

A Defense of “the Satan” as the Devil in Job and Zechariah

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Background

There are at least two modern, citable sources which make the claim that “the satan” in Hebrew, found in the books of Job and Zechariah, does not refer to the devil specifically, but rather an unknown individual who is simply labeled as “the satan”, or “the adversary” or “the accuser”; these sources are Michael Heiser in his material regarding “The Unseen Realm”, and Tim Mackie in an article for the Bible Project. There are undoubtedly other adherents and proponents of this teaching, but these are the two in focus for this paper. Tim Mackie and the Bible Project article are of primary focus, because they are the original source from which this publication was instigated. Michael Heiser and “The Unseen Realm” have been mentioned because of a citation within this paper that was written in opposition to his specific teachings regarding the phrase “the satan”; Kenneth Berding is the author of the cited piece, written in opposition to Michael Heiser’s teachings. In either case, for all intents and purposes the teachings between Michael Heiser and Tim Mackie are the same regarding “the satan”, so this paper will make reference to them interchangeably.

Through research for this publication, it was also discovered that the thesis of the opposition regarding the meaning of “the satan”, as well as defenses against such thesis, originate from scholars dating back to the 17th and 18th centuries. Published in 1857, the “Hebrew and Chaldee lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures”, written by Wilhelm Gesenius and Samuel Tregelles makes mention of other scholars’ defense of the position on “the satan” shared by Tim Mackie and Michael Heiser. It should therefore be known to the reader now, that these modern writer’s views on this position are not iconoclastic teachings (teachings that “attack cherished beliefs or institutions”) of our current age, proving long lost truths and errors hidden for millennia and obfuscated by language and translations, but are actually centuries old debates that have been attended to by the highest of linguistics scholars. Ultimately, the outcome of these scholarly debates appear to be quite decisive and conclusive regarding one of the particular positions, but this point will be saved until the end so that the content of the modern citations may be addressed first.

Original Bible Project Publication by Tim Mackie: <https://bibleproject.com/blog/book-job-whats-going/>

Kenneth Berding Article: <https://www.biola.edu/blogs/good-book-blog/2021/why-michael-heiser-is-probably-wrong-about-satan-in-the-book-of-job>

Regarding Tim Mackie's Piece for the Bible Project

To start, there are a few things worth highlighting about the piece by Tim Mackie written for the Bible Project; a few of these ideas are elaborations on points taken from the piece written by Kenneth Berding, entitled: "Why Michael Heiser is Probably Wrong about Satan in the Book of Job". It is recommended that the reader review his publication as well for further consideration, and to understand his original work on the issue. Without further adieu:

1. A major issue of irrationality exists between Tim Mackie's statements and the teachings of the text in Zechariah; at the end of his "Who is This "satan"?" section, he makes the following statement regarding "the satan"'s role before God:

"In this context, the satan is not evil or sinister. Rather, he represents the just and right accusation that Israel is guilty before God, and God counters this member of his staff by saying that Israel stands forgiven."

Key to note are the words that Mackie uses, "just" and "right"; if something is "just" and "right", then it is praiseworthy. Let us have a look at just a few Bible verses to see how the Word speaks of "just" or "right" things:

"Righteousness and justice are the foundation of thy throne; steadfast love and faithfulness go before thee." - Psalm 89:14

"When justice is done, it is a joy to the righteous but terror to evildoers." - Proverbs 21:15

"He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" - Micah 6:8

"Blessed are they who observe justice, who do righteousness at all times!"
- Psalm 106:3

In these verses, and as can be seen in many more, being "just" and "right", or doing justice and being righteous, are things that bring "joy", are directly stated as obedience to the Lord, and are the very foundations to God's throne! There can be no doubt; to do anything "just" or "right" is to do something worthy of the praise and blessing of the Lord. If this is all so, then how on earth can we read the following response of the Lord to "the satan" for his allegedly "just" and "right"

actions of accusation?

“And the Lord said to Satan, “The Lord rebuke you, O Satan! The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is not this a brand plucked from the fire?”” - Zechariah 3:2

No matter how you want to try to spin it (and attempt to spin it Tim Mackie does), there is no way of avoiding the fact that the Lord full out “rebukes” this “the satan” figure for his accusations against Jerusalem! In God’s Kingdom of liberty (James 1:25) where justice and righteousness are the foundations of His throne (Psalm 89:14), it is a full-stop contradiction to assert that a creature made by God (the “sons of God”, including “the satan”, are creatures made by God) can be simultaneously “just” and “right” while being rebuked! One of the verses cited literally says “blessed are those you observe justice ...”; what then is this “the satan” figure blessed with upon his “just” and “right” accusations of Israel according to Mackie? Rebuke?! Receiving a blessing is equal to rebuke according to Mackie, but according to scripture, such a thing cannot be. Rebuke and praiseworthiness are like oil and water; they do not mix.

In his article, Tim Mackie simply says that God “counters” this “member of his staff” by forgiving Israel; countering someone is a whole lot different than rebuke! An example of countering someone would be when David seeks to build the temple for the Lord, but the Lord counters him and tells him the task of building the temple is for his son to complete (1 Chronicles 17); no rebuking, just countering well intentioned plans by David. As seen in ample Bible verses, rebuke is only required where sin is present: “As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear.” (1 Timothy 5:20). Can you imagine the archangel Michael, a perfectly obedient and highly exalted angel, ever in dialogue with the Lord where the Lord must rebuke him?! Better yet, have a look at the verse in Jude where the archangel Michael is in dialogue with Satan; notice the parallels to Zechariah here?

“But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, disputed about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a reviling judgment upon him, but said, “The Lord rebuke you.”” - Jude 1:9

On top of all of that, for heavenly beings, the “sons of God”, there is no such thing as forgiveness (1 Peter 1:12); so, one act of disobedience deserving rebuke is the equivalent of being cast out of heaven with the devil and the other fallen angels. In other words, there is no “well, maybe this “the satan” figure was rebuked (or “countered””, but in a manner which is consistent with his role as an

adversary” to be made; rebuke is always the result of disobedience, and disobedience for heavenly beings is a one way ticket to banishment from God, and therefore banishment from being one of His upstanding “officers” as Tim Mackie tries to suggest.

Based on this simple rational assessment of Mackie’s words against scripture, it can be already concluded that there are significant problems with the concepts which Mackie is defending. He first casts a loose shadow of doubt over the classically well understood translation of “the satan”, saying the figure “is not necessarily identical” to the devil, and then proceeds to suggest an alternative understanding based on a completely logically fallacious argument when the logic is tested against the revelation of scripture. Already the credibility of the argument is severely fractured by these blunders, but let us continue on to consider a few other ideas from his publication to see if we can substantiate even more evidence of this teaching being amiss.

2. As already alluded to in the first point made, we start to see glimmers of light of a very significant issue with the ideas presented when we see attempts made to label things that are worthy of rebuke as “just” or “right”; at the core of such a fallacy is actually the reality that good is being called evil, and evil being called good. If we continue this line of biblically logical thinking to its further degree of implications, then we actually end up with a scenario, again, based on the arguments Mackie presents, that implicates God directly of doing evil himself. This reality is especially made clear when we consider the figure “the satan”’s interactions with God and Job in the book of Job.

As Mackie himself acknowledges and asserts, Job is stated to be a “blameless” and “upright” man; let us consider for a moment what this actually means. We know from other scriptures that all men are born dead in their sins and are evil from their youth until the Lord performs a spiritual work in them (Genesis 8:21, Ephesians 2:1-2), which means at a spiritual level, Job is like all other men in that he is indeed spiritually guilty of sins. In other words, Job had “the flesh” just like the rest of us. What does it mean then that Job was “blameless” and “upright”?

Simply stated, it means that he was not guilty of any sins meriting the chastisement or discipline of the Lord; every day we all have uncountable sins that flutter through our hearts and minds, either blasphemy directed at God or unjust anger or lusts directed at our neighbors. Thankfully for all of us, since God is a merciful and gracious God, He does not deal with us on a one-to-one basis for every little sinful desire or thought which flutters through us; in other words, we can all be eternally grateful that this saying is truly one of the Lord: “love

covers a multitude of sins” (1 Peter 4:8).

Essential to considering what we see stated about Job’s character is that there is only one being in the universe who is able to see and test our hearts and minds to assess how blameless and just they are: God. Scriptures such as Jeremiah 17:10 and 1 Samuel 16:7 directly teach that the conscience of man, otherwise known as his internal faculties, is the jurisdiction of the Lord alone; it is He alone who can see and test our hearts and minds, and therefore only He alone who determines if any chastisement or discipline is merited for the state of our internal affairs. And again, simply seeing traces of “the flesh” in us in our hearts and minds doesn’t necessarily instigate the Lord to discipline or chastisement, because He is a just and merciful God.

When the book of Job describes Job as being “upright” and “blameless”, it means that when looking into Job’s heart, the Lord sees a heart that is overwhelmingly committed and obedient to Him, not deserving of any chastisement or discipline in the Lord’s mind. In the Lord’s mind then, Job is indeed “blameless” in a very real sense; according to the scriptures previously cited, it means that Job was a “just” and righteous man, deserving of blessing and joy according to the Lord’s scales. Given what scriptures tell us about the heart of man, this is not to say that Job didn’t have internal struggles ever with sin, but rather in light of the Lord’s grace and mercy through which He looks at those whom He loves, He did not find *enough* of anything in Job to be worthy of anything but blessing, joy, and praise for his obedience.

If God was able to state that Job was “upright” and “blameless” from an internal perspective, then it means that in terms of external sins, he must have truly been immaculate in purity of his actions. Dealing with external sin is a different issue than internal sin, because external sin is primarily dealt with according to other institutions which God has ordained. God has designated priests (Matthew 18:15-20) and civil leaders (Romans 13) to deal with most external sins (see also books of Leviticus & Deuteronomy regarding Old Testament priesthood, the ceremonial system, and theonomy), and there is a key requirement to dealing with external sin: evidence. Either through spiritually ordained priestly processes, such as the test of bitter water in Numbers 5, or as based directly on the evidence of two or three witnesses (Deuteronomy 19:15), evidence must be visibly counted before a person’s external sins can be dealt with.

Therefore, if Job was “upright” and “blameless” according to the Lord Himself, the only One who can see a man’s heart and mind, then it also necessarily implicates Job of being innocent of any external sins which would cast doubt

upon his character. If Job was upright and blameless in the eyes of the Lord internally, then so too was he externally as well.

All of these considerations about the blamelessness of Job are of immense importance when considering Mackie's statements that the figure known as "the satan" being "just" or "right" in his accusations, because such statements beg us to ask the question: what evidence did this "the satan" figure have to substantiate his accusations? And, if there is no evidence to suggest blame of Job's character, can "the satan"'s accusations be in any way considered "just" or "right"?

Just as with any modern court of law, and especially with Israel and in God's courts of justice, baseless accusations without evidence have no merit or weight, and are in fact unjust and evil. In fact, modern courts recognize a crime of "defamation", closely related to "slander" and "libel", which is defined as: "the action of damaging the good reputation of someone; slander or libel." The very first thing that is made abundantly clear to us in Job is the fact that Job's character was unworthy of any charge against it; he had immaculate character, and as now has been abundantly discussed, no one could bring any just charge against it. Therefore, for "the satan" to throw baseless charges against Job towards God, attacking and accusing Job of internal issues for which "the satan" had no evidence of being the case, rather only unjust suspicion and speculation, is for "the satan" to commit defamation of Job's character, a very evil and unjust thing to do according to God's law.

Ultimately, at its core, such baseless accusations regarding a person's character are a violation of 9th commandment: "thou shall not bear false witness against thy neighbor". Without evidence, any witness against our neighbor we give is determined by God's law to be a false witness, and therefore evil; God's law is not only a law for man, but is a reflection of His divine and Holy character. Since God's character is unchanging, if a law here on earth is reflective of His "holy, holy, holy" character, then it must also necessarily be in effect for the heavens as well; it is the same law which governs His heavenly creatures. So, as has been now shown, for "the satan" to be found operating in such a manner as to defame Job's character with baseless accusations rooted in mere suspicion and speculation, is for "the satan" to be committing evil under God's divine law which governs all the heavens and the earth, and of which Christ Himself stated: "For truly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished."

Therefore, it is without a doubt that, according to the law of God, which is His character revealed to us, "the satan" presented in Job and Zechariah, cannot be

one who is seen as “just” and “right” in action in the eyes of the Lord; the actions of this “the satan” not only violate the law of the Lord, but receive the outright “rebuke” of the Lord. Such things simply could not be true of an divine “officer” who is in good standing within any divine counsel that the Lord may have.

Having now thoroughly examined the implications of Mackie’s assertions in light of the scriptures and God’s law, we can fully unravel the ideas of “the satan”’s actions as being “just” and “right”. The only way we have any moral compass to determine what is “just” and “right” is on the basis of God’s revealed Word, His law. To assert that actions of accusation which are baseless in substance or evidence are in fact “just” or “right” is to assert a complete inversion and overturning of God’s revealed Word, as we have now clearly seen in the previously cited scriptures. If the actions “the satan” in Job are to be viewed as “just” and “right”, then we in fact are saying that God is no longer the God of Bible, neither Old Testament nor New. Scripture says that God is unable to deny Himself (2 Timothy 2:11-13), which means that He is bound by what is revealed about Himself in His Word; to assert that “the satan” was acting in a “just” and “right” manner as a good agent operating in the counsel of God, is to them implicate God as denying Himself and acting against His own Word, implicating Him directly of evil for having someone in His divine council who does unjust acts, or implicating Him of being a false God and not the God of the holy scriptures revealed to man in the Bible. Obviously, these things cannot be; rather, the simple conclusion is that Mackie’s assertions are logically incorrect and to be disregarded. The God in Job is the God of the Christian Bible, and “the satan” is in fact “the devil”, as directly clarified for us in Revelations.

3. As a follow on from the conclusion from the prior point, it is now apt to point out what should be considered by Christians a major “red flag” of statements made by Mackie, namely:

“A helpful way of understanding the book of Job was offered by a Jewish scholar named Matisyahu Tsevat. He proposed that the book is exploring three claims made about God and Job, but only two can be true at the same time.”

While there is certainly no hard and fast rule that Christians cannot be aided or sharpened in their understanding of God’s Word via interactions with person’s of another religion, especially those of the scriptures of the Old Testament, the Jews, Christian’s must not forget that everyone from other religions deny that Christ is Lord, including modern Jews, and are spiritually dead in their understanding of the scriptures. They have no spiritual eyes of illumination for the

scriptures (John 14:26, Ephesians 1:8), and have no ability of truly understanding the things of God, unless they are spiritual infants in whom the Lord is willing and working to call them to repentance. Even if the latter is the case, they are infants, unable to even drink the “milk” of the Word yet until they repent, and therefore unqualified to be making confident assertions about nuanced matters of linguistics, and their implications on the spiritual teachings.

In citing a Jewish scholar as a his source for teaching the meaning of the book of Job, Mackie completely jettisons the Christian faith for his interpretation! This “Matsiyahu Tsevat” is a spiritually dead human who literally believes in a different God! Matsiyahu’s God is not the God of the New Testament; He does not believe in Christ as the truth, the Affirmer of His law, and the clarifier of how the devil is named or referred to; Matsiyahu has no ability to determine if he is inverting God’s law and its teachings of right and wrong, justice, or blame, because he does not know God! For him, it is no spiritually difficult task to simply assert that “the satan” ought to be understood as “just” or “right”, purely on a reasoned argument which is based on the use of one structure of grammar, a definite article, presented before a word; the Spirit is not guiding him as he weighs such assertions, so for him there is no tension or illumination into how his assertion profanes the revealed truth and law of God, completing inverting its system of morality in the process.

Matsiyahu Tsevat has no capacity or ability to understand the things of the Lord according to the Spirit, and yet Mackie cites him as the correct source for understanding the meaning of Job! My dear Christian readers, there is no circumstance ever in which we should depend upon or propagate the teachings of someone from a false religion as the true and correct teachings of the Christian Bible; there is no difference between this instance and hypothetical alternative where someone who practices Islam is relied upon for teachings regarding Abraham, Moses, or David, since both religions share scriptures which refer to those men. Especially given the fact that spiritually dead Jews were the ones to crucify the Lord and develop the religion of the Pharisees based on misunderstanding God’s Word, we should be especially guarded against any close association with teachings from such adherents to the modern Jewish faith.

Now, as a concession, though spiritually dead, it is certainly the case that unbelievers are capable of excelling in objective sciences, such as the study of linguistics, apart from knowing God; so it would not have been at all unreasonable for Mackie, or others, to point to Hebrew scholars regarding nuances of Hebrew grammatical structures to make a certain case for an argument; however, this is not what Mackie does. He in fact literally relies on this

Jewish teaching to tell us the meaning of Job: “He proposed that the book is exploring three claims made about God and Job, but only two can be true at the same time.” Far from simply leaning on an unbelieving expert in Hebrew linguistics, Mackie turns to this Jewish teacher for the full understanding of the book of Job. If the other points of discussion in this publication have not convinced the reader of the issue with the publication and assertions by Mackie, this one unquestionably should; Mackie’s position regarding the figure of “the satan” in Job and Zechariah is completely fallacious in its logical assertions when tested against the spiritual teachings of the rest of scripture, and, as affirmed directly in his own publication, his suggested corrections to understanding the book of Job are the teachings of Jew, a spiritually dead individual with no eyes to see the things of the Lord, and not a Christian.

For these reasons, and several more which have yet to be detailed, the teachings of Tim Mackie through the Bible Project, as well as those of Michael Heiser, regarding the figure of “the satan”, should be fully rejected by Christians.

Position from Historic Scholarship

Shifting gears from a rational and reasoned approach to the teachings of Tim Mackie and Michael Heiser, when digging into an interlineary and lexicon regarding the Hebrew word, שָׂטָן, which is transliterated “śāṭān”, or “satan” in modern English, we find some striking discoveries. Truthfully, if we are going to fully understand the argument Mackie and Heiser make, we must go to these depths, since, as it turns out, their line of argument regarding the interpretation of the phrase “the satan” is nothing new. As aforementioned, it is a centuries old debate that has long been settled, and is now only rising to the surface again in modernity.

When examining Strong’s Lexicon for the Hebrew Word “śāṭān” via the Blue Letter Bible online tools, we find a photo of another referenced lexicon with some striking statements:

שָׂטָן — (1) *adversary* (Arabic شيطان), as in war, *an enemy*, 1 Ki. 5:18; 11:14, 23, 25; 1 Sam. 29:4; in a court of justice, Psa. 109:6 (compare Zec. 3:1, 2); and also whoever opposes himself to another, 2 Sam. 19:23; Nu. 22:22, “the angel of Jehovah stood in the way לוֹ לְשָׂטָן to resist him;” verse 32.

(2) With the art. שָׂטָן (adversary, κατ' ἐξουσίαν) it assumes the nature of a pr. n. (see Hebr. Gramm., § 107, 2), and is *Satan, the devil*, the evil genius in the later theology of the Jews [rather, in the true revelation of God from the beginning], who seduces men (1 Chron. 21:1; in which place only it is without the article, compare 2 Samuel 24:1), and then accuses and calumniates them before God, Zech. 3:1, 2; Job 1:7; 2:2, seq.; compare Apoc.

12:10, ὁ κατήγορος τῶν ἀδελφῶν ἡμῶν, ὁ κατηγοροῦν ἀντῶν ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν ἡμέρας καὶ νυκτός. But it is a groundless opinion of Alb. Schultens, Herder, and Eichhorn, that Satan, in the book of Job, is different from the Satan of the other books, and is a good angel employed to examine into the manners of men; and on this account, whenever in the early part of this book he is mentioned, they would read, שָׂטָן i. e. περιδεύτης (from the root שָׂט); this notion has now been rejected by all interpreters. And—

The above image is sourced from page 788 of the Lexicon, which can be viewed here: <https://archive.org/details/hebrewchaldeelex00geseuoft/page/788/mode/2up>

The above image, which directly discusses the very charge of Mackie and Heiser in the lower boxed section, is found in the lexicon mentioned in the “Background” section of this publication, written in the 1800s by Wilhelm Gesenius and Samuel Tregelles, who were both, lexicographers, Christian Hebraists, or scholars in Hebrew, textual critics, and theologians. Plenty can be found regarding both men to substantiate their accreditation in their scholarly fields, amplified historically by the volume of their works and cited uses. While certainly no one should ever just listen to a claimed “expert” with blind trust, everyone must also have the humility to know their own place in being able

to raise assertions and challenges to Biblical teachings which are rooted in centuries old defenses of the nuanced grammatical constructs of the Hebrew language.

In the photo displayed, we read from the original authors that the idea of “the satan” being a “good angel” “has now been rejected by all interpreters”, apart from the names listed by them as raising an original defense of the “good angel” position. Already we have shown that from a rational, reasoned perspective, the “good angel” theory in no way stands the test of scriptures and proper application of God’s law; and, in looking at the history of translations of the Bible, we see abundantly that “the satan”, or a lowercase, non-proper, descriptive version of the noun, “śāṭān”, is never presented as the translation of the original Hebrew in Job. One only needs to look through a bible comparison list of translations for Job 1:6 to see this is the case (cited below); in this list can be read all of the following as translations for the original Hebrew: “Satan”, “that Satan”, “the Satan”, “the Adversary”, “Satan the Accuser”, “that Hasatan”, “**the devil**” (**the original Koine Greek literally translates it directly to “the devil”**), and “the Designated Accuser”.

<https://www.biblestudytools.com/job/1-6-compare.html>

What we never see from any interpretation of the Bible in this list is a lower-case translation, which would match the transliteration of “the satan”; as in, we never see “the adversary, or “the accuser”, or “the satan” (this last one which would make no sense since it is transliteration, and the English word “satan” only exists in a proper noun form, Satan). Simply on evidence alone, the original scholars of the displayed image are correct in that, ever since the original translation of the Hebrew into Koine Greek, known as the Septuigent, not one interpreter has agreed with the position presented by the original scholars challenging Wilhelm Gesenius and Samuel Tregelles, nor therefore with the position of Tim Mackie or Michael Heiser; this alone substantiates the original statement of Gesenius and Tregelles, which reads: “this notion has now been rejected by all interpreters”.

While simply “going with the crowd” is almost never a safe bet when dealing with people of the world, when the context is choosing who to follow from millenia of theologians, lexicographers, and textual critics who are far more educated and accredited to be making assertions and defenses of the nuances of a particular languages grammatical structure, going with the crowd is in fact the wisest way to go; this is in fact exactly how the broader ecosystem of peer reviewed science works. It is certainly not always a guarantee, but when a broad ecosystem of experts agree over thousands of years on a certain principle, it is simply wise to park ourselves in their camp of understanding until a new position is defended with substance and confirmed by the broader community over a long period of time. This is especially true, when that broader majority of experts

actually practice the faith to which we adhere, as is the case with the original authors of this lexicon, and the millennia of Christian theologians who have defended the spiritual teaching with rigor. This is especially the case when the parties in opposition to the accepted teaching end up profaning God’s words with assertions that defile the spiritually informed meaning and intent of all of scripture, especially regarding essentials to the faith such as biblical justice and righteousness.

Why is it though, that even when the word *adversary* or *accuser* is used, instead of the capitalized proper noun Satan, the word is still capitalized? (I.E. “Adversary” or “Accuser”)? The reason is because this is how the definite article “the”, or “ha” in Hebrew, is to be translated when used in these linguistic circumstances, according to the grammatical rules of Hebrew. This is what is cited in the above image, in the circled section, which makes the reference, “see Hebr. Gramm. 107, 2”. Current internet sources provided access to a more modern, “edited and enlarged” version that was published in 1909; in this version, the section originally referenced section (107, 2), is now (126, 2, specifically (d)), in which we read the following regarding the use of the definite article “ha” in Hebrew grammar:

“The article is, generally speaking, employed **to determine a substantive** wherever it is required by Greek and English; thus:

...

(d) When terms applying to whole classes are ** restricted (simply by usage) to particular individuals ** (like ὁ ποιητής, meaning Homer) or things, ** e.g. אֲדֹרְשֵׁי *adversary*, אֲדֹרְשֵׁי הַאֲדֹרְשֵׁי *the adversary, Satan*; הַבַּעַל *lord*, הַבַּעַל הַבַּעַל *Baal as proper name of the god*; ** אָדָם *the (first) man, Adam*; ^[2] אֱלֹהֵינוּ *or אֱלֹהֵינוּ הַיְחָדֵשׁ ὁ θεός, the one true God* (cf. also ὁ Χριστός in the New Testament); also הַנָּהָר *the river, i.e. Euphrates*; הַכֶּכֶר *the circle, sc. of the Jordan, the Jordan plain* [Gn 19¹⁷, &c.]”

In layman’s terms; when the article “ha”, or (35 § הַ, הָ, הֵ) in Hebrew precedes a noun which can describe a “whole class”, it “restricts” the usage of the noun to a “particular” individual; by “whole classes”, it is meant that word without the article can be used to describe a class of something, which is how Mackie tries to assert its use as a “descriptive noun”. As a whole class, the word “adversary”, or *satan*, can appropriately describe an army of individuals, or a single person; without the definite article, it is ambiguous and only clarified by the context of usage. In either case, it remains in the lower-case, hence “*satan*” or “*adversary*”. This is the situation when a lower-case

translation of the word makes sense, such as in the case of Numbers 22:22, or 1 Samuel 29:4, both cited appropriately by Mackie as situations where the lower-case, whole class is used.

In both of those cases, the article “ha” does not precede the use of the noun, satan (**שָׂטָן**); the Hebrew word “satan” with the article attached appears as (**הַשָּׂטָן**). As the cited Hebrew grammar principles state, when the article “ha” is used preceding, it restricts it to a specific individual in a proper sense; this rationally makes sense, since, given that the lower-case scenarios are used abundantly in scripture to refer to specific individuals as “adversaries”, without the noun being made proper (as in Numbers 22:22 and 1 Samuel 29:4), the use of the article “ha” must mean something special. It is not simply “the adversary”, rather “the Adversary”.

Immediately, these teachings on Hebrew grammar substantiate Kenneth Birdings first point in his article “Why Michael Heiser is Probably Wrong about Satan in the Book of Job”; in this point, he raise the idea that even if “the satan” is better translated as a title, it can simply then be compared to a title such as “the Fuhrer” or “the Emperor”. In such a case, it is completely appropriate that the devil himself would also be titled as “the Accuser”, or “the Adversary”, as in the chief and highest order accuser or adversary. This would make sense in light of the rest of Christian scriptures, for the scriptures say that the devil is the primary evil agent who is to be resisted (James 4:7), otherwise known as our chief adversary (“adversary” being the more appropriate translation of the Hebrew “satan”, instead of “accuser”). If this is the case for the uses of the phrase “the satan” in Job in Zechariah, then it may certainly be the case that the Bible translations which translate it to “the Adversary”, “the Hasatan”, or “the Accuser”, may be the most appropriate, but this in no way leaves room to suggest that the chief adversary, or “the Adversary” of the “sons of God” is not the devil himself. This especially in light of the previously reasoned arguments regarding scriptures opposition to the idea of “an adversary” as a “good” officer of God.

To conclude this section, as Kenneth Berding points out, it’s not even that Mackie or Heiser fully assert that “the satan” couldn’t be the devil; they simply cast as shadow of doubt on the linguistics, and then used a reasoned approach (at least in the case of Mackie’s arguments), to argue the position that it is in fact not the devil being referenced. Mackie himself uses the words “not necessarily identical” when challenging the idea that “the satan” is the devil. He never substantiates any claim to prove that it isn’t in fact the devil with reference to other spiritual teachings of the Word, rather, he simply casts a shadow of doubt and then runs off into reasoned ideas about who it alternatively could be, and citing Jewish rabbi’s teachings regarding the book of Job. As we have already shown, their reasoned approaches, specifically that of Mr. Mackie, are

completely logically flawed when assessed against the revealed Word; so, though they may make an interesting point about the use of the phrase “the satan” as more appropriately a title, none of their supporting arguments for defending the figure as some being other than the devil himself stand up to theological rigor. If either are going to give a true and just defense of a different interpretation of the phrase “the satan”, then they must contend with centuries of scholarly deliberations on the grammatical structures of Hebrew, as well as contend with Christian scholarly defenses of why scripture teaches us that this “the satan” figure is in fact the devil, and not the teachings of Jewish rabbis who do not know our God.

Conclusion

Having now come through ample defenses and scriptural examples which defend the classic Christian understanding of “the satan” in Job as the devil himself, we can read a few of Mackie’s statements to see the confusion he was worked:

“Is it really wise or just for God to reward the righteous? What if it corrupts their motives?” It raises the question of whether God should reward all good deeds and punish all bad ones, if he does at all?”

As has already been defended, righteousness, praiseworthiness, and blessings are artifacts of morally good acts; such blessings and praiseworthiness are inherent in the nature of a morally good act; for an in depth discussion of such concepts, the reader should see “The Freedom of the Will” by Johnathan Edwards. For the sake of brevity, as has already been defended in prior sections of this paper, there is no such “good”, “justice”, or “righteousness” in baseless suspicion and accusation made towards those in good standing with the Lord. There is no “just”, “right” or “wise” attribute of baseless accusations against the “blameless” and “upright”, which is what “the Adversary” described in Job does as previously discussed.

In perhaps one of the biggest ironies of all, Mackie’s final conclusions regarding the “retribution” principle and the way the Lord governs creation, are: 1) no different than the conclusions reached by many Christian teachers regarding the book of Job, meaning Mackie has taken a very long, round-about way filled with falsehood and error to come to the exact same conclusions that most Christians come to already, and 2) is a partially invalid argument given that God in fact rewards Job with twice the amount of blessing which he had prior to his trials, exemplifying that obedience to the Lord, especially under trial, does in fact merit blessing! If there be any doubt about this concept, we only need to look at the list of curses, or blessings, listed for Israel in Deuteronomy 28 to see that God promises reward, or curses, based on the obedience of His people; and, in the New Testament, we read of promised blessings for obedience to the Lord for one of the most important verses for our current time, James 1:25:

“But he who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer that forgets but a doer that acts, he shall be blessed in his doing.”

Given that Mackie's primary premise has now been deconstructed and shown to be false, both through dismantling of his reasoned arguments, and well as via centuries old scholarly works from lexicographers, Christian Hebraists, and textual critics, we can now conclude that Mackie's conclusions, as well as his suggested alternate teachings from a Jewish scholar, should be completely disregarded as they are presented in Mackie's publication. Even if there are semblances of truth in some of the assertions, such as caution regarding the providence of the Lord and viewing every act of it as retribution for our actions, given the confused roots of the argument it is better to avoid their arguments as sources for such teachings altogether, because they perpetuate false and illogical concepts about scripture which ensnare and mislead the minds of many who read them.