

Introduction to the Book of Job

I. Title and place in the Canon

- A. Hebrew: אִיּוֹב *ʾiyōb*
 - 1. Possibly "where is my Father?" attested in the Armana tablets, or related to the Arab root, *ʾwb*, "one who repents."¹
 - 2. Possibly from the Hebrew root, אִיב *ʾyb*, meaning "enemy."
- B. Greek: ΙΩΒ *iōb*
- C. Placement in the Canon²
 - 1. The Hebrew Canon places it in the writings after Psalms and before Proverbs
 - 2. The Septuagint varied widely in its placement of Job, some manuscripts place it at the end of the Old Testament after Ecclesiasticus.
 - 3. Syriac Bibles place Job between Deuteronomy and Joshua, probably due to the patriarchal setting of Job.

II. Author

- A. There is no consistent tradition on who the author might be
 - 1. The Talmud suggests that it was someone who lived before the time of Moses³
 - 2. Some early commentators ascribe the work to Moses
- B. Really, we don't know who the Author is
- C. We are certain that the Author is an Israelite
 - 1. The book of Job was in the Hebrew canon
 - 2. The author uses the divine name, "Yahweh"

III. Date

- A. Proposals for the Date of Composition⁴
 - 1. Before the Time of Moses
 - a. No indications of the Torah, Moses, etc.
 - b. The difficulty with this is the narrators use of the divine name, "Yahweh" (Exodus 6:1-6)
 - 2. During the reign of Solomon
 - a. The pursuit of wisdom was a feature of Solomon's reign
 - b. Many earlier scholars, such as Luther, Delitzch, and others favored this date
 - 3. During the 7th Century in Manasseh's reign
 - a. The time of Manasseh was a time of moral degeneracy

¹ William Sanford Lasor, David Allan Hubbard, Frederic WM Bush, eds., *Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form, and Background of the Old Testament*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 560.

² *Ibid.*, 561.

³ Gleason Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, (Chicago: Moody, 1994), 505.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 506-511.

- and social injustice, which fits well with Job's observations in 9:24
- b. The difficulty with this is that there are other periods of history where this description would fit
4. During the time of Jeremiah in the 7th Century
 - a. The land of Uz only appears outside of Job in Jere 25:20 and Lam 4:21
 - b. This is not very strong evidence, unless you can demonstrate the Uz only began to be called Uz at this time.
 5. During the Exile in the 6th Century
 - a. Scholars who hold this date believe Job's purpose was to deal with suffering of Israel through the Assyrian and Babylonian crisis
 - b. Job evidently witnessed deportation in 12:17-19, 23
 - c. The obvious difficulty with this is that the answer to Israel's suffering was obvious as voiced by the prophets.
- B. More generally, after the book of Proverbs as a complement to traditional wisdom theology.⁵
- C. Ezekiel mentions Job in Ezekiel 14:14 and 14:20, which would have been around 600 B.C
1. Job definitely existed before then,
 2. Did the book exist, or was Job still an oral tradition at this time?
- D. Jesus ben Sirach mentions Job in the apocryphal book, Sirach 49:9 (or Ecclesiastics 49:9), which dates to the early 2nd century B.C.
- E. Many, many other proposals for the date of Job, ancient and modern exist, and do not all agree
1. This demonstrates that it is impossible to date Job
 2. After pages and pages surveying the various proposals for the date of Job, Marvin Pope concludes this:
 "The fact that the dates proposed by authorities, ancient and modern, span more than a millennium is eloquent testimony that the evidence is equivocal and inconclusive."⁶

IV. The Setting

- A. The date of the setting of Job differs considerably from the date of composition
 1. Ezekiel places Job alongside Noah and Daniel⁷, which indicates

⁵ James Crenshaw, "Popular Questioning of the Justice of God in Ancient Israel." In *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom*, edited by Harry M. Orlinsky, 289-304. (New York: KTAV Publishing House, INC. 1976), 289-304. Crenshaw refers to Job and Qohelet (Ecclesiastes) as "volcanic explosions" against the inadequacies of traditional wisdom in giving meaning in times of crisis or extreme difficulty.

⁶ Marvin Pope, *Job: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, (Garden City: Doubleday, 1973), XL.

⁷ James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955), 151, 153. The Biblical "Daniel" is spelled, דַּנְיֵאל but Ezekiel has דַּנְיֵל which is probably

- an ancient and patriarchal setting.
2. The narrative setting also indicates a patriarchal setting
 - a. There is no mention of a sanctuary or priesthood
 - b. Job, the patriarch, acts as priest for his family through his offering up of sacrifices for them
 3. The names of God in Job
 - a. The narrator prefers the divine name, "Yahweh"
 - b. Job and his friends prefer the archaic designations for God: אֱלֹהִים *ʾēlōhîm*, אֱלֹהִים *ʾēlōah*, and שַׁדַּי *šadday* (see table below)
 - c. This further gives the sense of antiquity in the setting.

Tally of the Names of God in Job

	Archaic designations for God			Common Designations for God	
	אֱלֹהִים <i>ʾēlōah</i> "God"	שַׁדַּי <i>šadday</i> "Almighty"	אֱלֹהִים <i>ʾēl</i> "God"	אֱלֹהִים <i>ʾēlōhîm</i> "God"	יְהוָה <i>YHWH</i> Yahweh, LORD
Narrator	0	0	0	3	30
Dialogues	41	31	57	13	2 (1:21 & 12:9)
Hebrew Bible	57	48	236	2,600	6828

B. The land of Uz

1. 1:3 - Job was the "greatest of the people of the east"
2. 1:3 - It was an area suitable for livestock
3. Gen 10:23 - Identifies Uz as the son of Aram, which would mean that this is an Aramean land
4. Lam 4:21 - Identifies Uz as where the "daughters of Edom" live, which would make Uz an Edomite place
5. Scholars identify favor one of two identifications for Uz⁸
 - a. Hauran, south of Damascus
 - b. The area between Edom and Northern Arabia
6. Uz, עוֹץ might be intended as a pun, the word "to counsel" in Hebrew: עוֹץ a word associated with wisdom.

C. Non-covenantal

1. Job is a foreigner and the setting is ancient
2. This removes the debate in Job from the realm of Torah
 - a. Torah is mentioned only once in a speech of Elihu at 22:22, but there it should be taken in the sense of "instruction" rather than "law"
 - b. This eliminates the default explanation for calamity, which is a breaking of Torah.
 - c. This heightens the exemplary character of Job, because it demonstrates that the focus of Job's devotion is not keeping a code or rules, but simply devotion to God.

"Danel," a hero of antiquity from Ugaritic sources who "judges the cause of the widow and adjudicates the case of the fatherless."

⁸ D.A. Hubbard, "Uz" In *New Bible Dictionary* 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1982), 1232.

3. This also universalizes the issues in Job

V. Language and Literary Features

A. The language of Job is very difficult

1. Modern translations differ widely
2. In addition to rare words, the syntax is sometimes difficult, making it hard to translate.
3. The book of Job has an abundance of Aramaisms
 - a. It used to be a common conclusion among scholars that this was an indication of a late date for Job, since Aramaic became the lingua franca at a late date
 - b. However, the evidence shows that the Aramaisms in Job are there intentionally.⁹
 - 1) The Hebrew of Job is sophisticated, showing that the author had the ability to write good Hebrew
 - 2) Both Aramaic and Hebrew words of the same meaning appear in Job.¹⁰
 - 3) Both Aramaic and Hebrew words of the same meaning appear in parallel lines in Job.¹¹
 - 4) What literary function would this serve?
 - a) Possibly to give an air of "foreignness" to Job and his friends. The Aramaisms appear in the dialogue portions but not the narrative portions
 - b) Possible to show that God's interests are universal, and not limited to any one person or nation. This becomes subtly evident in the content of God's speeches in that God cares for things outside of the normal world of the typical human being.

B. Issues of Genre

1. The importance of Genre
 - a. Not attending to the Genre can cause a massive misinterpretation of a given passage
 - b. Example: 3000 years from now, Archaeologist uncover

⁹ Edward L. Greenstein. "The Language of Job and its Poetic Function." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 122 (2003): 651-666. Greenstein points out that scholars need to reevaluate the Aramaic forms in Job as having a poetic or literary function, rather than being the result of a foreign provenance.

¹⁰ One example is מַלְיָה which is found both in Hebrew plural form (מַלְיָיִם *mullim*) in 6:26; 8:10; 23:5; 32:18; etc, and also in Aramaic plural form (מַלְיָיִן *mullin*) in 12:11; 26:4; 32:14; 38:2; etc. If the Aramaisms were due to Hebrew being a second language, you would expect the author to consistently use the same forms.

¹¹ Some of the examples of Aramaic words coupled with Hebrew counterparts are: דָּבָר and מַלְיָיִן "word(s)" in 4:2, שֹׁהֵר and עֵד "witness" in 16:19, עֵרֹוד and פָּרָא "wild donkey" in 39:5, עֲצָם and גֵּרָם "bone" in 40:18, and אָהָה and בָּא "come" in 3:25.

an ancient building dating to about 1985 A.D., and find some letters. One of the letters begins, "Dear Joseph..." They do a little linguistic investigation on the word, "Dear," and find that it denotes affection. So they conclude that the originator of the letter must have had an intimate relationship with Joseph. They find that the letter is signed by Ed McMann.

-Not understanding the "genre," in this case the conventions of letter writing leads to a serious misunderstanding.

- d. Genre is not only a matter of "what" a text means, but also of "how" a text means.¹²
 - e. Genre creates expectations and comes with a set of unspoken built in rules as to how to read it.
2. Proposals for the genre of Job
 - a. Scholars used to try and identify a single overarching genre for Job. Examples include: A Dramatized Lament,¹³ Lawsuit,¹⁴ and Controversy Dialogue.¹⁵
 - b. Most scholars now recognize that these classifications are artificial and do not adequately describe the character of the book.
 - c. The book of Job employs a number of genres and literary techniques, but the one overarching genre is the narrative drama which frames the book.

C. Genres and Literary techniques employed in Job

1. Narrative frame of the book

- a. This gives the narrative context to the dialogues
- b. Does not use typical Hebrew narrative sequence¹⁶
 - 1) This, along with the description of Job gives an almost fairy tale like feel to the narrative. This would be analogous to an English story that begins with the phrase, "Once upon a time..."
 - 2) This heightens the idyllic feel and naïveté of Job's life before his trials.

2. Poetry

- a. The dialogues beginning with chapter three are written in

¹² Gerald Janzen, *Job*, (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985), 15-16.

¹³ Claus Westermann, *The Structure of the Book of Job: A Form-Critical Analysis*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981).

¹⁴ Heinz Richter, *Studein zu Hiob, Der Aufbau des Hiobbeches dargestellt an den Gattungen des Rechtslebens* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1959).

¹⁵ James Crenshaw, "Wisdom," in *Old Testament Form Criticism*, edited by John H. Hayes, (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1974), 254.

¹⁶ Typical narrative sequence uses the waw-consecutive verb form וַיְהִי אִישׁ "There was a man..." as in 1 Samuel 1. However, here in Job 1, the narrator uses the simple perfect, אִישׁ הָיָה "A man there was..."

- poetic lines, which comes through even in English.
- b. The most basic form of Hebrew poetry is the parallel lines
 - 1) Synonymous parallelism
The second line repeats the thought of the first
 - 2) Synthetic parallelism
The second line builds on or completes the first
 - 3) Antithetical parallelism (rare in Job)
The second line gives a contrast to the first
 - c. Poetic lines are the language of the sages
 - d. This portrays Job and his friends as sages disputing on themes related to wisdom. Examples:
 1. Job 8:11, 25 - Synonymous
 2. Job 9:3 - Synthetic
 3. Job 9:19 - Synonymous
 - e. This, along with the wisdom poem of chapter 28, portrays God as the ultimate sage who settles the disputes of Job and his friends.¹⁷

3. Lawsuit

- a. Legal terminology abounds in Job.¹⁸
- b. Beginning with chapter 9, Job begins to contemplate bringing a legal suit against God, which builds to Job demanding God answer his suit in chapter 31.
- c. Examples:
 - 1) 9:3 - Job contemplates a lawsuit
 - 2) 9:33 - Job laments that there is no "judge"¹⁹ between him and God
 - 3) 10:2 - Job requests to know the charges against him
 - 4) 13:3-12 - Job accuses his friends of not being impartial
 - 5) 13:18 - Job is confident he has a strong case
 - 6) 19:7 - Job despairs that there is no justice for him

¹⁷ Norman Habel, "In Defense of God the Sage," in *The Voice from the Whirlwind: Interpreting the Book of Job*, edited by Leo G. Perdue and W. Clark Gilpin, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992), 30-33. Habel has investigated the image of God as the prototype of the successful sage (23). However, instead of the genre, Habel approaches this from the standpoint of Wisdom's soliloquy in Proverbs 8:22 where God "acquires" wisdom at the beginning, which is what every good sage should do according to Proverbs 4:7. In Job 28, God hides wisdom somewhere, then hints at it in his speeches (33-34). The question form that God uses "keeps the wise seeking and learning in the search for theological wisdom."

¹⁸ Examples include, רִיב "lawsuit, to contend" in both it's noun and verb forms in 9:3; 10:2, 13:6, 8, 19; 23:6; 26:19; 31:35; 33:13; and 40:2," and מִשְׁפָּט "judgment, justice, case" which appears in 8:3, 9:19; 9:32; 13:18; 14:13; 19:7; 22:4; 23:4; 27:2; 29:14; 31:13; 34:12, 23; 35:2; 37:23; 40:8. Other legal language that appears in Job are: שֹׁפֵט, דִּין, מוֹכִיחַ "judge," יָכַח "to dispute, reprove," יָעַר (hiphil) "to summon," עֵד, עֵדָה "witness," שִׁיחַ "complaint," and גֹּאֵל "vindicator, redeemer"

¹⁹ Umpire is a poor rendering of מוֹכִיחַ which should be translated more like, "judge, convictor, or reprover." Umpire doesn't carry the legal overtone of this word very well.

- 7) 22:4 - Eliphaz is confident that God's suit against Job is due to Job's wickedness
- 8) 23:4 - Job desire to bring his case against a God he cannot find
- 9) 31:35 - Job demands God hear his case
- 10) 40:2, 8 - God cross examines Job

4. Irony

- a. Irony is a way to attack or rebuild a position not directly, but indirectly from within.
- b. One can detect Irony's from the word itself which comes from the Greek, *eironeia*, which means "simulated ignorance."²⁰
- c. "The ironist appears to share the place being described, but inhabits it - talks about it or represents it - in such a way so as to expose its uninhabitability. ... The persuasive and invitatory rather than coercive character of irony is seen in the fact that some readers may well miss the irony and choose to dwell in happy ignorance in the shaky edifice, thus adding to its absurdity."²¹
- d. Examples of different kinds of Irony:
 - 1) "Yet Brutus says he was ambitious;
And Brutus is an honourable man."
 - 2) The average cost of rehabilitating a seal after the Exxon Valdez oil spill in Alaska was \$80,000. At a special ceremony, two of the most expensively saved animals were released back into the wild amid cheers and applause from onlookers. A minute later they were both eaten by a killer whale.
 - 3) Two animal rights activists were protesting the cruelty of sending pigs to a slaughterhouse in Bonn. Suddenly the pigs, all two thousand of them, escaped through a broken fence and stampeded, trampling the two hapless protesters to death.
 - 4) A clutz trips over his own two feet, and his friend tells him, "You are the most graceful person I have ever seen."
 - 5) "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" This is a dramatic irony, because Jesus was from Nazareth
- e. Examples of Irony in Job
 - 1) 1:10; 3:23; 7:12; 19:8 - Job's fence
 - 2) 7:17f (Psalm 8:4) - God's concern for man

²⁰ *Lexicon Universal Encyclopedia*, 1988 ed., s.v. "Irony." The strategy of Socratic irony is to pretend ignorance and openness to an opposing point of view and in asking deceptively simple questions in order to expose the absurdity of a concept.

²¹ Janzen, 18.

- 3) 9:2ff (5:17ff) - On Job's righteousness
- 4) 7:20; 10:4-6; (Gen 22:8,14²²) - God's seeing or watching over Job
- 5) 12:2f; 26:3 - The wisdom of Job's friends
- 6) 28:1ff (Prov 8)- The accessibility of Wisdom
- 7) 27:7-23 - Job parody's the orthodoxy of his friends (16:4 - Job said he could speak as they did, satire)
- 8) The main irony is the orthodoxy the friends, which most readers would initially sympathize with since its source is traditional wisdom theology.²³

f. Thought question: Why use Irony?

5. Mythopoeic Language

- a. Rather than a "genre," it may be better to call this a "worldview" or "system of thought."²⁴
- b. Ancient Near Eastern Features & Background
 - 1) The ancient near eastern concept of "myth" is not something inherently untrue, as in Greek and Modern concepts
 - 2) The forces of nature are not inanimate, but are either themselves a deity or representative of one
 - 3) Expressed itself in narrative forms
 - a) Stories concerning the sky, sea, etc.
 - b) There were common themes that ran across all ancient near eastern cultures
 - c) One common theme was a battle of deities and creation born out of violence
 - 4) Creation Narratives²⁵
 - a) A powerful deity does battle with a Chaos monster (usually a serpentine-water creature, or the water itself), slays it, and uses its carcass to create an orderly world.
 - b) Sumerian and Babylonian: Marduk slew Tiamat (sea) and created the cosmos with her carcass
 - c) Ugaritic, Baal that slays Yam, who is also

²² Most English translations translate ראה as "provide," when in fact it means, "to see." Therefore it is, "The Lord will see for himself a sacrifice..."

²³ Many of the maxims, proverbs, and instructions of the friends can be found in traditional wisdom sources, such as the book of Proverbs, which in a nutshell is: Living in harmony with God's order, particularly his moral order, (being righteous and wise) brings life, prosperity, and the blessing of the Lord, while living in disharmony with it (ie: wickedly) brings misery, death, and the curse of the Lord.

²⁴ Malcom J.A. Horsnell, "Myth, Mythology" In *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, edited by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company: 1986), 3:455-456.

²⁵ English translations of these texts can be found in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, edited by James B. Pritchard, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969).

identified as the "serpent" *tnn*, the "dragon" *ltn*, "river" *nhr*, and the "tyrant with seven heads" (Note: These texts are significant because of the geographic, cultural and temporal proximity of the Ugaritic documents to Israel)

- 5) Creation texts as political documents²⁶
 - a) Monarchs were often seen as extensions of the deity, and granted ruling power by the deity
 - b) The Monarch believed he was to exercise his rule using the same creative, community building, coercive and violent power his deity used in initially establishing order in creation.
 - c) Monarchs used creation texts as political documents to validate the *nature* of their rule
 - d) In other words, the understanding of the nature of ruling power stemmed from how they believed their deity established the created order.
 - e) This is important, because the speeches from the whirlwind give a dramatically different conception of ruling power.

c. Use in the Old Testament

- 1) Mythopoeic language appears throughout the Old Testament usually in poetic or prophetic texts.²⁷
- 2) The Hebrew, לְוִיָּאֲתָן *lwyātān* is cognate with the Ugaritic seven headed monster, *ltn*.²⁸
- 3) References in Job to לְוִיָּאֲתָן *lwyātān*, (leviathan), יָם *yām* (sea), תַּנִּינִן *tannin* (dragon, or sea monster), נָחָשׁ *nāḥāš* (serpent), and רַהַב *rahab* all allude to the battle with a dragon like sea creature.²⁹

²⁶ J. Gerald Janzen, "On the Moral Nature of God's Power: Yahweh and the Sea in Job and Deutero-Isaiah," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 56 (July 1994), 458-478

²⁷ Horsnell, 458-459. Some of the expressions include: "references to *lilit*, "night hag" (Isa 34:14); *rešep*, "Canaanite god of pestilence" (Hab 3:5); and the latter sons, *b'ne rešep* (Job 5:7), all of whom reflect divine beings in ancient Near Eastern mythology." Horsnell also highlights the allusion to astrological ideas by the reference to the "chains of Pleiades," "the cords of Orion," and "the Bear with its children," in Job 38:31f.

²⁸ Maarten J. Paul, "לְוִיָּאֲתָן" In *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, edited by Willem A. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 2:778.

²⁹ Horsnell, 459. Horsnell cites the various Old Testament passages with allusions to the battle with the dragon motif: "Leviathan (*lwyātān* - Job 3:8; 41:1 [MT 40:25]; Ps. 74:14; Isa. 27:1; 2 Esd. 6:49, 52), Rahab (Heb. *rahab* - Job 9:13; 26:12; Ps. 89:10 [MT 11]; Isa. 30:7; 51:9), Tannin (*tannin*) i.e., "dragon" or "sea monster" (Job 7:12; Ps. 74:13; Isa. 27:1; 51:9), Yam (*yām*), i.e., "sea" (Job 7:12; Ps. 74:13; Isa. 51:10; Hab. 3:8), Nahar (*nāḥār*), i.e., "river, stream" (Ps. 93:3; Hab. 3:8), and Nahash (*nāḥāš*) i.e., "serpent" (Job 26:13; Isa. 27:1). It had several heads (Ps. 74:13f.) and had apparently made the gods

- d. Some Examples
 - 1) Psalm 74:12-17 - A call for God to act as he did in creation, when he slew the monsters
 - 2) Isa 27:1 - A symbol of Yahweh's enemies
 - 3) Isa 51:9-11 - Application of Mythopoeic language to the Exodus and to a future redemption.
 - 4) Job 7:12 - Job complains God treats him as the sea monster
 - 5) Job 9:13; 26:12-14 - Concerning God's power
- d. Ancient Near Eastern contrasted with the Hebrew
 - 1) These are merely allusions, there is nothing like the Baal/Yam stories in the Bible
 - a) "Poetic" accounts of creation employ mythopoeic language, usually in connection with God's vindicating or redeeming power for his people
 - b) The "narrative" account of creation in Genesis 1-2 carries no hint of a battle.
 - 2) Many of the uses are polemical in nature, designed to show the superiority of Yahweh
 - 3) The Hebrew Bible is committed to monotheism, and does not affirm the reality of rival "gods," though it does affirm the reality of other spiritual beings.
 - 4) "Their occurrence no more indicate commitment to the underlying theology than does the use of similar mythological concepts in Milton's *Paradies Lost*."³⁰
 - 6) Modern example: "I battled the dragon and won!"
 - 7) Either extreme is poor methodology:
 - a) Uncritically import the mythopoeic world view into the Hebrew Bible
 - b) Dismiss clear uses of mythopoeic language
- e. Purpose in Job
 - 1) Job's mythopoeic language demonstrates that he apparently held the violent, coercive view of ruling power that executes justice
 - 2) His friends held the same view, but expressed it in mostly traditional wisdom teaching
 - 3) God's view stands in stark contrast
 - a) There is no hint of battle in Genesis 1-2

afraid (Job 41:25 [MT 17]). Yahweh subdued and killed it (Isa. 27:1) by smiting it (Job 26:12), by cutting it to pieces (Isa. 51:9), by piercing it (Job 26:13; Isa 51:9), by crushing it (Ps. 89:10 [MT 11]), and by bludgeoning its heads (Ps 74:13f.). Yahweh also defeated the monster's allies (Job 9:13; Ps. 89:10 [MT 11])."

³⁰ Ibid.

- b) There is no hint of battle in Job 38-42
- c) This agrees with the perspective from Romans 1:18ff on how God demonstrates his wrath, with is through a type of hands off approach, letting sinners suffer the penalty of their error at their own hands
- 4) The mythopeic language, which is turned on its head in the speeches from the whirlwind, give Job a new understanding of the nature of God's rule

6. Proverb

- a. Typically short and pithy. It is "compressed experience"³¹
- b. Job's friends use various types of proverbs and apply them to Job's situation. A few examples:
 - 1) Job 5:2; 11:12 - Observational saying
 - 2) Job 5:17 - Beatitude and admonition saying
 - 3) Job 8:11-15 - Similitudes and metaphors
 - 4) Job 12:12-13 - Job counters a proverb with a proverb
- c. The wisdom of the friends comes from traditional sources
 - 1) Job 4:12ff - Revelation from God
 - 2) Job 8:8ff - The experience of the ancestors
 - 3) Job 15:10 - The gray hair and the aged
 - 4) Job 15:18 - The sages
 - 5) Job 4:8; 5:3-5 - Observation

7. Rhetorical Questions

- a. A rhetorical question expects no answer, but is intended to make a statement or evaluation
- b. Examples in Job
 - 1) Job 4:7 - The innocent do not perish
 - 2) Job 4:17 - Mortals cannot be pure before God
 - 3) Job 8:3 - God does not pervert Justice

8. The Lament and complaint

- a. Expresses sorrow or complaint
- b. The normal pattern for a lament or complaint in Psalms ends with some sort of assertion of faith. Examples:
 - 1) Psalm 22 - God has not forsaken me after all
 - 2) Psalm 73 - It is not a vain thing to serve God
- c. Job's laments do not follow this pattern
 - 1) Job 3 - Job sees nothing but trouble
 - 2) Job 10:18ff - Nothing but gloom for Job

³¹ C. Hassell Bullock, "The Book of Proverbs," In *Learning from the Sages: Selected Studies on the Book of Proverbs*, ed. Roy B. Zuck, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1995), 20.

9. The Vow

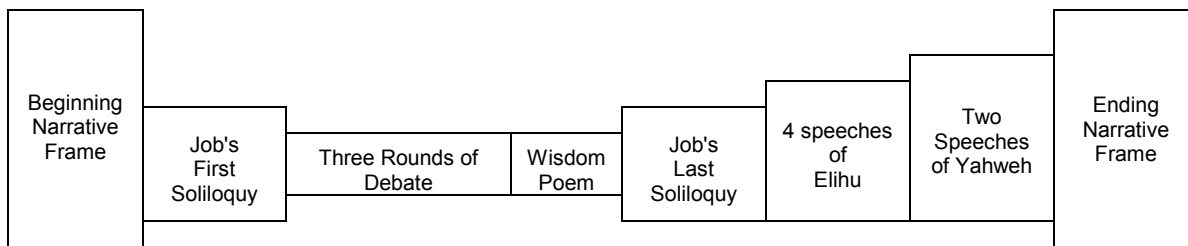
- a. Job avows his innocence
- b. The normal pattern for a Hebrew vow is, "May God do so to me if..."
 - 1) The vow maker usually does not identify a specific penalty for breaking the vow
 - 2) This shows that people took vows with caution
 - 3) Examples:
 - a) 2 Sam 3:35 - David
 - d) 1 Kings 2:23-24 - Solomon
- c. Job does not use the pattern of oath
 - 1) Job "asserts" his innocence at first
Job 6:28-30; 16:17; 23:10-12; 27:2-6
 - 2) In chapter 31, Job makes a series of oaths
 - a) He does not follow the typical oath pattern
 - b) He boldly identifies specific consequences!

D. Literary Tensions in Job

1. The Narrative frame v.s. Poetic dialogues
 - a. Many scholars see a tension due to the difference in style and vocabulary, and liberal scholars usually hypothesize the merging of two literary sources as the explanation
 - b. The literary sophistication of Job speaks against a clumsy stitching together of sources
 - c. It is likely that this tension was intentional to create the sense of the idyllic naïveté of life before Job's trials
2. The unusual style of the third cycle of speeches
 - a. In chapter 27, where you would expect a speech from Zophar, there is none. Zophar does not have a third speech as the other friends do.
 - 1) Some scholars will rearrange the text and assign a third speech to Zophar
 - 2) This is likely intentional, demonstrating that Job's arguments have silenced his friends.
 - a) Job's speeches grew longer as the book progresses
 - b) The friends' speeches often grew shorter
 - b. In 27:13ff, Job contradicts his earlier statements and talks like his friends, as if he had changed his mind and adopted their positions!
 - 1) This does not make any sense
 - 2) Some scholars typically emend the text and assign the words to Zophar rather than Job
 - 3) It is more likely that Job is engaging in irony, which is a major literary feature in Job.
3. The hymn to Wisdom in chapter 28

- a. Most scholars recognize this to be out of place because the language, perspective, and tone is different
 - b. Many see this as an interlude
 - c. Functionally, it serves to case judgment on Job's friends AND Job for their dogmatic conclusions.
 - 1) Even though it "sounds" like another voice, the text assigns these words to Job. There is no textual evidence of a switch in speakers, whether to another character or to the narrator.
 - 2) This makes chapter 28 ironic, since it comes from the mouth of Job
4. The Elihu speeches
- a. He is mentioned nowhere else in the book, not even by God when he condemns the friend and affirms Job.
 - b. Possible explanations
 - 1) Elihu ran away when God appeared.³²
 - 2) Elihu was so ridiculous that he was not taken seriously, so he was ignored
 - 3) Elihu's positions were more correct than either Job or his friends.³³

VI. Plot and Structure



- A. (1-2) Beginning narrative frame: The Naïveté of a Righteous Man
- 1. (1) The first scene
 - a. (1:1-5) Introduction to Job, an exemplary and prosperous man
 - b. (1:6-12) The Heavenly Court and the Adversary's challenge to God concerning Job's integrity
 - c. (1:13-22) Job's four-fold calamity, the loss of all

³² I heard this explanation in a sermon by Richard Rogers before, but there is no evidence of this.

³³ This is my position. Elihu only condemns Job for the sin of arrogance which he personally witnessed (34:7ff), not for a "supposed" sin like Eliphaz does (22:1ff). Elihu makes the case that in addition to "corrective" discipline, which the friends made a case for, God also exercises "preventative" discipline (33:16). This fits with the overall portrayal of God in the Bible, especially in the temptations of Christ (Matt 4). Elihu also points out that Job can be restored on the basis of the work of a mediator (33:23ff), which characterizes man's relationship with God as being based on "grace" not on human piety. This is more correct than what both Job and his friends have claimed.

- indications of prosperity and Job's integrity
 - 2. (2:1-10) The second scene
 - a. (2:1-6) The Heavenly Court and the Adversary's second challenge to God concerning Job's integrity
 - b. Job's second calamity, the loss of health, and Job's integrity
 - 3. (2:11-13) Transitional scene. Job's friends come to comfort him in silence
- B. (3-31) The Dialogues between Job and his friends
1. (3) Introduction: Job's Soliloquy, cursing his day and questioning his existence
 2. (4-27) Three Rounds of Dialogues
 - a. (4-14) First Round of Dialogues
 - 1) (4-5) Eliphaz: God does not punish the righteous
 - 2) (6-7) Job: Job asks for evidence of his sins
 - 3) (8) Bildad: God is just and Job needs to repent
 - 4) (9-10) Job: God is stronger than Job and a bully, but Job still asks for evidence of his sin and begins to consider litigation
 - 5) (11) Zophar: God is wise and all knowing, Job is stupid and simply needs to repent
 - 6) (12-14) Job: Desires litigation with God and accuses his friends of showing partiality to God
 - b. Second Round of Dialogues
 - 1) (15) Eliphaz: Job is guilty and his own mouth condemns him
 - 2) (16-17) Job: His friends are miserable comforters, God gives Job over to the ungodly and Job is confident that there is a witness for him
 - 3) (18) Bildad: Job is obstinate, the end of the wicked is ruin and misery
 - 4) (19) Job: God has wronged Job, Job is forsaken by everyone, but knows he has a vindicator
 - 5) (20) Zophar: The prosperity that comes from wickedness will turn to misery and ruin
 - 6) (21) Job: The wicked often live all their lives in prosperity and God does nothing to them.
 - c. Third Round of Dialogues
 - 1) (22) Eliphaz: Accuses Job of specific sins that he needs to repent of
 - 2) (23-24) Job: God desired to bring his case before a God he cannot find. God ignores the afflicted and prospers the powerful
 - 3) (25) Bildad: A mortal cannot be righteous before God

- 4) (26) Job: God is powerful and mysterious
- 5) (27) Job: Parodies his friends as he said he could do in 16:4
- 3. (28) Poetic interlude: A Poem to the inaccessibility of Wisdom, God has hidden wisdom and told humans to fear him
- 4. (30-32) Job's Closing: Job's final Soliloquy
 - a. (29) Job's reminisce of a glorious past, he was a man of honor
 - b. (30) Job's lament of a humiliating present, Job has lost his honor
 - c. (31) Job's oaths of innocence and demand for litigation
- C. (32-37) A newcomer: The Speeches of Elihu.
 - 1. (32-33) Rebuke of Job's friends and Job. God's discipline v.s. punishment. Elihu will attempt to act as Job's mediator
 - 2. (34) God is just and all knowing, and therefore does not need to litigate.
 - 3. (35) Job is guilty of self-righteousness.
 - 4. (36-37) God governs the whole creation with his righteousness
- D. (38-41) Yahweh speaks two rounds of speeches from the whirlwind
 - 1. (38:1-40:5) Yahweh's First Speech and Job's response
 - a. (38:1- 40:2) - God questions Job about his knowledge of creation and it's maintenance which highlights Job's lack of knowledge and wisdom
 - b. (40:3-5) Job's response: Reduced to silence
 - 2. (40:6-42:6) Yahweh's Second Speech and Job's response
 - a. (40:6-14) God challenges Job to rule the created order
 - b. (40:15-24) God's primordial creature, Behemoth
 - c. (41) God's primordial creature, Leviathan
 - d. (42:1-6) - Job is satisfied
- E. (42:7-17) The Ending Narrative Frame: A reordered world-view
 - 1. (42:7) God is angry with Job's three friends for not speaking rightly about God as Job has
 - 2. (42:8-9) Job intercedes for them
 - 3. (42:10-15) God pays Job back double in prosperity
 - 4. (42:16-17) Job dies of old age in prosperity

VII. Theme, Message, and Purpose

- A. Reading and interpreting the Book of Job
 - 1. Most scholarly attention tends to overemphasize the poetic center and underemphasize the narrative frame.
 - 2. Most popular attention tends to overemphasize the narrative

frame and underemphasize the poetic middle

3. James 5:11

- a. Some Bibles refer to the "patience" of Job
 - 1) Job only appears patient in the prologue
 - 2) In the dialogues, Job is anything but patient
- b. ὑπομονήν *hupomonē* can mean "endurance, steadfastness, or perseverance"
- c. Perseverance is the best rendering of this word
 - 1) Job persevered in his integrity
 - 2) Job persevered in his desire to see God
 - 3) According to James, the book of Job demonstrates God's compassion and mercy.

B. The meaning and purpose of the book of Job

1. Various proposals over the years

- a. A reflection on the exile experience
- b. The problem of the righteous sufferer
- c. To demonstrate how to respond in suffering.³⁴
- d. An open ended debate on the problems associated with the righteous sufferer
 - 1) Job highlights competing theologies³⁵
 - 2) Job is a true dialogic text³⁶
 - 3) Job is a "concealed catalog"³⁷
- e. Provides a sort of existential reordering in the end
 - 1) Job, who saw the world as dark and foreboding, now sees the terrifying beauty in it³⁸
 - 2) After the speech from the whirlwind, Job understands there is harmony in the world.³⁹

³⁴ Ellen F. Davis, "Job and Jacob: The Integrity of Faith," In *The Whirlwind: Essays on Job, Hermeneutics and Theology in Memory of Jane Morse* ed. Stephen L. Cook, Corrine L. Patton, and James W. Watts, 100-120 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 119-120.

³⁵ David Penchansky, *The Betrayal of God: Ideological Conflict in Job*, (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990). According to Penchansky, the inconsistencies in Job highlights the ideological conflict in Israel, and is about the struggle of competing theologies in Israel.

³⁶ Carol A. Newsom, *The Book of Job: A Contest of Moral Imaginations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 23. Newsom points out that Job is dialogic, meaning that no one voice or perspective controls the outcome of the text, making it a true dialogue. The narrator has the last word, reopening the dialog by showing how God rewards Job, something that should have been rejected.

³⁷ Yair Hoffman, *A Blemished Perfection: The Book of Job in Context*, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 99. In Hoffman's view, the book of Job combines the catalog genre with narrative in order to catalog the various views of recompense, but has no resolution since God doesn't deal with the issue in his speeches.

³⁸ Several scholars propose this as the goal of Yahweh's speeches. Lorine L. Patton, "The Beauty of the Beast: Leviathan and Behemoth in Light of Catholic Theology." In *The Whirlwind: Essays on Job, Hermeneutics and Theology in Memory of Jane Morse* ed. Stephen L. Cook, Corrine L. Patton, and James W. Watts, 142-167 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 156-159.

³⁹ Robert Gordis, *The Book of God and Man*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1965), 133.

- 3) Job doesn't hear, but now "sees" the world in a new way, he "experiences" it differently⁴⁰
 - f. The book of Job offers no solution to the problem⁴¹
 - g. Repudiation of the principle of retribution⁴²
 - h. An acknowledgement of absurdity in the world⁴³
 - i. The list goes on
2. Must take the book as a whole
 - a. Context is important in studying any Biblical book
 - b. This is especially true in Job
 - c. The message of the book comes through only when the book is read as a whole.
3. The book of Job is not about Job, but about God. Includes these themes:
 - a. God's character. What kind of God is he?
 - b. The nature of God's rule. By what principle does God rule the world?
 - c. The nature of God's relationship with man. What is the basis of the creators relationship with the creature?
 - d. The knowledge and wisdom of God. Does God know, and to what extent will he go to know?

C. Dealing with the Theological difficulties in Job

1. We must let the message of Job speak for itself, not try to force it into a mold that makes us more comfortable
2. Over the centuries, many have found parts of the book offensive and have tried in various ways to soften it. Here are some ancient examples:
 - a. Two of the so called "Tiqqune Sopherim"⁴⁴ are in Job

⁴⁰ Moshe Greenberg, "Reflections on Job's Theology," In *Studies in the Bible and Jewish Thought*, 327-333 (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1995), 329-330.

⁴¹ Robert H. Pfeiffer, "Wisdom and Vision in the Old Testament," In *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom*, edited by Harry M. Orlinsky, 305-313 (New York: KTAV Publishing House Inc., 1976), 310.

⁴² Matitياهو Tsevat, "The Meaning of the Book of Job," in *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom*, edited by Harry M. Orlinsky, (New York: KTAV Publishing House Inc.), 366. According to Tsevat, Justice is not the foundation of the creation. The creation itself is "amoral."

⁴³ Dermot Cox, *The Triumph of Innocence: Job and the Tradition of the Absurd*, (Roma: Universita Gregoriana, 1978). The book of Job acknowledges that the world can be meaningless.

⁴⁴ Masoretic tradition, which dates from about 500-1000 A.D., identifies eighteen of these tiqqune sopherim ("emendations of the scribes"), which were motivated by theological reasons mainly to preserve honor and respect for God. The most well known one is from Genesis 18:22 where the original reading was, "And Yahweh was left standing before Abraham," which the Masoretes considered inappropriate, and therefore emended it to, "and Abraham was left standing before Yahweh." The Masoretes identify the other 17 emendations at: Num 11:15, 12:12; I Sam 3:13; 2 Sam 16:12, 20:1; I Kings 12:16; 2 Chr 10:16; Jer 2:11; Ezek 8:17; Hos 4:7; Hab 1:12; Zech 2:12; Mal 1:13; Ps 106:20; Job 7:20, 32:3; and Lam 3:20.

- 1) Job 7:20
 - a) MT: "...and I have become a burden to myself?"⁴⁵
 - b) Original: "and I have become a burden to you?"⁴⁶
 - c) Most newer translations now follow the original reading.⁴⁷
- 2) Job 32:3
 - a) MT: "and they condemned Job"⁴⁸.
 - b) Original: "and they condemned God"⁴⁹.
 - c) Most newer translations still follow the emendation
- b. Job 13:15
 - 1) MT: "Lo, he will kill me, I have no hope.⁵⁰
Yet my ways to his face I will prove/defend."
 - 2) A "qere" (what is to be read aloud) in the margin of the Masoretic Text has a different reading
"Lo, he will kill me, to him I will hope."⁵¹
Yet my ways to his face I will prove/defend."
 - 3) Some English translations follow the qere
3. Modern examples usually involve trying to explain away the difficulties, soften them or glossing over what is offensive
 - a. Is Job completely righteous? Is Job a man of complete integrity and without flaw? The text says yes, some say no.
 - b. Is God responsible for what happens to Job? The text says yes, others say no.
 - c. Does Job say blasphemous things about God?
 - d. If Job speaks blasphemous things about God, how did Job speak rightly and his friends did not?
4. We need to be careful of jumping immediately to the most comfortable answer.
 - a. Job is a difficult book dealing with difficult issues
 - b. The wide variety of interpretations of Job demonstrates that there are no easy answers.
 - c. In our eagerness to come to God's defense, we need to

⁴⁵ עָלַי "to me"

⁴⁶ עָלֶיךָ "to you" The Septuagint reflects the original reading, εἰμὶ δὲ ἐπὶ σοὶ φορτίον "...but (why) am I to you a burden?"

⁴⁷ The original reading is found in a foot note in BHS, the traditional Hebrew text.

⁴⁸ אִיּוֹב 'ıyyôḇ

⁴⁹ אֱלֹהִים 'ēlōhîm

⁵⁰ לֹא אֵיחָל lō' 'āyahēl "I have no hope"

⁵¹ לֹא אֵיחָל לוֹ lō' 'āyahēl "To/concerning him I will hope"

remember both the words of Job and the words of God

- 1) Job 13:7-10 - Job's accuses his friends of partiality
- 2) Job 42:7-8 - God seems to affirm this
- 3) We need to remember not to make the text say something it does not to make us more comfortable
 - a) If we do, we do not speak rightly concerning God
 - b) If we do, it is not scripture that is talking, but just us talking
 - c) Part of "integrity" is taking the text for what it says, not for what we want it to say

D. Reading and interacting with Job

1. From the perspective of the Narrator
 - a. The narrator is "omniscient"
 - b. The narrator is aware of the wager in Heaven
 - c. The narrator knows that Job is innocent
 - d. The narrator is aware of the reason for Job's calamity
 - e. This reading focuses more on the nature and character of God
2. From the perspective of Job and his friends
 - a. Job is ignorant of the reason for his calamity
 - b. Jobs struggles valiantly to find meaning and vindication
 - c. This reading focuses more on the nature of knowledge and wisdom, it source and limits
3. Theocentric v.s. Anthropocentric reading
 - a. Anthropocentric readings tend to focus on our place and response to God
 - 1) Problem of the righteous sufferer
 - 2) Disinterested goodness
 - 3) The proper attitude and response in suffering
 - 4) The nature of friendship
 - 5) The nature of man
 - b. Theocentric readings tend to focus on the nature of God
 - 1) God's character
 - 2) The nature of God's rule over the cosmos
 - 3) The nature of God's design and meaning of the cosmos
 - 4) The nature of God's wisdom and knowledge
 - 5) Accountability
4. From a Christian v.s. Hebrew perspective

- a. Job in itself does not have a developed view of an eternal life, if at all.
 - 1) This heightens the issues of justice and reward
 - 2) If there is no reward of an afterlife, as in Christian theology, then what is the point if God will not reward you in this life?
 - 3) This makes Job's integrity all the more remarkable
- b. The added perspective of Christian theology in a sense makes us as readers more "omniscient" than even the narrator
 - 1) Job is part of the "Christian" canon, which means it contributes to the overall mosaic of Christian theology.
 - 2) Christian themes of Heaven, resurrection, love, grace, discipline, eternal reward, judgment, and providence all have contributions to the issues that the book of Job deals with

VIII. Strategy for This Study

- A. Since the issues and arguments in Job are progressive, our reading will keep a record of the arguments and proofs that the text presents us
- B. The themes we will trace will fall under these headings
 - 1. The nature of God and his rule. This will include themes such as justice, reward, retribution, and grace, as well as God's design and maintenance of the cosmos.
 - 2. The Nature of Man. This will include themes such as sin, integrity, piety, mortality, etc.
 - 3. Wisdom and Knowledge. This will include things such as the accessibility of wisdom, the sources for wisdom, and the limits of it
 - 4. Friendship. This will include themes of loyalty, self-preservation, integrity, etc.
- C. In addition to these themes we will note how some of the major literary devices contribute to the book
 - 1. The lawsuit
 - 2. Mythopoeic language
 - 3. Sapiental devices, such as the wisdom saying or the proverb
 - 4. Irony
- D. Since this is a book of dialogue, dialogue is encouraged.
- E. Other themes may be added to this list, but this is where we will start.