

**JOB'S BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS DISADVANTAGED  
PEOPLE IN SOCIETY**  
(An exegetical study of the text of Job 31:16-23)

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**Abstract.** Job 31 is a chapter that arouses both confusion and amazement. The perplexity is given by the negative-imprecative way in which, for the last time, Job defends his behaviour during his prosperity. The amazement emerges from the values that are highlighted by him, starting from the motivations and intentions, and continuing with the nature of the words and the manifested acts. Job 31:16-23 is the rendering of the way in which Job used to behave with the poor and defenseless people of society. Job's concern for the poor is a benevolent *modus operandi*, derived from a *modus vivendi* whose intrinsic motivations discover an ethic of epitomical nature in relation to the disadvantaged ones in society.

**Keywords:** Job, poor, orphan, widow, *modus operandi*, *modus vivendi*.

**Introduction**

Job 31 is the last part of a soliloquy<sup>1</sup> (Job 29-31) in which the main character rejects the accusations of his friends by asserting his innocence in the form of categorical imprecations. Tributary to the traditional view that he who performs evil receives what is evil, Job's friends have tried to convince him that his distress is a consequence of his rebellious behaviour toward God, and of his lack of sensitivity to the needs of his fellow human beings. Although he cannot explain the cause of his tragedy, Job tries to find an answer from God. In this context, chapter 31 of the book represents the petition signed and submitted by Job before the supreme court. He is convinced that only *Šadday* can answer him (Job 31:35). The way in which the defense is built is given by a series of curses by which Job denies not only the accusations made by his friends during the dialogues carried out, but also certain hypothetical attitudes, intentions or motivations, which could be hidden from others,

<sup>1</sup> PAINTER, Rick, "Cycle Theory and the Dialogue Cycle of Job." *Proceedings EGL & MWBS* (Grand Rapids, Michigan) 25, (2005): 59-68 (66-67).