Readers of the book may realize that the various voices in the prologue and the first cycle of Job create new meanings with respect to Job's characterization as a perfectly righteous man when they respond to one another. By creating new meanings, the voices generate more questions than answers regarding this characterization of Job. However, some readers may not have totally abandoned their expectation of hearing a voice or voices which will eventually finalize Job as blameless, upright, a fearer of God, a shunner of evil in Job, for the book of Job has not yet ended. The remaining chapters of the book of Job, chapters 12 to 42, include more voices Job's, his three friends', Elihu's, and God's. Further, since Job ends in 42:17 by stating Job's death, some readers may assume that Job will have been finalized by a voice or voices by then.

This final chapter attempts to conclude or finalize the discussion on whether the various voices in the whole book of Job succeed in finalizing Job. First, the chapter briefly examines whether the voices in the second and third cycles of the dialogue between Job and his three friends finalize Job as a perfect man. In chapter 12, Job responds to his friends' speeches in the first cycle by uttering that his nefesh is still unfinalized and alive.\(^1\) Job's response to his friends,

\[
\text{no doubt you are the people, and wisdom will die with you. But I have understanding as well as you; I am not inferior to you. Who does not know such things as these? (12:2–3),}
\]

implies that Job has not yet been finalized and Job's voice has more to say about him.

Also, Job's final lengthy speech in the third cycle begins with Job's assurance that his nefesh is still alive. Job's last speeches in chapter 27 commence with his response to his friends,

\[
\text{as long as my breath is in me, and the spirit of God is in my nostrils, my lips will not speak falsehood, and my tongue will not utter deceit.}
\]

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\(^{1}\) Webb, *Mark at the Threshold*, 20.
Going on this statement, readers may perceive that Job never once abandoned his *nefesh* in resisting his friends' finalizing words against him and continued to use his *nefesh* to finalize himself in the appropriate way. It is quite clear that the second and third cycles begin and end with Job’s living *nefesh*. The mere fact that Job’s *nefesh* is still alive indicates that Job has not been finalized.

Particularly, in the second and third cycles, the word “words” (מלין) plays a key function in the dialogic relationship between Job and his friends and in Job’s unfinalizability. The word “words” (מלין) provides a place where Job and his friends create their individual finalizations of Job. The word “words” (מלין) indicates or implies the words with which Job tries to finalize himself as a perfect and righteous man and also the responses of Job’s three friends to Job aimed at finalizing Job in their own ways. The three friends perceive Job’s “words” (מלין) as unprofitable words (15:3), no good words (15:3), words against God (15:13), stupid words (18:2), and censuring words (20:3). Eliphaz sees Job’s words (מלין) as condemning Job and testifying to his being a sinner (15:5–6). To his friends, Job’s words (מלין) serve no purpose in finalizing Job as a perfect man and rather fail in substantiating Job’s righteousness.

However, Job’s understanding of his words (מלין) is different. First, he believes his words sufficiently prove his innocence and righteousness (19:23–25; 24:25; 29:22), but his friends have misunderstood his words (12:11; 13:17). Second, Job perceives that not only have they misunderstood, but they have also used his words (מלין) to attack him. Job thinks that his friends have used his own words against him to torment him and crush his *nefesh* in order to stop him from speaking (19:2) and have used his words as a means to mock him (30:9).

The second and third cycles end with Job’s final speeches from chapter 27 to chapter 31. The fact that the dialogues between Job and his three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, end with long speeches by Job indicates that Job’s three friends have failed to finalize Job. Job’s speeches in 27–31 serve as the main cause for Job’s friends’ failure. Since Job’s speeches in 27–31 highlight Job’s unfinalizability or ambiguity, his three friends could not understand Job and had to stop their finalizing of Job. In particular, the relationship between chapters 27 and 29 and chapter 28 leaves his friends

\[2\] In Zophar’s speech, 20:3 does not explicitly use the word “words” (מלין), but readers clearly perceive that Zophar’s words in 20:3 are caused and provoked by Job’s words (מלין).