

MY SERVANT'S AND MY MAIDSERVANT'S RIGHT (An Exegetical Study of the Text of Job 31: 13-15)

GHEORGHE ȘCHIOPU-CONSTANTIN

Abstract. Job 31: 13-15 refers to Job's attitude toward the right of his slaves. As an act of honor, stemming from the sense of honor and respect for created beings, Job accepted to go to court with his slaves when they accused him. In these verses, we can see how a master of slaves, clothed in the clothes of righteousness and fairness (Job 29:14), responds to their allegations with respect and, at the same time, obeys the sentence in the courtroom, even though it might be unfavorable.

Keywords: Job, Slaves, Rights, Judgment, Honor and Shame, Justice and Respect.

Introduction

Job 31: 13-15 was viewed with great attention by the theologians, being considered at the beginning of the 20th century an unmatched reference point on social debt in antiquity ethics. In the early 1960s, the tendency to idealize the perspective in this paragraph went so far that Job's position was considered almost unique in the ancient world, rising approximately to the same level as the New Testament ethics. In the last part of the last century, the text was astonished as one that inspired and brought a new light on the matter dealt with in the text.¹

Most researchers who supported the ethical idealism of the passage in Job 31: 13-15 based their claims on at least two perspectives: a) how Job treats his subjects from the understanding that they are like him, and not animals;² and b) Job behaves so with slaves because they consider him equal, because of their common origin³ and being humans like him, made of "the same flesh and the same blood."⁴

¹ NEVILLE, Richard W., "A Reassessment of the Radical Nature of Job's Ethic in Job XXXI: 13-15", *Vetus Testamentum* 53, no. 2 (2003): 181-200 (181).

² ANDERSEN, F.I., *Job: An Introduction and Commentary in Tyndale Old Testament Commentary*, Inter-Varsity, Leicester, 1976, 242.

³ PERDUE, Leo G., *Wisdom in Revolt: Metaphorical Theology in the Book of Job*, Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield, 1991, 185.