin. To our latter-day Christian ears the sentence fits nicely with all the positive news about Job's rehabilitation. The author of the Testament of Job already seems to have understood this and elaborated on it quite as easily¹. Therefore the reception of the sentence has become a chapter of the history of the hope for resurrection in Hellenistic Judaism and early Christianity. In this context, by the side of the Testament of Job especially Jerome's Vulgate has to be mentioned, where in his celebrated translation of 19,25-27 he has Job speak prophetically on the resurrection of Christ and the resurrection in the flesh of all the faithful. The influence of these words up to Handel's Messiah can hardly be overestimated regarding the fashioning of Christian concepts of resurrection and in this respect may easily compete with the bizarre images of the vision of the dry bones in Ezek 37.

However, the previous history of Job 42,17a LXX is of equal importance, where the use of γέγραπται is evidence of a determined wish to integrate the passage into a written tradition beyond the Book of Job. As we have no extant witnesses of this tradition, the most crucial question is how this notion may fit into the immediate context of the Greek Job. The search for first traces of a hope for resurrection in the Book of Job is of great interest for the evaluation of a nascent belief in resurrection in the Old Testament. The reason for this lies in the fact that with Job 42,17a LXX there exists unequivocal evidence for an individual resurrection from the dead, which is however placed in a completely different context from that of the more famous passages in Dan 12 and 2 Macc 7. With reference to the motives and motivations the belief in resurrection in the Book of Job appears neither as a concept of hope for those martyrs who died for their faith nor as part of the eschatological restoration of God's people. The collective aspect recedes almost entirely. Rather, the belief in resurrection now appears in the context of Job's basic questions of human suffering, the relationship between God and man and divine justice.

1. Cf. the literal reference in TestJob 4,9 and the apotheosis in chapter 52.

I therefore propose to discuss the contested problem of the hope of resurrection in the Book of Job in the Hebrew text and especially in the Septuagint with the help of two key passages.

I. JOB 14,13-17

This passage is of paramount importance for the questions raised, because it is inserted into a general complaint on the transitoriness of life. This establishes a connection with the problem of mortality and its implications. On the other hand, the interpretation of this passage was always dominated by the assumption that it constitutes a marked contrast to its context. I propose the following translation of the Hebrew text:

1. Masoretic Text

- ¹³ How could you in Sheol hide me, conceal me until the reversal of your wrath, set a limit for me and (then still) remember me?
¹⁴ When a man dies, will he (then) live? I will endure all the days of my service in war until the coming of my relief.
¹⁵ You will call and I, I will answer you. The work of your hands you will long for.
¹⁶ Surely, then my steps you will count, you will not watch over the punishment of my sins².
¹⁷ My transgression is sealed in a bundle and you will glue over my iniquity.

The translation: *מי יתן* in Job often introduces a wish, and it is usually translated as such in this passage. But then the question arises how a wish like that might fit in with the preceding complaint on transitoriness and especially with the rhetorical question following in v. 14³.

What is more, there are two passages in Job where *מי יתן* cannot signify a wish. In the same chapter Job 14,4 *מי יתן טהור מטמא* certainly should not be translated as a wish, but, still quite literally, as a “negative question”⁴. This suggests the translation “How could a pure (man) come from an impure (man)?” By analogy, I interpret v. 13 not as a wish, but

2. For this translation of *חטאת* cf. Zech 14,19.

3. Cf. as example for the older research G. FOHRER, *Das Buch Hiob* (Kommentar zum Alten Testament, 16), Gütersloh, Mohn, 1963, p. 239, who simply obliterates v. 14a “als variierende Glosse nach V. 10a [...], die grammatisch nicht in den Zusammenhang paßt” and the survey in A. DE WILDE, *Das Buch Hiob: Eingeleitet, übersetzt und erläutert* (Oudtestamentische Studiën, 22), Leiden, Brill, 1981, p. 176.

4. “Negative Frage” Ges¹⁷, p. 529; cf. KBL³ 693. The second case where *מי יתן* cannot be translated as introducing a wish is Job 31,31. Cf. for *מי יתן* in optative clauses GesK §151,1.

similarly as a negative or rhetorical question. Stylistically as well as materially this guarantees a smooth transition to the following verse.

Some basic observations can be made:

a) First of all, the netherworld is perceived as an appropriate hiding place from God's wrath, and this implies that God does not punish there. One might of course object that this is unnecessary in the realm of the shades with its sombre qualities. Essentially however this passage is a statement on God's sphere of action. Even if the thought that God may command the underworld could be toyed with, the text remains convinced that Sheol is characterized by God's absence. As e.g. in Ps 88,6, God does not remember the dead who dwell there.

b) Neither the text nor its surrounding passages point to an apocalyptic construction of time. As we cannot assume a uniform eschatological concept for the whole postexilic period we are not allowed to turn to the idea of a Last Judgement or a universal turn of the aeons to understand this passage⁵.

c) God's wrath seems to be a temporary phenomenon. Here we find the same concept as in Ps 30,6 or Isa 54,7-8. There remains however the problem that man is ignorant how long God's wrath will endure and if, considering human transitoriness, the individual will survive to see the end of the divine wrath (cf. e.g. Ps 90).

With these assumptions the text may be interpreted as follows: Human transitoriness as a common fate makes it questionable for Job if he will live to see an end of the divine wrath and a change of his fate. Or to be more precise: considering his state of health he is aware of the danger that God's wrath will only subside when he will be already in Sheol. A reverse in the order of the *conditio humana*, namely that Job will await the end of the wrath in the underworld and then lead a happy life in a joyous relation to God is refuted as impossible in vv. 13-14a. That God is lord over life and death forms the uncontested background. He sets a

5. I do not agree with T. MENDE, *Die Wurzeln der Auferstehungshoffnung im Ijobbuch*, in *Trierer Theologische Zeitschrift* 102 (1993) 1-33, esp. pp. 5 and 10-14. After isolating vv. 13a.15-16 as belonging to the "Grundschrift" (*ibid.*, p. 10) and therefore dating to the fifth or fourth century BC (*ibid.*, p. 3), she finds unequivocal references to Gen 3. "Im Gegenüber zur urgeschichtlichen präsentiert der Ijobdichter eine endgeschichtliche, d.h. gleichfalls nicht historische Darstellung eines innergeschichtlichen Ereignisses, sondern die Wesensbestimmung der zukünftigen, von der Macht der Sünde (14,16b) und ihrer Folge, dem Gericht (14,13aß), befreiten, zu ihrem ursprünglichen Verhältnis mit Jahwe zurückgeführten (14,15) – d.h. vollendeten – Schöpfung. Es ist offenbar, daß der Ijobdichter damit jenen endeschatologischen [sic!] Heilszustand im Blick hat, wie ihn die oben beschriebene nachexilische Eschatologie erwartete" (*ibid.*, p. 12).

limit to life in death, as is formulated in the last of the three cola in v. 13 in close accordance with the context of this speech of Job's (v. 5). Not the statement that God could not bring Job into Sheol is stressed. Rather, the phrasing that uses the concept of "hiding" aims at the possibility that Job may be brought to light again. But this is impossible with Sheol, because there Job would be cut off from the remembrance of God. This brings our text close to Ps 88,6. The rhetorical question in v. 14a generalizes on these personal thoughts.

If this is so – the text continues from v. 14b – then there remains only a single hope for Job, who as in military service awaits his relief. God himself has to relent in his wrath during Job's lifetime, by pardoning him and calling him into his community. In the logic of sin and punishment this means that God himself abstains from the chastisement of sin⁶. Instead, the sins are perpetually sealed like contaminated material⁷. In this way the sphere of guilt, which obviously surrounds Job and causes his punishment through suffering and blows of fate is rendered harmless.

In the Hebrew text I therefore see no indication that Job hopes for a resurrection. To see such a hope here is only possible when the mental background has changed to such an extent that a judgement of the dead and consequently a divine salvation after death are taken for granted. It can be assumed that in this respect the situation had changed by the time the Septuagint was translated.

2. *Septuagint*

¹³ Oh, that in Hades you would have protected⁸ me, would have hidden me until your wrath will have subsided and you will have ordained me (according to your will)⁹ a time, at which a remembrance of me you will perform.

¹⁴ For when a man dies he will live, although he has ended the days of his life. I will endure until I will be again.

6. For *ספר צער* cf. Job 31,4,37. It seems that in this context of hope for an altered fate Job is rather ready to admit a connection between at least possible transgressions of his own and his suffering; cf. F. HORST, *Hiob. I. Teilband* (BKAT, 16/1), Neukirchen-Vluyn, Neukirchener Verlag, 1968, p. 212.

7. Cf. Zech 5,7-8 where the "wickedness" is sealed in a vessel; for parallels from Assyrian and Hethite sources cf. V. HAAS, *Ein hurritischer Blutritus und die Deponierung der Ritualrückstände nach hethitischen Quellen*, in B. JANOWSKI – K. KOCH – G. WILHELM (eds.), *Religionsgeschichtliche Beziehungen zwischen Kleinasien, Nordsyrien und dem Alten Testament: Internationales Symposium Hamburg 17.-21. März 1990* (OBO, 129), Freiburg/S, Universitätsverlag; Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993, pp. 67-85, esp. 79-83.

8. For the rendering of the tense cf. F. BLASS – A. DEBRUNNER – F. REHKOPF, *Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Griechisch*, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979, §360,3 with n. 4.

9. I understand τῶξῆ as 2nd person aorist middle.

- ¹⁵ Then you will call, I however will answer you. The works of your hands do not reject.
¹⁶ But you have counted my ways of living, and certainly none of my sins can escape you.
¹⁷ You have sealed my unlawfulness in a purse, you have marked it down when I transgressed something unwillingly.

The translation: In v. 13 the Greek translation of the יִמְּךָ -sentence follows exactly Exod 16,3 by $\delta\phi\epsilon\lambda\omicron\nu$ with Aorist indicative. Thus, on the one hand this rendering is unique in Job, where יִמְּךָ is usually rendered as literally as possible by $\tau\acute{\iota}\varsigma \delta\acute{\omega}\phi\eta$. On the other hand this causes an unusual sequence of tenses in the Greek text, by combining an unreal past optative clause with a temporal sentence in a future aspect (aorist conjunctive). The Hebrew has *yiqtol*-forms, so that the recourse to the past tense is an addition in the Greek text. These difficulties may perhaps best be explained as analogies to Exod 16,3, where the children of Israel in the hardship of life in the desert wish that they had already died in Egypt. Job desires not to have lived through all the suffering he has already experienced. Instead, he wishes to have died previously and be in Hades at present – to be sure with the expectation that this would not be the end of his existence but only an intermediary state of being.

In the context of our questions the LXX text is to be understood and interpreted as evidence of Hellenistic Judaism in its own right. Therefore, when I compare it to the masoretic text, I am less interested in the question how the translator understood the Hebrew, but in how readers would have understood the Greek text.

The statement of the Greek text is quite clear. Job, facing his sufferings, wishes to be in Hades. In v. 14 as the key passage it becomes evident that a real death is meant, not a short visit to Hades as was made by Ulysses. However, this underworld is not a place of no return. The Hebrew rhetorical question, if a man may live after his death, which has a marked sapiential air, is quite matter-of-factly turned into an affirmative¹⁰. The text obviously is presupposing that there is a life after death. Job therefore hopes for his *palingenesis*. The passage thus does not really fit in any longer with the context of a complaint of transitoriness which negates precisely this hope. This renewed existence follows God's call and depends entirely on his discretion. It even seems possible that God rejects the individual. In this process the transgressions, which are registered by God into different categories, play a role. Even if not

10. I do not rate this phenomenon as a "dogmatic correction"; cf. e.g. DE WILDE, *Hiob* (n. 3), p. 176: "offenbar eine dogmatische Korrektur". The rendering is rather due to the translator's understanding of v.13 and his endeavour to produce a meaningful text.

named explicitly, the association with a judgement of sins is being evoked.

The text thus delineates a mental background where the concepts of rebirth, resurrection or a last judgement must have been known to some extent. If the composition of the Job-LXX is dated to the Alexandria of the mid-second century BCE¹¹, then this supposition is quite probable with regard to chronology and the Egyptian-Hellenistic environment. The tensions that evolved with the rest of the passage extensively complaining about the transitoriness of life were obviously accepted. It therefore seems wrong to talk about „dogmatic changes“ in this passage. It is rather the rendering of a difficult text into a different linguistic and mental system. Another famous text should validate these observations.

II. JOB 19,25-27

As I cannot deal with the many problems of this difficult text, I will now concentrate exclusively on the question of the hope for resurrection.

1. Masoretic Text

²⁵ And I, I have recognized: my *goel* is alive and as the last one he will rise on¹² the dust.

11. For Alexandria as the cultural background of the translation cf. N. FERNÁNDEZ MARCOS, *The Septuagint Reading of the Book of Job*, in W.A.M. BEUKEN (ed.), *The Book of Job* (BETL, 114), Leuven, University Press – Peeters, 1994, pp. 251-266, esp. 256 with reference to the older works by Swete and Dhorme. He dates the translation to “ca. 150 B.C.” (*ibid.*, p. 251); cf. also F. SIEGERT, *Zwischen Hebräischer Bibel und Altem Testament: Eine Einführung in die Septuaginta* (Münsteraner Judaistische Studien, 9), Münster, Lit, 2001, p. 42.

I agree completely with Fernández Marcos’ observations concerning the translation technique: “When his Vorlage, not too different from the preserved Masoretic Text, was intelligible he translated accurately enough, although according to the ancient principle *sensum de sensu* rather than *verbum de verbo*. In the numerous cases where the text remains obscure and the meaning uncertain, open to diverse interpretations [...] the translator adopted diverse solutions but always with the purpose of creating a meaningful text within the Greek linguistic system” (*ibid.*, p. 263).

12. J. HOLMAN, *Does My Redeemer Live or Is My Redeemer the Living God? Some Reflections on the Translation of Job 19,25*, in BEUKEN (ed.), *The Book of Job* (n. 11), pp. 377-381, esp. 378 with n. 14 proposes to translate על by “against”. While this translation is doubtless possible I prefer the traditional reading because of the broad distribution of על-עֹפֵר with a local meaning in the Book of Job. על with eight occurrences is the preposition used most frequently in Job with עֹפֵר (26 times in Job): Job 17,16; 19,25; 20,11; 21,26; 22,24; 34,15; 41,25; 42,6; whereas it occurs outside of Job only in Isa 47,1; Amos 2,7.

- ²⁶ And after¹³ they have thus beaten my skin, from my flesh I will behold God.
²⁷ That is: I myself shall behold, namely my eyes will have seen¹⁴, and not a stranger. My kidneys perish within me.

This difficult text seems to express Job's hope that he will see his fate turn during his lifetime. On this view a consensus seems now to evolve among scholars¹⁵. The context of the chapter is completely different from Job 14. Here, the aporia of Job's sufferings is dealt with, which results from the following premises: 1. God persecutes him as an overmighty opponent, 2. there is no one left of his friends and family who would even recognize him, much less speak up for him, and 3. his physical state makes an imminent death probable and does not allow him to play an active role any longer. In this situation the institution of the *goel* comes into view as the very last hope¹⁶. Job hopes that in the end God's intervention as his *goel* will have the last word. In this truly ultimate way he would be saved and his relation to God would be re-established. To my mind it is especially v. 27 which underlines the fact that Job expects his salvation to take place during his lifetime. But even then these verses deal with a hoped-for vision of the Living God and the saving of a dying man, so that the text talks about an extreme borderline situation in any case. It cannot be denied therefore that the text is open to different interpretations. However, I believe it not to be justified to pin it down to postmortal salvation in the sense of a resurrection of the dead.

2. Septuagint

- ²⁵ I however know that he is eternal who is about to deliver me on earth.
²⁶ May my skin arise which bore this, because from the Lord this was accomplished for me.
²⁷ Which I myself know, which my eye has seen and not some one else. But everything has been accomplished for me in the bosom.

Compared to the Hebrew, the LXX renders the text quite freely and it becomes more theological. By the attribution of ἀθάνατός it is now clear

13. For this translation of אחר cf. Lev 14,43; Jer 41,16; Job 42,7.

14. For the translation of a *qatal* form as past future cf. P. JOÜON, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew: Translated and Revised by T. MURAOKA*, 2 Vols. (Subsidia Biblica, 14), Rome, Editrice Pontificio Instituto Biblico, 1996, §112i; M.F. ROGLAND, *Alleged Non-Past Uses of Qatal in Classical Hebrew* (Studia Semitica Neerlandica, 44), Assen, Van Gorcum, 2003, pp. 51-52, 119.

15. Cf. H. STRAUSS, *Hijob 19,1-42,17* (BKAT, 16/2), Neukirchen-Vluyn, Neukirchener Verlag, 2000, p. 18.

16. Cf. R. KESSLER, "Ich weiß, daß mein Erlöser lebet": Sozialgeschichtlicher Hintergrund und theologische Bedeutung der Löser-Vorstellung in Hiob 19,25, in *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 89 (1992) 139-158.

from the beginning that Job's saviour is God himself. From v. 26b onwards the main topic becomes the revelation to which Job owes his knowledge described in v. 25. Thus parts of the hope for a better future in the Hebrew text are transformed into a certainty of salvation in Job's present. The key word is συντελέω¹⁷. In the process, the content of his hope becomes clearer and more succinct. By transposing קוּם from the end of v. 25 to the beginning of v. 26 the rising of Job's skin – some variants read "body" – is now talked about. Even if it cannot be determined exactly whether this remarkable ἀνίστημι denotes a process before or after death, on the level of the Greek Book of Job it formulates a contrast to chapter 14,12. There it is stated quite clearly that a dead man does not rise again¹⁸. If one considers further the later addition to the epilogue in Job 42,17 LXX cited above, it is evident that the statement of resurrection within the book can only refer to this passage.

It may therefore be underlined that the Greek rendering does not enter any "dogmatic changes", but that it presents a reading which could be interpreted as a certainty of resurrection revealed to the patiently suffering Job. It was understood as such at the latest in the additions to the epilogue. The way to a changed image of Job was now free, a change which became visible in the Testament of Job and the New Testament¹⁹. Further, only the knowledge of those effects of the Greek text can explain Jerome's free translation of the Hebrew. On the one hand, he proposes a messianic interpretation of the *goel* pointing to the resurrected Christ²⁰. On the other hand, he executes a change of subject at the end of v. 25 as an interpretation of the Greek translation, by means of which he can speak of a bodily resurrection and the *visio beatifica* of the faithful.

III. CONCLUSION

Even if a hope of resurrection cannot be shown to have existed in the Hebrew Book of Job, its contemplation of the suffering of the just, of human hopes and transitoriness has triggered a reception pointing into this direction. The LXX here holds a key position, as it remains faithful to the Hebrew text in literally translating even those passages which

17. For the use of συντελέω in the sense of "to be accomplished" by God see e.g. Gen 2,2; Isa 46,10; 55,11.

18. See also Job 7,9, to be sure with ἀναβαίνω.

19. Cf. for Job as exemplary sufferer considering the divine promise TestJob 4,6-10 and Jas 5,7-11.

20. For the semantic range of redeemer in the New Testament cf. Lk 24,21; Rom 8,23; Eph 1,7.

roundly deny a resurrection of the dead. But it has become clear for Job 14,13-17 LXX that for difficult passages there appears a mental background of the Greek text where the resurrection of the dead is considered possible. This is also true for Job 19,25-27 LXX which contains a phrasing that in the context can be understood as a testimony of resurrection. The addition in Job 42,17a LXX allows much more explicitly for a reading of these passages as precisely such testimony.

Alttestamentliches Seminar
Katholisch-Theologische Fakultät
Universität Bonn
Regina-Pacis-Weg 1a
D-53113 Bonn
Deutschland

Johannes SCHNOCKS