



JOB – PART I - INTRODUCTION

Bible Jam Session 8– Spring



NOTE:
Spring Semester Schedule:

April 19 & 26 – Reflection Days (No Class)

Semester Completes on May 17 or 24 (TBD)

“There once was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job.”
Job 1:1

MARCH 29, 2022
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From The Interpreter's Bible, *The Book of Job*, Volume IV., p. 319 ff

“ ‘There was once a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job.’ With these words, the Bible introduces one of its most memorable characters. In the popular imagination Job is an icon, emblematic of the sufferer who endures the unendurable without complaint. Yet what many generations have tended to remember about Job is only one aspect of his story. The “patience of Job” has become a cliché that obscures the much more complex figure who appears in the biblical book. Although the book of Job begins with such a depiction of Job as pious, patiently enduring calamity, that initial image serves as a foil for the contrasting representation of Job that follows: Job the rebel, who debunks the piety of his friends and boldly accuses God of injustice. In contrast to the majority of Jewish and Christian interpreters over the centuries, who have often seemed somewhat embarrassed by Job’s unrestrained blasphemies, many 20th century readers, reeling from a century of unparalleled horror, have been drawn to Job’s anger as a voice of moral outrage against a God who could permit such atrocities. The attempt to claim Job as the patron saint of religious rebellion, however, also encounters embarrassment, for at the end of the book, after God’s speech from the whirlwind, Job withdraws his words against God. Neither the character nor the book of Job yields to an easy appropriation. To the reader who is willing to forgo simplistic answers, however, the book offers a challenging exploration of religious issues of fundamental importance: the motivation for *piety*, the meaning of suffering, the nature of God, the place of justice in the world, and the relationship of order and chaos in God’s design of creation.”

1. motivation for piety (Hebrew: 'àdiygt)
Reverence and devotion to God.

2. suffering (Hebrew: sevel – say vil)
Describes physical, spiritual, mental or psychological pain and agony one may feel.

3. nature of God Hebrew: there are many descriptions:
 - Yahweh Elohim – Elohim means one[s] of power and authority
 - Yahweh Tseva'ot – (same as above with the connotation of “forces”)

4. place of justice in the world Hebrew:
 - tzedek: justice – honesty, the path of truth
 - tzedakah: charity
 - tzaddik: righteous person
 - “the first and foremost source of real justice” is *rishon tzedek mamash schenica*, or the presence of God.

5. relationship of order and chaos in God's design of the world. Hebrew:
 - tóhu vavóhu: chaos – without form and void. (the deep; the abyss)

The Theology of Suffering:

According to the Interpreter's Bible in outlining the theological issues in Job:

“perhaps the most prominent issue in the dialogs is that of the proper conduct of a person in suffering. For the friends, suffering is an occasion for moral and religious self-examination and reflection. Although there is no single meaning for suffering, it is to be understood in some way as a communication from God. For the wicked it is judgment; for the ethically unsteady, it is a warning; for the morally immature, it is a form of educational discipline; and for the righteous, it is simply something to be born with the confidence that God will eventually restore well-being. In every case the proper response is to turn to God in humility, trust, and prayer. Implicit in the friends' view is the assumption that God is always right and that it is the human being who must make use of the experience to learn what God is trying to communicate.”

Background

1. The book was written sometime around the 7th to 5th Century BCE.
There are no historical references to events that make it easy to choose a date with certainty.
2. The book of Job is learned and cosmopolitan, full of rare words and archaic verb forms.
3. There are suggestions that this is a reworking of an ancient Mesopotamian poem called: "Ludlul bēi nēmeqi" (I Will Praise the Lord of Wisdom); sometimes known in English as *The Poem of the Righteous Sufferer*. The poem concerns itself with the problem of the unjust suffering of an afflicted man names Shubshi-meshre-Shallan. The author is tormented, but he does not know why. He has been faithful in all his duties to the gods. He speculates that perhaps what is good to man is evil to the gods and vice versa. He is ultimately delivered from his sufferings. Believed to be written ca. 1307-1282 BCE.

4. Following Excerpt from <https://www.worldhistory.org/article/226/the-ludlul-bel-nimeqi---not-merely-a-babylonian-job/>

“The Ludlul-Bel-Nimequ – Not Merely a Bablylonian Job”
from World History Encyclopedia:

There is no question that a number of biblical narratives of the Old Testament have their origins in Sumerian works. The Fall of Man and Noah's Flood in Genesis, for example, can be traced back to the Sumerian works *Adapa* and *Atrahasis*. Because of the similarity of the themes addressed in *Ludlul-Bel-Nimeqi* and *Job*, so many have compared the two works that there exists today the claim that *The Book of Job* was derived from the earlier work in the same way as the Flood story. While there is, obviously, some merit to this claim and a comparison is profitable, it seems a disservice to both works to only read them for what they offer regarding literary borrowing. The *Ludlul-Bel-Nimeqi* could as easily be compared to other books in the **Bible** such as Ecclesiastes or the third chapter of The Lamentations of **Jeremiah**. The speaker in Ecclesiastes asks the same questions as Tabu-utul-Bel and Lamentations chapter three has very similar imagery to *Ludlul-Bel-Nimeqi*. While it is certainly possible that the later work drew on the earlier (as the *Ludlul-Bel-Nimeqi* most likely drew on the earlier *Man and His God*) it is just as probable that the two works simply treat of the same theme. People in the modern day are still wrestling with the question of why good people suffer. When modern readers insist that *The Book of Job* derives from *Ludlul-Bel-Nimeqi* it seems they relegate the earlier poem to mere source material instead of appreciating the work for what it has to say about the human condition.

There are more significant differences between *The Book of Job* and the Babylonian work than there are similarities and, while it may be that the earlier work was drawn on as source material for the later, to read *Ludlul-Bel-Nimeqi* as simply a `rough draft' of biblical narrative (or to dismiss Job as `derivative') is to demean the works as well as miss the point of the pieces. The question `why do bad things happen to good people' is as old as human beings themselves.

Tabu-utul-Bel, like Job, endures terrible suffering even though he has been very religious, observed all the rites and prayers. He says, "But I myself thought of prayers and supplications - Prayer was my wisdom, sacrifice my dignity" and yet still he suffers. Job says likewise, "My foot hath held his steps, his way have I kept, and not declined. Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food" (*Job* 22:11-12). Both works ask how a human being is supposed to understand the will of God and, in the end, both protagonists are healed of their afflictions through divine intervention.

<https://soundcloud.com/soas-university-of-london/the-righteous-sufferer-tablet-ii-read-by-karl-hecker>

5. On wisdom literature: (Interpreter's Bible): "Although the author of Job orchestrates motifs, genres and themes from a variety of different discourses in a way that is not characteristic of the Book of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, one should identify the book of Job primarily with the wisdom tradition. *Wisdom literature is centrally concerned with the nature of proper moral and ad religious conduct of an individual and with the relations of such conduct to personal and communal well-being.*
6. Scholars agree that neither the character Job nor the story about his misfortunes originated in Israel. The name Job is not a typically Israelite name. Moreover, the the story associates itself with the Land of Uz which is to be located either in Edomite or Aramean territory.



Job 1

A Man Devoted to God

1 ¹⁻³ Job was a man who lived in Uz. He was honest inside and out, a man of his word, who was totally devoted to God and hated evil with a passion. He had seven sons and three daughters. He was also very wealthy—seven thousand head of sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred teams of oxen, five hundred donkeys, and a huge staff of servants—the most influential man in all the East!

⁴⁻⁵ His sons used to take turns hosting parties in their homes, always inviting their three sisters to join them in their merrymaking. When the parties were over, Job would get up early in the morning and sacrifice a burnt offering for each of his children, thinking, “Maybe one of them sinned by defying God inwardly.” Job made a habit of this sacrificial atonement, just in case they’d sinned.

The First Test: Family and Fortune

⁶⁻⁷ One day when the angels came to report to GOD, Satan, who was the Designated Accuser, came along with them. GOD singled out Satan and said, “What have you been up to?”

Satan answered GOD, “Going here and there, checking things out on earth.”

⁸ GOD said to Satan, "Have you noticed my friend Job? There's no one quite like him—honest and true to his word, totally devoted to God and hating evil."

⁹⁻¹⁰ Satan retorted, "So do you think Job does all that out of the sheer goodness of his heart? Why, no one ever had it so good! You pamper him like a pet, make sure nothing bad ever happens to him or his family or his possessions, bless everything he does—he can't lose!

¹¹ "But what do you think would happen if you reached down and took away everything that is his? He'd curse you right to your face, that's what."

¹² GOD replied, "We'll see. Go ahead—do what you want with all that is his. Just don't hurt *him*." Then Satan left the presence of GOD.

¹³⁻¹⁵ Sometime later, while Job's children were having one of their parties at the home of the oldest son, a messenger came to Job and said, "The oxen were plowing and the donkeys grazing in the field next to us when Sabeans attacked. They stole the animals and killed the field hands. I'm the only one to get out alive and tell you what happened."

¹⁶ While he was still talking, another messenger arrived and said, "Bolts of lightning struck the sheep and the shepherds and fried them—burned them to a crisp. I'm the only one to get out alive and tell you what happened."

¹⁷ While he was still talking, another messenger arrived and said, "Chaldeans coming from three directions raided the camels and massacred the camel drivers. I'm the only one to get out alive and tell you what happened."

¹⁸⁻¹⁹ While he was still talking, another messenger arrived and said, "Your children were having a party at the home of the oldest brother when a tornado swept in off the desert and struck the house. It collapsed on the young people and they died. I'm the only one to get out alive and tell you what happened."

²⁰ Job got to his feet, ripped his robe, shaved his head, then fell to the ground and worshiped:

²¹ Naked I came from my mother's womb,
naked I'll return to the womb of the earth.

GOD gives, GOD takes.

God's name be ever blessed.

²² Not once through all this did Job sin; not once did he blame God.

<https://youtu.be/GswSg2ohqmA>

Wisdom Series

<https://youtu.be/xQwnH8th fs>

The Book of Job

JOB'S DEBATE WITH THE FRIENDS



- 1 IS GOD JUST?
- 2 DOES GOD RUN THE UNIVERSE ON THE STRICT PRINCIPLE OF JUSTICE?
- 3 HOW IS JOB'S SUFFERING TO BE EXPLAINED?

JOB

AN INVITATION TO TRUST GOD'S GOODWILL

UNIQUE BOOK IN THE BIBLE

- SET IN '02' FAR AWAY FROM ISRAEL
- ALL CHARACTERS ARE NON-ISRAELITES
- THERE IS NO CLEAR HISTORICAL SETTING

The Point

THE AUTHOR WANTS US TO FOCUS ON THE QUESTIONS RAISED BY JOB'S SUFFERING

INTENTIONAL!

1-2

• BEHEMOTH
• LEVIATHAN
• THE WHIRLWIND

WHY? AS ANSWER THE LORD ASKED AMONGST THE WHIRLWINDS...

3-28

ARGUMENT: I'M INNOCENT!
IMPLICATION: MY SUFFERING IS NOT DIVINE JUSTICE

CONCLUSION A: GOD DOESN'T RUN THE WORLD ACCORDING TO JUSTICE
OR
CONCLUSION B: GOD IS UNJUST

3-37

ARGUMENT: GOD IS JUST
IMPLICATION: GOD RUNS THE WORLD ACCORDING TO JUSTICE

CONCLUSION: JOB MUST HAVE SINNED

JOB'S PROTEST

EMOTIONAL INTERLUDES

THE JUSTICE OF THE INNOCENT: 9:22-23

THE INJUSTICE OF THE WICKED: 16:9-10

THE INJUSTICE OF THE WICKED: 21:7-10

38-41

THE POINT: GOD'S ASSUMPTION OF JUSTICE - THE POINT: JOB HAS SUFFERED ENOUGH TO MAKE A CLAIM SUCH AS A CLAIM

BEHEMOTH: THE CHAMPION OF THE BEASTS

LEVIATHAN: THE MOST DANGEROUS OF BEASTS

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GOD HONORS JOB'S SUFFERING

THE POINT: JOB HAS SUFFERED ENOUGH TO MAKE A CLAIM SUCH AS A CLAIM

JOBS FAMILY & FORTUNES RESTORED

WHY? & BUT:

THE REAL QUESTIONS: IS GOD JUST? AND IF HE IS, WHY DOES HE ALLOW SUFFERING TO HAPPEN?

WHY? AS ANSWER THE LORD ASKED AMONGST THE WHIRLWINDS...

WHY? AS ANSWER THE LORD ASKED AMONGST THE WHIRLWINDS...

PROLOGUE

JOB & THE FRIENDS

GOD'S RESPONSE

EPILOGUE