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When God Turns to a "Terrible Monster": An Androcentric Reading of Job's Wife in Job 2:10[673]

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ABSTRACT

*The wife of Job has been imagining as a demon or satanic agents or instrument for the destruction of job's faith in Yahweh. The woman says less but means more than a thousand words to her interpreters. Therefore, I am employing the following methods to de-*marginalize her; *the first mode of reading, which could be called a sociological reading, has its focus behind the text. The second, which could be called a literary reading, has its focus on the text. Therefore, the researcher argues that she never said what many are saying she said and what she requested her husband to do was sincerity from the heart which is good.*

[673] This paper is been prepared in honor of Dr. Hassan Musa for both his birthday and his contributions to the scholarship of the Old Testament Book of Job. As his student I cannot stop thanking God for meeting such an African critical thinker whose work I strongly believe will shape the world of biblical scholarship both in Africa and beyond. You help me! To imagine life and somehow sometimes I over-imagine and I wish you forgive me for not really swimming just in the river you taught me how to swim. The strange rivers are presently showing their faces in this paper but not withstanding I know you will understand me. You are a blessing in ECWA Theological Seminary Kagoro for your gracious lectureship especially the Book of Job! You lead me to critical views of Job and continue to honor you for given me direction in the world of biblical scholarship.

INTRODUCTION

God is not all times God.[674] The God we are serving has no stable face, therefore, he is not our want as human but maybe he is our need. Sometimes the loving God turns to a hating beast, sometimes the lifesaving God could turn to a vampire who kills and seeks to kill, sometimes the healing God turns to the giver of sicknesses, God the liberator could at times be God the incarcerator. God who smiles also frowns; God who laughs also gets angry. We are to get used to his faces because is possible for our good. The question is if you experience his dark face of the unbearable moment will you behave and be polite, better than Job's wife? Most of us are comfortable with the light sight of God and wish Job's wife should dance the beating drum of her hypocrite's husband who insincerely asserts that "should we take good from God and not evil." And I wish I could tell Job that we have sign neither good nor evil with God. Life with God is not a contract of good and evil but that seems to be what Job told his wife. In the process of the conversational reality with the practical reality when life moves, it seems Job imagines that he too has signed no contract of good and evil. If God gives us good, is not an agreement that he must inflict us with bad or evil, however, Job understood the wife late, I think.

[674] Most at times, he (God) seems to be Devil himself by playing the role of Satan especially in the ways we have categorizes Satan to be in our lives. The way we are categorizing the works of Satan, sometimes comparing God to Satan is very easy and flexibly balance. The fact is that not all times we imagine God to be God because he often fall into the events we thought only Satan should involve in doing. The biblical writers define God base on their experience not just their theoretical imaginations that could be often contrary to the experience. It is true that mainly we don't understand God when some things happen to us, we should not think God has disappointed us instead of seeing it as part of God plans

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THE MISREPRESENTATIVES AND MISINTERPRETERS OF JOB'S WIFE

The woman has been re-author for centuries or decades as devil's incarnate without taking time to imagine who she was. Her re-authors judge her to make her husband perfect. She was painted as an evil and dangerous woman, who is a bad model for married women. What I am going to argue here is the fact that her husband, her translators, her preachers, her teachers disappointed her and many are still disappointing her and even I also was disappointing her before and because I marginalized her out of ignorance but now I realized the level of sincerity and faithfulness she had toward her husband who was the root of her marginalization.

The silence of most of the commentators is the fact of continue marginalization of her sincere speech toward an unfriendly husband and God.

Christian's leaders who have been viewing this faithful woman wrongly are the following church fathers eg. Augustine misinterprets her as the (diabolic adjutrix) "devil's assistant", Calvin called her "Satan's apparatus,[675] for the destruction of her husband. Abnormal thing is that even feminist who usually emancipate the stories of the bible out of male-centered interpretation is not even seen any sense in giving her the voice she requires.

Her husband marginalized her presence for calling her a fool; translators wrongly translated her six Hebrew words. Preachers preach about her as a good example of a bad wife, teachers teach about her as a good example of an illiterate woman, builders teach their apprentices that she is a good example to a bad foundation.

[675] David J. Clines, *Job 1–20* (WBC 17; Dallas: Word, 1989), 51.

JOURNEY TOWARD FAITHFUL INTERPRETATION JOB'S WIFE

The only faithful reading that can recover the life of the ordinary powerful women is behind the text kind of reading. It is the type of reading that looks at the general life of the ordinary people from their context in general not the context of the recorded word itself. The understanding of the Job's wife speech can only clearly be seen in the perspectives of their ancient context not our modern kind of the context because of the contextual overview of the women from their ancient background.[676]

The women in the ancient near eastern world usually involved in the socialization and education of their children and even household economic activities. [677] Therefore, even the wife of Job should be more responsive to the level of the categories characters of women describes or analyzes above. The role of her did not capture as she supposes to be capture.

Why? Because she was not the only woman that the Old Testament scribes were neither interested nor marginalizing her stories, by silencing her and only captured where they thought she could sound problematic. The Old Testament, generally speaking, does not mention the role of women, but is not really as interested in their stories as it was of the men. Therefore, the scribal writers of the Old Testament seem to be unqualified sincerely to the women stories especially that of Job's wife.

As scholars noted that "the old testament and the religion of which it tells, is male originated, male-focused and probably anti-

[676] Carol Meyers, *Discovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988):142-149.

[677] Gerald West, "Hearing Job's wife: towards a feminist reading of Job" *Old Testament Essays* 4 (1991): 111.

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women."[678] It is senseless, for someone to say that the society descript within the Old Testament is not patriarchal kind of society because is obvious even to the blind that women are not that interested in the biblical writers and it seems even the God behinds the inspiration of the writers. I am personally sorry for Job's wife because she falls in the hands of those who are not interested much in their stories and only interested in the words which they make complicated beyond her imaginations. The scriptures recognize women but significantly negative sometimes and sometimes insignificantly positive. [679]

In corresponding to such an outstanding role of women and Job's wife verdict, Gerald West argues vividly as it supposed to be that; If Job's wife did indeed play such a crucial role in the life of this large and prosperous household, it is understandable why she is the first to address Job and why she addresses him as she does (Job 2:9). Their customary equality or interdependence and their complementary household functions would have meant that she had every right and reason to question him concerning his responsibility for their economic, familial, and religious plight.[680]

Therefore, can I say West looked at what Job wife said as a negative kind of assertion which came out of suffering and unbearable pains of losing? The main thing here is that She may-be saying it out of pains but nothing negatively wrong about her statement she fittingly right to confront the sincere condition with the sincere words that Job could not comprehend from the beginning but did later when it was late. She should be taking as been sincere and open to her husband than any

[678] T. Desmond Alexander & David W. Baker., eds., Dictionary of the Old Testament Pentateuch (Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 897-898.

[679] They are significantly negative like in (Deut. 22:22, 25-27, Exodus 22:16 Deut. 24:1), and insignificantly positive like in (Exodus 15:2021, 35-36, Deut. 22:28-29, Exo. 21:2-11, 22, Num. 30:1-15, Deut. 22:22 etc). If carefully considering the following passages above could clearly explain to you as a person and as a group how insignificantly positive and significantly negative the scriptures used women in the Old Testament.

[680] West, "Hearing Job's wife: towards a feminist reading of Job" 112

person in the whole book even God was not that upon to Job as the wife did.

It should be stated here that she seems to visualize the fact that Job will soon realize that the complex feeling of holding both his integrity and bless God because either him (Job) or God himself must be guilty at this point.[681] According to neither clines, Job was in the in-between kind of reality because at the end he neither bless nor curses God.[682] Let me not over-imagine here but the reality is that cursing the day of the birth which he did (Job 3), is tantamount to cursing the maker of both the day and himself, therefore unless someone created that day apart from God and even if someone did then Job technically curse that person either knowingly or unknowingly, which David Cline did not think so but he prefers in-between kind of viewing Job, but I preferred being sincere like my sister Job's wife did.

JOB'S WIFE'S CONDITION

She is more miserable as a mother than her husband. The first test of God was on her directly not really her husband. The first test only touched her husband indirectly, that was why he has the wrong respond toward the test, not like a wife that made a responsible response. She could not imagine losing her children in the hands of a terrible and heartless God, who was once kind and loving toward her and her family. Everyone has to know that her children have no part two for her to say she is hopeful. God stroke her to look so hopeless and low among her friends in the community. Who knows, maybe she was dismissed as an African witch at this moment, one that ate her children and wanted to kill her husband. None will ever think that God ate her children not her. She could not be imagining this heartless God who kills the children that she did not only suffered to conceived them as a mother but also suffered to raise them up to become more

[681] Ibid. West, 116.

[682] Clines, *Job 1–20, 52*.

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human in society. She has no monster anywhere except their family God who now lack familiarity.

Job's wife could not really construct and imagine her loss memory of her loving God who is her worst enemy now. The devil she knows is God and the hell she understands is her God-given condition. God appears to be the source of her problem. She is struggling with the imaginative dilemma of the unreliability of once-reliable God of her family. She imagines God to bethink less to have introduced a lucky game that affected her entire life without putting her in the scene as well. The hopelessness of her hope is truly hopeless because she has no one to turn to for survival and protection since the reliability (God) is no more unreliable. She does not have an option than to rely on Death that dismisses her from existence instead of the monster called "God". Suicide seems to be her only option because not just the world that is against her even heaven is not in her side. The main problem to her plausibly is that God is not punishing her for wrongdoing but for the right doing. She could not perceive and fathom such a God who claims righteousness and love justice is punishing them. She could not imagine how foolish is her husband who still trusting God who was once loving but presently heartless. How can a God who makes her hopeless be dependable? That is impossible, not even hereafter.

The game of luck which God is playing with Satan is unbearable to her because God should have a reason beyond the husband. This game of luck between God and Satan about the sincerity of her husband really tested her faith, not the husband's faith. The God who supposes to solve the problem and calamities in her life is now the giver of the same problem and calamities in her life. I am imagining that the lesser feelings of this woman are not just to give off on this heartless and terrible being "God" plausibly to eliminate this monster "God" from existence. None can over-imagine the emotional, psychological and spiritual struggling of these woman's imaginations over her pains with this kind God. The main problem is not the existence of evil to her but the existence of the being who is the cause of evil. No one knows which is plausible she could have thought of

murdering this God or get someone who is powerful enough for this murder mission for the elimination of God.

The suggestions of this woman to her husband are out of serious emotional (that what happen is unbearable) psychological (that she cannot reason clearly about what is going on with her) spiritual (she cannot imagine putting her faith and rely upon her God any longer). This woman pain is holistic in nature. The husband seems to be heartless toward her feelings and dismisses her to a *Nabal* which means like a foolish woman's words. Humanly speaking Job is more of *Nabal* than his wife for trusting and relying on the heartless monster call (God). Presently to the wife of Job an old family friend is now a fresh-looking enemy she cannot fathom. The reality is, it is foolishness to the core to still depend on your enemies for survival which Job's wife understood, and Job was sarcastically ignorance about. Job prefers the game of hypocrisy before God. While his wife struggled to see how she could pen down reality as it is without mixing words. She is confused about who to turn to for survival since her children are dead; her husband is unfavorably thinkable and presently is as good as dead because of the sickness. She is now the hope of the husband instead of her husband is her hope in this present condition. Where can I go? Is her unavoidable question! Who will save me? Is her powerless question but she has neither a turning nor saving ground, therefore, left hopeless?

JOB'S INTEGRITY UNDER-FIRE AND HIS WIFE'S RESPONSE

It seems to be what God was arguing with God and the theology of the narrator wired toward the integrity of Job that put him into such unbearable pains and regrets. Must scholars connect the woman question with the assertions of Yahweh in Job 2:3c that "that he still holds fast his integrity despite you (the Satan)[683] moved me to destroy

[683] The Satan in the book of Job is not the kind of Satan that was painted in the Old Testament. The Satan here is not just a name but a "verb" which means "the accuser." the Satan here is one of the angels of the Lord who his mission is to accuse the men and women to see how faithful they are in the side of God. It

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him without caused," hmm! Can someone move God against his willful actions; however, the narrator imagines so. That God is just like a mortal being, seduce if you bring a sensible case. The case of Satan makes more sense, to seduce God to put Job integrity into crisis. God thought he was testing Job's integrity, but his own integrity was in serious crisis because none will rely on God that is so complex to the extent that he does not just punish the evil men but also good men.

A lot of people think she is telling Job to disrupt his integrity. It should be asserted here that this is not the case. Why? It is positive questions that she asked Job, not negative as many of us may be imagining. It is problematic for Job to blame God faithfulness toward his condition. It is needful to say that Job's conditions also put but God faithfulness and Job's faith under fire. Job's problematically put God in problem for still holding his blameless imaginative service to the Lord and still passing through a blamable condition which everyone has the right to blame him. The meaning of the question, which the woman asked Job, is that you don't insist on your integrity with God well these things are happening with you.

THE MEANING OF "*BARUCH ELOKHIM, VE MO*"

The argument is clear now that we really want Job's wife to vomit our minds not her mind in our quest of translating the following words *"Baruch Elokhim, vemos,*" the translation of this word for centuries has always rendered "curse "God and die." Many think that the term "Baruch Elokim" is a colloquial expression for "Curse God". This fits with other texts and Job's own response which is to chastise her as "foolish" (*Navel*)."[684] The interpreters of the Hebrew

can also mean one of the lord angels who usually carried out the role of accusing believers. In fact, any person can play the role of "the Satan" anyone can be "the Satan" because if you are an accuser of brethren then you are "the Satan."

[684] The Book of Job, part 5: Job's wife – did she bless or curse *Alexander Goldberg*https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/belief/2010/jul/26/judaism-job-philosophy. p

phraseology *"Baruch Elokhim," do* not really take it literally but preferably follow the translation of the Masoretic texts which is translated Curse "God and die." It is also possible, however, that *Baruch* contains both the meanings "curse" and "blessing" in its semantic range, the fabulous unavoidable that takes the word literally is that she says "Bless God" not the other negative way round. It will take a blindly kind of argument for anyone to literally turn the "*Baruch*" to the word curse instead of a blessing. No one sees something good about this our loving and caring sister/mother (some because of this translation by the biblical scholars who are insisted that she really mean "curses God." Many who think they are translating this statement base on the context, because the translators of "Curse God" are re-imagining that the woman cannot really say "Bless God" at this kind of situation, so she must have said "curse God." The translation is a complete presupposition of the translators in struggling to paint the woman as evil as possible. Despite the LXX which has a long reading of her speech also seems to imagine her to ask her husband to curse God and die when it stated that she said to her husband " say some word against the Lord and die."[685]

Some look at what the wife says as a wifely kind of advice to the husband in agony.[686]

Her advice wanted to serve the very purpose of Satan and to bring that satanic purpose into fulfilment. However, her suggestive advice was not with any evil intention and really just to see her husband's pain and degradation ended Wilson, *Job*, 32. but also to show Job that whatever the situation it is needful to die peacefully with your creator. It also seems that the agitated response of Job demonstrates the fact that he refuses to act foolishly[687] as his wife has acted for asking him

[685] John E. Harley, *The Book of Job,* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), 82.

[686] Gerald H. Wilson, *Job.* Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007, 31.

[687] Daniel J. Estes, *Handbook on the Wisdom Books and Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishers, 2005), 34.

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(Job) to cause God and die as Masoretes insisted. David Mckenna asserts that Job's wife[688] seriously passed through hell especially seeing hero ridiculed by rowdies is more than what she can bear or take. He furthers see the cursing God which Job wife asked her husband to do is tantamount to merciful death[689] today and that seems to be true if she really told her husband to do so and he agrees that we can joint her husband by singing the song of her foolishness but not really evil.[690] It should plainly assert here that she marginalizes scholars thought she is a fool but not an evil woman at all. Notwithstanding, you are allowed to dismiss her as a fool or evil but I don't think she deserves any of the two, even if she really told her husband to curse "God" who is now playing the role of both "the Satan" and the terrible monster.

The woman speeches are more of telling her husband not just literally saying "bless God" but also say your farewell and amend your ways peacefully with God before you die. I do not think, she is in any way telling Job to commit suicide, but she is rather saying his situation is deathly and is dead calling and maybe he may not survive it, so he should say his blessed prayer to God before he dies. It is very important to note, the outstanding remembering of Job's wife to her husband condition. We should all remember to "bless God" before we die in this world as human beings. Nothing wrong to bless your creator before you die, if you think, you cannot survive your chronic condition, because is a privilege and Job's wife fully understood. It should be stated here that her words are neither negatives words to

[688] The name of this woman in Targum is Dinah because Dinah also acted foolishly in (Gen. 34:1-10), Testament of Job her name is Sites. John E. Harley, *The Book of Job,* 82.

[689] This is the kind of death that you take someone life or asked a Doctor to do because of the kind of suffering that person is passing through. It can also connote you take your life by yourself to save your parents, relatives or friend from suffering for the sake of your condition.

[690] David McKenna, *Master The Old Testament, Vol.12: Job*(London: Word Publishing, 1986), 46.

God nor Job himself because he understood later round at the late hour, how right his wife was.

The acknowledgement of Job in Job 42:1-6 was just his ignorance against the will of God but also against his wife, and to be blunt with you, the wife needs an apology from Job for calling her a fool which none of us knows whether Job did at this his humble and sincere stage. It is now reasonable to know that Job realized at the end that his words are foolish not that of his wife because he speaks foolishly without understanding (42: 2-3). Job's wife speech seemed to be tantamount to Elihu, no wandered God called other friends like Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar to repentance but accept Job's wife and Elihu and make Job an intercessory priest Just to please him for all he has been seduced to led him passed through. Maybe God should also repent to both Job's friends and Job with his (God) sacrifices so that he could be forgiving by Job's wife friends and Job himself. Notwithstanding, he technically repented for showing such a terrible face because "the Satan" seduced/moved him to do so, by providing all that Job has a loss in his (God) game of luck with Satan.

CONCLUSION

I wish God would have to tell Job to apologize for calling her a *Nabal*(fool), and to applause, her, for been sincere to the situation and refuse to dance the beating drum of hypocrisy which he wanted her to! However, in the end, she understands as Job also did that the existence of evil either through divine permission or divine causing, is never the endpoint of tremendous blessings. However, what matter how "terrible monster" God may seem to be to your condition like Job's wife, don't forget the (God) can also be "tremendous good." Notwithstanding, God knows he appears terrible at times so be sincere like Job's wife and confront him and tell him your sincere heart like Psalmist (Psalm 22). Job's wife was not in her birthdays but in her bad days.