

Who is the ‘hungry’ in Job 5,5a?

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Abstract

Job 5,5a has been understood as describing situations that are realistically inadequate. The emendation of רעב into ערבי, effected by metathesis, provides a meaningful *Sitz im Leben*. This approach construes Job 5,3-6 as Eliphaz’ allusion to a sequence of events that resemble Job’s calamities, albeit with a significant accusatory twist.

Job 5,5 אשר קצירו רעב יאכל ואל מצנים יקחרו ושאר צמים חילם has been long considered a *crux interpretum*. Commentators generally assumed that the first colon אשר קצירו רעב יאכל is obvious, “On the other hand, stich b in MT is impossible to interpret satisfactorily” in Gordis’ view and that of many other scholars.¹ As will be shown, this position may be rather optimistic, necessitating a reevaluation and reinterpretation of the colon as well as its context.

The major problem with Job 5,5a is the use of the specific term רעב and the identification of its referent. It seems that, under the impression of the preceding verse, commentators assumed Eliphaz implying that the sinner (איל)² would somehow lose in court ownership and control of the produce of his land, making it available to the hungry who would then freely partake in it.³ This raises the following questions:

- a. If שער in 5,4 is the seat of the city court, then the verse seems to refer only to the mistreatment of the sinner’s sons in that forum.⁴ A sinner’s sons are not necessarily

¹ R. Gordis, *The Book of Job, Commentary, New Translation and Special Studies* (New York, 1978) 53. For instance, Pope typically translates the first colon without comment by “his harvest the hungry consume.” But regarding 5,5b and c he says, “these two lines are impossible, and the various emendations not much better” (cf. M. Pope, *Job* (AB 15; New York, 1965) 42).

² Y. Hofmann, “The use of equivocal words in the first speech of Eliphaz (Job 4-5)”, *VT* 30,1 (1980) 117-118. Hoffman considers איל an example of Eliphaz’ equivocation in his first speech. He says, “The equivocal character of איל – כעש – determines the ambivalence of the whole passage v 2-5, either as accusing Job of wickedness—hence a severe chastisement—or as considering him a silly, impatient person, which is forgivable in the circumstances.” It seems to me that cleverly the author makes Eliphaz shift from איל meaning “foolish” (v. 2) to “foolish to sin” (v. 3). Cf. T. Donald, “The Semantic Field of ‘Folly’ in Proverbs, Job, Psalms, and Ecclesiastes”, *VT* 13 (1963) 288.

³ For instance JB translates this verse: their harvest goes to feed the hungry, God snatches it from their mouths, and thirsty men hanker after their goods.

⁴ R. Gordis, “Corporate Personality in Job: A Note on 22:29-30.” *JNES* 4 (1945) 54. Eliphaz is basing his argument on the ancient doctrine of corporate responsibility. Cf. Jer 31,28-29.

sinner. It would be ironic if Eliphaz would try to demonstrate God's justice by pointing to injustice done to a sinner's sons even if innocent. Taken in a forensic sense ירחקו מישע "removed from salvation," דכאו בשער "crushed at the gate," and אין מציל "no rescuer," do not convey just judicial treatment.

- b. Since 5,4 does not refer to the sinner himself, nor does it deal with his loss of ownership and control over any part of his property, what is then the justification for assuming that any hungry could freely feed on the produce from the land of the sinner (קצירו)?
- c. Even if we assume that the sinner loses control over his property, than anyone could partake of it, not just the hungry. Why then does the author stress רעב יאכל? Can he for some good reason assume that others would forgo such opportunity to appropriate free produce?
- d. Why did the author overload this colon with the word אשר? The word is awkward or superfluous. Indeed, the colon reads more smoothly without it, and better fits the 3-3-3 structure.

A review of standard English translations shows that they essentially translate קצירו רעב "his harvest the hungry eats" (KJV, NKJV, NASB, RSV, Webster, Young, Darby, ASV, NJPS); that is, the harvest of the sinner is consumed by hungry others. While there is general agreement on understanding קצירו רעב יאכל, the preceding word אשר caused some discomfort, leading to the following variants: KJV, Webster, Young, Derby, JPS -- "whose"; NKJV -- "because"; NASB, JB and RSV omit אשר; and, NJPS -- "may." The awkwardness of אשר seems to have compelled the Septuagint to read קצרו ("they harvested") instead of MT קצירו ("his harvest"), and the Peshitta to read קצר. Thus, according to the Septuagint קצרו אשר = "what they (i.e. the sons) have reaped," and according to the Peshitta "His harvest." The Septuagint's reading is adopted by a long *catena* of scholars (Mendelssohn, Bickel, Budde, Dillmann., Driver and Gray, Ehrlich, Tur Sinai, Horst, etc.).

The Septuagint also indicates some discomfort with the term רעב. It replaces it with *dikaioi* (צדיק) in an effort to create balance with אויל ("sinner") in 5,3 (cf. Prov 10,21), or harmonize with 27,17. Saadiah understood רעב not as a class of people but rather as a state of being hungry. He translates קצירו רעב יאכל "For he eateth his seedcorn out of hunger."⁵ This would bring to mind the dire fate of the sinner, whose stored harvest from the previous season would be insufficient to feed him till the next season. Eating out of desperation his seedcorn, he seals his chance for survival. This situation, dreaded by any farmer, is quite realistic. Unfortunately, it does not agree with the rest of the verse, "and taketh it from amidst the thorns. His strength is wasted by thirst," as Saadiah translates.

Now, the hungry could glean and gather among the sheaves as Ruth did (Ruth 2,7). However, for the hungry to partake in what was reaped, as in the MT, requires the obvious availability of a situation in which such an unusual affair would occur. Both Rashi and Ibn Ezra feel compelled to fill in this void. Rashi could not imagine the sinner being divested of the produce of his land by hungry people. Consequently, he conjures a situation in which the sinner dies and those shortchanged by him are then restituted from the estate. Similarly, Ibn

⁵ Saadiah Ben Joseph Al-Fayyumi, *The Book of Theodicy. Translation and Commentary on the Book of Job* (trans. L.E. Goodman) (New Haven, 1988) 191. Saadiah explains: I rendered קצירו as 'his seedcorn,' as in "the seedcorn of the Nile, its grain" (Isa 23,3). And I rendered מצנים 'thorns' as in "as thorns (צנינים) in your sides (Num 33,55)," referring to thorn bushes as thorns.

Ezra (and Ralbag) could not envision hungry just feeding on what belongs to the sinner, so he contrives his own unrealistic scenario, in which the hungry and weak are able to overpower the sinner and take away what he harvested. It seems that Maimonides understood 5,5a as referring to a glutton, having excessive desire for eating and drinking.⁶ Metzudot also had difficulty with the specific term רעב so he enlarged the scope - ויתאוה לו - אשר ירעב (“he who is hungry and who desires”). Obviously, having in the text לו ויתאוה “and who desires” would have included all the categories and even eased the problem with אשר, however that is not the case.

With respect to אשר קצירו רעב יאכל, modern scholarship tends to follow the Peshitta in dropping אשר (Gordis, Pope, etc.). However, otherwise interpretation of Job 5,5a does not seem to significantly differ from that found in standard English translations.⁷ The following are instances of some unique understandings. Tur-Sinai revocalizes רעב (reading *ra'ab* instead of *ra'eb*) and anthropomorphizes it, translating “What they harvest famine eateth.”⁸ Gordon shows his ambivalence by translating רעב יאכל “will eat the hungry exploited by him, or the hungry beduins who attack the settled areas to plunder” (cf. Ps 27,35-36)⁹ Habel discerns mythological allusions, “That the Hungry One would consume his harvest,” where the “Hungry One” is Mot.¹⁰ Hacham explains that no one guards the fields of the sinner. Anyone who wishes comes and eats his produce; i.e. it becomes abandoned property.¹¹ Wolfers understands 5,4-5 as describing the downfall of the foolish by man-mediated disaster. He says, “‘Their’undoing is in the ‘gate’ where human justice is dispensed, and their harvest eaten by the hungry rather than blasted by blight. This is the effect of a חרם (“ban”) in the spirit of Ezra x 8.”¹² Horst has “Was ‘sie geerntet’, aß der Hungerleider.”¹³ Ehrlich explains, “Was die Kinder geerntet haben, verzehrt irgendeiner, der durch Frevel des Vaters un sein ganzes Vermögen gekommen, sodass er Hunger leiden musste.”¹⁴ In Fohrer’s view, “Dann haben sich gierige Menschen auf ihren Besitz gestürzt und ihn mit allem Ertrag ihrer Arbeit an sich gerissen, wie hungerige und durstige Beduinen plündern.”¹⁵

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Certainly, the meaning of אשר קצירו רעב יאכל is less than obvious. That the verse describes a more ominous situation than suggested by the translation of Driver and Gray, “That which they have reaped the hungry eateth/ and their sheaf the poor taketh/ and the thirsty draweth from their well,”¹⁶ has already been suggested by the Targum. Its translation

⁶ M. Maimonides, *The Guide for the Perplexed* (Trans. M. Friedlander) (New York, 1956) 270.

⁷ The NLT translation “Their harvests are stolen” stands out in its deviation from the MT. However, it highlights the dissatisfaction with רעב.

⁸ N.H. Tur Sinai, *The Book of Job. A New Commentary* (Jerusalem, 1957) 94.

⁹ Sh.L. Gordon, ספר איוב (Tel-Aviv, ND) ad loc.

¹⁰ N.C. Habel, *The Book of Job* (Philadelphia, 1985) 136. He also assumes that the “Thirsty Ones” and “thorns” are also forces of destruction associated with the “Hungry One” (Mot).

¹¹ A. Hacham, ספר איוב (Jerusalem, 1981) 38-39.

¹² D. Wolfers, “A note on Job V:3.” *VT* 43,2 (1993) 275.

¹³ F. Horst, *Hiob*, Vol. 1 (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1968) 27.

¹⁴ A.B. Ehrlich, *Randglossen zur Hebräischen Bibel*, Vol VI. Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag (1968) 196.

¹⁵ G. Fohrer, *Das Buch Hiob* (Gütersloh, 1963) 147.

¹⁶ S.R. Driver, and G.B. Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Job* (Edinburgh, 1964) 51

הון ("Whose harvest the hungry will devour and warriors will carry it off with implements of war, and robbers will plunder their herds") obviously depicts a raid by marauders.¹⁷ Indeed, a careful analysis of the micro-context shows that Eliphaz alludes in 5,3-6 to a sequence of events that resemble Job's disasters in Chapters 1 and 2, albeit with a significant accusatory twist.¹⁸ As in the case of Job in these chapters, Eliphaz also describes a successful man; sudden attack from the desert; demise of sons; and, loss of property.¹⁹ However, now the disasters happen to the cursed sinner.²⁰ Eliphaz observes the sinner prospering and becoming entrenched. He derides this unjust success, cursing the sinner's abode (and its beauty?). Suddenly, the sinner's sons are attacked at the gate and no one can help them.²¹ Arab attackers plunder his harvest, taking it from the hidden stashes, panting as the thirsty in the effort. How can this understanding be textually justified? In 5,3 the sinner's status is described by the Hiphil of the root שרש, he is "taking root" = משריש, indicating establishment and growth. Naturally, Eliphaz does not approve of this state of affairs. His natural reaction is to curse the sinner (perhaps, under his breath) and his house/success: ואקוב נהו.²² Using the word נהו he cleverly refers to both of its meanings: "dwelling" and "beauty." The last word, פתאם = "suddenly," should be attached to the following verse. It describes how the following disasters happened. As it was with Job, the calamities come out of the blue.

¹⁷ C. Mangan, *The Targum of Job* (Collegeville, 1991) 31.

¹⁸ A. Lo, *Job 28 as Rhetoric. An Analysis of Job 28 in the Context of Job 22-31* (VTSup 97; Leiden, 2003) 173. Lo finds that Job 5,2-7 and 27,13-23 share the following notions: calamities will fall on the offspring of the wicked; and, the wealth of the wicked will be gone and taken away by others.

¹⁹ Habel, 136. Habel observes, "Eliphaz does not refer directly to Job's fate, yet the ambiguity of the poetic language allows Job to interpret Eliphaz' comments as allusions to the sudden destruction of family, dwelling, harvest and wealth (1,13-19)." It is notable that in 5,6 Eliphaz mentions עפר and אדמה, which parallel אפר (2,8) and ארץ (1,20), as well as the friends' expression of sorrow by throwing עפר (2,12) and sitting on ארץ (2,13). Similarly, עמל in 5,7 links with 3,20. These parallels are further indications that Eliphaz intended 5,3-7 to be suggestive of Job's story though carrying his counter-argument.

²⁰ Hoffman, Y. *A Blemished Perfection. The Book of Job in Context*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press (1996) 137. Hoffman says, "At this point, we are left with no alternative but to interpret the general remarks uttered by Eliphaz earlier on the subject of evil-doers (5,1-5, 15,20-25) as in fact alluding to Job himself." Similarly, Andersen considers 5,4 a "cruel reference to Job 1,19" (Andersen, F.I. *Job an Introduction and Commentary*. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. London: Tyndale Press (1976)).

²¹ The term שער, and in particular עיר שער, often refers to the administrative center where justice is dispensed. However, the primary meaning of שער is "gate," and could be the gate of a house or several houses (Jud 18,16-17). Andersen suggest reading "tempest" instead of "gate." This minimal emendation creates a strong thematic parallelism with Job 1,19.

²² Saadiah, 191. Saadiah explains: I translated אקוב as 'knocked at his door,' since he did not execrate him [as suggested by נקב in Lev 24,16], nor literally 'lay open his house' [as in 2Kgs 12,10]. I took the expression metaphorically ['I penetrated his house,' i.e. visited it]. Eliphaz cursing of the sinner's house disturbed commentators and caused them much perplexity (Rowley, H.H. *Job*. London: Nelson (1970) 58. Rowley provides a long list of attempts for disposing with this difficulty.). For instance, Tur Sinai says, "The sentence as it stands – 'And I cursed his habitation suddenly, rushly' – is obscure: if the fool's habitation is in ruins because I, the speaker, have cursed it, what proof is this of his assertion that his own anger will kill him?" (Tur Sinai, 94). Tur Sinai's difficulties are considerably mitigated if we realize that פתאם is an acrusis belonging to the next verse, and that the flow of logic here may be associative. I consider אקוב a curse under his (Eliphaz') breath, a personal and natural reaction, not a formal or ceremonial cursing. It is also possible to understand אקוב ("I marked"), from the root נקב. The Septuagint has "devoured" (*diaita*) for אקוב and the Peshitta "destroyed."

Suddenly the state of the sinner's sons is described by the triplet ירחקו מישע "removed from salvation," ידכאו בשער "crushed²³ at the gate (of farm or village, cf. Jud 18,16-17)," and "no rescuer."²⁴ An apt description of the aftermath of an attack by a marauding band, not unlike the events described in Job 1,14-15, and 17.²⁵

Who were these marauders? The answer can be found in 5,5a if we read it as ראש קצירו "the first of his harvest the Arab will eat". The MT אשר is, perhaps, a scribal error caused by the retention in the scribe's mind of the ר in the previous בשער. Upon discovery of the error the ר was inserted at the end of the word, or above it. Thus, אשר ==> ראש, and ראש קצירו is of the same form as ראש דברך (Ps 119,160) having the meaning "first of" (Ex 12,2; Isa 41,4,36; Eze 16,25,31; 17,4; 21,24, 26; 42,12; Prov 8,23; Ecc 3,11; Lam 2,19; 4:1). The word ערב is obtained from רעב by a simple metathesis, and in the original ערבי the י dropped out by haplography because of the י in the following יאכל.²⁶ Altogether the suggested emendations are rather mild and easily conceivable, and the resulting text presents a *Sitz im Leben* attested to in Jud 6,3-6 and the book of Job (1,15, 17).²⁷ The Arabs were known for provisioning caravans making their way through the Arabian Peninsula and for their raids into the settlements on the desert boundary. The term ערבי as a substantive occurs in Neh 2,19 and 6,1, and the plural ערבים in Neh 4,1; 2Chr 21,16; 22,1; 26,7, and 17,11 (with an extra א).²⁸ The chronicler tells about king Jehoshaphat's success in subduing the Arabs, their banding together with the Philistines against king Jehoram, and about God helping king Uzziah against them.

Farmers who have been subject to frequent raids by marauders had to stash away their harvest in hidden and inaccessible storage. These were in the hilly areas, as we are told in Jud 6,2, the מנהרות, מערות, and מצדות. On the plain, where such places were unavailable, the

²³ The only other occurrence of the grammatical form ידכאו is in Job 34,25 where it clearly means "crushed." There is no indication in the text that Eliphaz refers to the city court in בשער. Indeed the pastoral terms that he uses, משריש, נוהו, קציר, מצנים, militate against such a perception. The only other place where ידכאו is associated with בשער is Prov 22,22 where it parallels גזל.

²⁴ In only one case (out of 17) is the phrase אין מציל used in a forensic context (Prov 14,25). In most of the cases it refers to enemies or troubles. Eliphaz' allusions may be based on the following correspondences: ירחקו מישע "removed from salvation" <==> 1,15; ידכאו בשער "crushed at the gate" <==> 1,16; and, אין מציל "no rescuer" <==> 1,7. In Job's case the נערים were the victims while in the case described by Eliphaz the victims are בנים. However, note that in 1,19 the victims are said to be נערים though they were the בנים. Is this blurring between נערים and בנים intentional?

²⁵ Tur Sinai, 64. Tur Sinai suggests that 5,2-7 is a quotation from an ancient text on Wisdom, and places it after 4,9. Thus, "those who sow trouble are as the fools, who inflict with their anger and jealousy destruction to them. With their anger they curse their house and their children, and cause them ruin and annihilation. In their folly they do not realize that this evil and trouble that they sow will not grow and produce, and even if they give birth to a child, birds of prey would snap away." This reorganization of the text, for the sake of seemingly improved flow of argument, is highly questionable.

²⁶ Pope, 42. The germ of this idea is, perhaps, implicit in Pope's observation on 5,5b and 5c. He says, "The general sense is clear, that the wealth of the wicked becomes prey to others, especially the desperate destitute ones, perhaps the Beduin who lurk on the edge of the cultivated land and seize whatever they can."

²⁷ It is possible, though rather speculative, that the author's use of the pair ערבי – אייל was intended to create an association with the Akkadian military term ^{awel} urbi, which is mentioned in Senacherib's Annals. The term refers to "irregular combatants" (Winkler) or "ambushers, attackers" (Tadmor). Whichever is the true meaning of ^{awel} urbi it would fit combatants raiding an estate. Note that the Sabeans execute a surprise and disorderly attack, as "irregulars" would. The Chaldeans execute a well-planned orderly attack, as "regulars" would.

²⁸ The term ערבי in the Bible and Akkadian documents means "nomad, steppe dweller" mainly in the Northern Arabian Peninsula (Isa 13,20; Jer 3,2).

farmer stashed away his harvest in places that were surrounded with dense thorny growth, the access to which was secret. Eliphaz uses this reality to make his point that the sinner would not be able to preserve his harvest from plunder. He will be coerced to lead the Arab to the secret entry and show him how he could take the harvest from the thorny enclosure. Thus, ²⁹מַצְנִים יִקְחֶהוּ וְאֵל means “and he (sinner) will take him (Arab) to where from the thorns (the Arab could retrieve it).” The word יִקְחֶהוּ seems to play a dual role; i.e., the text should be understood as if it were ³⁰מַצְנִים יִקְחֶהוּ, where ³¹מַצְנִים יִקְחֶהוּ is the secret passage for retrieval from the enclosure. Because the access to the hoard was torturous the Arab had to exert much effort to reach it. One is not surprised that in these circumstances the Arab panted (שָׁאָה) ³²as a thirsty (צָמָא) reaching their (sinner’s and sons’) hoard (חֵילִים).

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It is necessary now to consider the agreement of this exegesis with the macro-context, the logic of Eliphaz’ speech in Job 4 and 5. Hacham understands that Eliphaz makes the following general points: (a) Job should not despair but be confident in his uprightness (4,2-11); (b) No man is blameless (4,12-21); (c) Job’s complaint makes no sense (5,1-7); and, (d)

²⁹ The only other occurrence of צָנִים is in a handiadys with פָּחִים “snares” (Prov 22,5). Primitive snares were made of thorns. Perhaps, the dagesh in the צ is in lieu of another צ. Thus, צָנִים = צָנִים = צָנִים = “thorns” (Num 33,55; Jos 23,13; cf. Jud 2,3). Indeed, Ibn Janah translated מַצְנִים “from among thorns.” Dillmann understood מַצְנִים וְאֵל as “from (behind) thorns (a protecting thorn hedge)” (A. Dillmann, *Hiob* (Leipzig, 1891)). BDB find this very dubious. Ibn Ezra gives it the *ad hoc* meaning “a basket of thorns.” Ehrlich reads מַצְנִים “granaries” (A.B. Ehrlich, *Randglossen zur hebräischen Bibel*, Vol. VI (Leipzig, 1918)). However, מַצְנִים in Ps 144,13 is a *hapax legomenon*. Budde suggested the emendation עֲנִי יִקְחֶהוּ וְאֵל “their sheaf a poor man will take” (K. Budde, *Das Buch Hiob*, Handkommentar zum Alten Testament (Göttingen, 1913)). Driver and Gray accept this emendation, but this is graphically quite distant from MT (S.R. Driver, and G.B. Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Job* (ICC; New York, 1921)). Among the various emendations for מַצְנִים יִקְחֶהוּ וְאֵל are צָנִים יִקְחֶהוּ “and as to their wealth barbs will take it” (Beer, Bevan), וְאֵל צָנִים יִקְחֶהוּ “and shriveled sheaf will he take” (BHS), וְאֵל צָנִים יִקְחֶהוּ “and their substance the starving will seize” (Tur-Sinai), etc. Gordis (54) accepts Tur-Sinai’s reading. Pope (40) gives the free interpretation “snatching it among the thorns.” Closest to our understanding of the text is Dhorme’s emendation מַצְפְּנִים (“hiding places”) (E. A. Dhorme, *Commentary on the Book of Job* (London, 1967)).

³⁰ The specific nuance of שָׁאָה “gasp, pant, pant after, long for” that commentators have adopted depends on how the following צָמִים was understood by them. However, a secondary meaning of שָׁאָה is “crush, trample upon.” If צָמִים reflects the physical weakness of those that fast (Ps 109,24), then 5,5c could be a description of the carnage inflicted by the Arab, “and he will trample as (those weakened by) fasting their wealth.” The damage from marauding bands was often more in the senseless carnage than in plunder. Perhaps the Author intended the reader to independently infer this secondary image. The Targum’s וְיִבְזֹזוּ “and they will plunder” appears interpretative.

³¹ The meaning of צָמִים has been considered by BDB as doubtful. It has been understood to mean: (1) “robbers, pirates, freebooters,” perhaps because these men wore their hair long (from צָמָה = “veil,” Isa 47,2; Cant 6,7), so Targum, Ralbag, KJV; (2) “young women with veils” (*apud* Ibn Ezra); (3) “snare, trap” (Job 18,9), so BDB, Budde, Bevan, NKJV; (4) צָמִים = צָמָאִים (for cases of missing א cf. Gen 23,24; Job 1,21, 32,18; 2Kgs 13,6; Jer 32,35; 1Kgs 21,29; Eze 28,16; 1Sam 28,24; Jud 4,19; etc.), so Symmachus, Peshitta, Vulgate, Ibn Ezra, and most modern scholars; (5) “fasters,” from צָוִם “to fast, avoid food” (cf. Isa. 58,3), so Rashi; (6) “lean” from צָמָה “constrict, contract, famished,” so Gordis; (7) “hungry and thirsty” as in Akkadian *sum am u*, so Tur-Sinai; (8) “schemer,” extension of “trap” to “trapper, schemer,” so NASB.

³² Some manuscripts have חֵילִים instead of חֵילִים (cf. BHS).

Piety has its rewards (5,8-27).³³ While this structure suggests a tight logic, it is not readily obvious how 5,1-7 fits its rubric. In Clines' view Eliphaz takes the position that Job's complaint makes no sense because Job's suffering is self-generated. He understands the logic of the passage thus: "Appeal to the 'holy ones' by Job is futile because Job's suffering is self-produced and therefore cannot be alleviated by any external agency (v. 1). An illustration of self-produced suffering is provided by the fool who not only brought upon himself his own destruction but also caused the destruction of his property and his children (vv. 3-5). The principle of man-produced suffering is finally spelled out in gnomic fashion (vv. 6f)."³⁴ This train of thought is certainly satisfactory, but unfortunately does not agree with v. 5, a verse which Clines does not discuss at all. Despite the enigmatic nature of Job 5,5 it seems that the אִיִּל loses some of his possessions, though the reason for the loss and the means by which it occurred are not clear. Was it because of anger and jealousy? If yes, then one would expect the illustration in some way highlight these elements of the adage. But neither anger nor jealousy/zeal are mentioned in v. 3-8, or are they implied.

It seems that 5,1-2 refers to a potential outburst upon realizing and internalizing mankind's fate, "crushed before their Maker, beaten from morning till evening, without notice forever lost. As the tent cord they are pulled, they die without gaining wisdom" (4,19-21).³⁵ One might have well asked: "Why is this the fate of mankind?" Eliphaz suggests in 5,1-2 that this is not a question that anyone is capable of answering, nor is it wise to get worked up about it and become aggravated. At this point, using word association (אִיִּל), Eliphaz tells of his experience with an אִיִּל, which substantially parallels that of Job.³⁶ That we have here a separate unit is indicated by the *inclusio* formed by the word אִיִּל in v. 3 and v. 8. The implication of Eliphaz' experience is that Job *ipso facto* sinned and has no reason to complain.³⁷ Consequently, Eliphaz gives Job two answers: (a) no one can explain the troubled fate of mankind; and, (b) in Job's particular case, his predicament was caused by his own sin (v. 6). The concluding vv. 7-8 refer to these two answers: v. 7 to answer (a),³⁸ and v. 8 to answer (b). We see that the exegesis on Job 5:5, which has been suggested in this study, naturally fits the micro and macro contexts of Eliphaz' speech.

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In conclusion, it seems that the proverbial character of 5,2 misled many into considering 5,1-8 a proverb and an illustration of its validity. However, this approach resulted in forced

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³³ Hacham, 28.

³⁴ D.J.A. Clines, "Job 5.1-8: A New Exegesis", *Bib* 62,2 (1981) 194.

³⁵ I read: מְדוּכָאִים לִפְנֵי עֹשֶׂם מְבַקֵּר לְעֶרֶב יָכְתוּ וְסִיכָאוּ מִלִּפְנֵי עֹשֶׂם מְבַקֵּר לְעֶרֶב יָכְתוּ. This is based on a loss of מ by haplography. For the concept of "their Maker" (עֹשֶׂם) see 4,17.

³⁶ Wolfers, 275. Wolfers correctly says that in the passage 5,2-7 "Surely, what is being discussed is the appropriate strategy in the circumstances which Eliphaz assumes Job to have encountered," rather than the clichés of the wisdom school.

³⁷ Clines, 187. Clines suggests that appeal to the "holy ones" is futile "because Job is caught by the sin-punishment nexus and no one – not, perhaps, even God – has the power to interfere in the working of that law."

³⁸ T.K. Cheyne, "Job V. 7", *ZAW* 11 (1891) 184. Cheyne translates v. 7 "Man is born to trouble and the fiery ministers of punishment are ever flying on high, ready to descend on the guilty man." I prefer the more mundane observation "Man is born to trouble, just as sparks fly up."

and unsatisfactory interpretations of the passage. The approach that I suggest redirects the theme of this passage from an excursion on a trivial Wisdom adage to a significant comment on the main Job theme -- man's fate and Job's unjust suffering. In this framework, Eliphaz masterfully conveys to Job his suspicions that Job may have sinned by means of an *ipso facto* argument, and tries to guide him to submission through normative piety.