

Job 1:1-22, 21:1-34, 38:1-41, 39:1-2, 26-30, 42 ; 1-17 - The Book of Job - (from *The Hebrew Bible* in English, published by the Jewish Publication Society of America, 1917 Edition.

Considered a masterpiece of world literature, “the book of Job is a sustained reflection on the nature of genuine religious faith. It squarely faces the possibility that in the grand scheme of things God neither rewards persons for their faith and virtue nor punishes them for lack thereof. At the heart of the inquiry lies the problem of evil: if God is all-good and all-powerful, why do bad things happen to good people? Will the apparent injustices of this life ultimately be balanced by a cosmic justice? And the answer that the book of Job gives to these questions – controversy. At the outset of the book, the virtuous Job suffers the death of his ten children and the devastation of his property. Faithfully humble at first, Job cries out in resignation.” What does the story of Job say about the Jewish issue of suffering? Along with Proverbs, Job is part of Judaism “wisdom literature.” While Proverbs attempts to understand the moral and physical universe, Job wrestles with the enigmas of the moral order. As a divinely ordained moral order, the issue of choice and free will are presupposed within this order; hence the need for humanity to have laws, seek justice and adhere to a moral world. Partial source: Phillip Novak. *The World’s Wisdom*. Edison, NJ: Castle Books. 1994:206-07)

(Naked Come I Job 1:1-22.)

1:1 There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was whole-hearted and upright, and one that feared God, and shunned evil. **2** And there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters. **3** His possessions also were seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she-asses, and a very great household; so that this man was the greatest of all the children of the east. **4** And his sons used to go and hold a feast in the house of each one upon his day; and they would send and invite their three sisters to eat and to drink with them. **5** And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt-offerings according to the number of them all; for Job said: 'It may be that my sons have sinned, and blasphemed God in their hearts.' Thus did Job continually.

6 Now it fell upon a day, that the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them.¹ **7** And the LORD said unto Satan: 'Whence comest thou?' Then Satan answered the LORD, and said: 'From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.' **8** And the LORD said unto Satan: 'Hast thou considered My servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a whole-hearted and an upright man, one that feareth God, and shunneth evil?' **9** Then Satan answered the LORD, and said: 'Doth Job fear God for nought? **10** Hast not Thou made a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath, on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions are increased in the land. **11** But put forth Thy hand now, and touch all that he hath, surely he will blaspheme Thee to Thy face.' **12** And the LORD said unto Satan: 'Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thy hand.' So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD. **13**

¹ The Satan referred to in this text is understood not as the Devil in the Christian sense, the cosmic counter-point of the LORD, but as “an adversary” to challenge and test the LORD’s relationship with the Jews, the ultimate prosecutor working for the LORD.

And it fell on a day when his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house, **14** that there came a messenger unto Job, and said: 'The oxen were plowing, and the asses feeding beside them; **15** and the Sabeans made a raid, and took them away; yea, they have slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.' **16** While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said: 'A fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep, and the servants, and consumed them; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.' **17** While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said: 'The Chaldeans set themselves in three bands, and fell upon the camels, and have taken them away, yea, and slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.' **18** While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said: 'Thy sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house; **19** And, behold, there came a great wind from across the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young people, and they are dead; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.' **20** Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped; **21** And he said; naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither; the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD. **22** For all this Job sinned not, nor ascribed aught unseemly to God.

("But the limits of Job's patience are soon exceeded. When he further suffers the ravages of a debilitating disease, Job craves the day of his birth. Three of his **friends** arrive [Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar] to comfort him, but in effect, they berate Job for some disobedience of the LORD he must have committed. They maintain that surely God's justice is supreme, that the LORD always rewards the good and punishes the evil; surely Job must have done something to deserve this, they tell him. He must confess his sins. But Job insists – and the book's omniscient author verifies – that Job is blameless. Job then challenges God to provide a justification for a good person's undeserved suffering and defiantly asks how it is that evil people can prosper. Phillip Novak. *The World's Wisdom*. Edison, NJ: Castle Books. 1994:207)

(Why Do the Wicked Live On? Job 21:1-34)

21:1 Then Job answered and said: **2** Hear diligently my speech; and let this be your consolations. **3** Suffer me, that I may speak; and after that I have spoken, mock on. **4** As for me, is my complaint to man? Or why should I not be impatient? **5** Turn unto me, and be astonished, and lay your hand upon your mouth. **6** Even when I remember I am affrighted, and horror hath taketh hold on my flesh. **7** Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, wax mighty in power? **8** Their seed is established in their sight with them, and their offspring before their eyes. **9** Their houses are safe, without fear, neither is the rod of God upon them. **10** Their bull gendereth, and faileth not; their cow calveth, and casteth not her calf. **11** They send forth their little ones like a flock, and their children dance. **12** They sing to the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the pipe. **13** They spend their days in prosperity, and peacefully they go down to the grave. **14** Yet they said unto God: 'Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways. **15** What is the Almighty, that we should serve Him?

And what profit should we have, if we pray unto Him?'--**16** Lo, their prosperity is not in their hand; the counsel of the wicked is far from me. **17** How oft is it that the lamp of the wicked is put out? that their calamity cometh upon them?that He distributeth pains in His anger? **18** That they are as stubble before the wind, and as chaff that the storm stealeth away? **19** 'God layeth up his iniquity for his children!'--let Him recompense it unto himself, that he may know it. **20** Let his own eyes see his destruction, and let him drink of the wrath of the Almighty. **21** For what pleasure hath he in his house after him? seeing the number of his months is determined. **22** Shall any teach God knowledge? seeing it is He that judgeth those that are high. **23** One dieth in his full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet; **24** His pails are full of milk, and the marrow of his bones is moistened. **25** And another dieth in bitterness of soul, and hath never tasted of good. **26** They lie down alike in the dust, and the worm covereth them. **27** Behold, I know your thoughts, and the devices which ye wrongfully imagine against me. **28** For ye say: 'Where is the house of the prince? And where is the tent wherein the wicked dwelt?' **29** Have ye not asked them that go by the way; and will ye misdeem their tokens, **30** That the evil man is reserved to the day of calamity, that they are led forth to the day of wrath? **31** But who shall declare his way to his face? And who shall repay him what he hath done? **32** For he is borne to the grave, and watch is kept over his tomb. **33** The clods of the valley are sweet unto him, and all men draw after him, as there were innumerable before him. **34** How then comfort ye me in vain? And as for your answers, there remaineth only faithlessness?

(The contest between Job's friends' traditional pieties and his own despair ends in a deadlock. Toward the book's end, God speaks to Job out of a whirlwind. Are Job's misgivings answered? View 1. Some commentators believe that Job gets his answer precisely in the direct *experience of God*; only experience, not a rational, cause-effect explanation, can resolve Job's questions. In this view, mystical experience doesn't answer questions, it *swallows* them. View 2. Still others believe that God's words imply that there is no divine system of justice at all, and that authentic religious faith requires human righteousness in spite of this fact. Resign yourself to whatever fate you are dealt. View 3. Because God does not respond directly to Job's questions, still other commentators believe that the answer is, in effect, that God's ways are flatly incomprehensible to human beings; the LORD is sovereign over humanity. Rational understanding thereof is impossible. Appearing the the story prior to this section, a **fourth friend**, Elihu (El-i-hu; his name means "My God is He") strongly condemns the approach of the other three friends and supports this third approach. Elihu maintains the sovereignty, omnipotence and righteousness of the LORD. Elihu stresses that Job or any mere human does not have the moral or spiritual authority to presuppose that he can "make his case" before the LORD, to be an equal, no less comprehend the LORD's actions. To assume such equivalence shows only human arrogance. Only the LORD can understand what the LORD does. Partial source, Phillip Novak. *The World's Wisdom*. Edison, NJ: Castle Books. 1994:208)

(God Responds to Job: Where Were You When I Laid the Foundations of the Earth? Job 38:1-41, 39:1-2, 26-30)

38:1 Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said: **2** Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? **3** Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto Me. **4** Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare, if thou hast the understanding. **5** Who determined the measures thereof, if thou knowest? Or who stretched the line upon it? **6** Whereupon were the foundations thereof fastened? Or who laid the corner-stone thereof, **7** When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? **8** Or who shut up the sea with doors, when it broke forth, and issued out of the womb; **9** When I made the cloud the garment thereof, and thick darkness a swaddlingband for it, **10** And prescribed for it My decree, and set bars and doors, **11** And said: 'Thus far shalt thou come, but no further; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed'? **12** Hast thou commanded the morning since thy days began, and caused the dayspring to know its place; **13** That it might take hold of the ends of the earth, and the wicked be shaken out of it? **14** It is changed as clay under the seal; and they stand as a garment. **15** But from the wicked their light is withholden, and the high arm is broken. **16** Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea? Or hast thou walked in the recesses of the deep? **17** Have the gates of death been revealed unto thee? Or hast thou seen the gates of the shadow of death? **18** Hast thou surveyed unto the breadths of the earth? Declare, if thou knowest it all. **19** Where is the way to the dwelling of light, and as for darkness, where is the place thereof; **20** That thou shouldest take it to the bound thereof, and that thou shouldest know the paths to the house thereof? **21** Thou knowest it, for thou wast then born, and the number of thy days is great! **22** Hast thou entered the treasures of the snow, or hast thou seen the treasures of the hail, **23** Which I have reserved against the time of trouble, against the day of battle and war? **24** By what way is the light parted, or the east wind scattered upon the earth? **25** Who hath cleft a channel for the waterflood, or a way for the lightning of the thunder; **26** To cause it to rain on a land where no man is, on the wilderness, wherein there is no man; **27** To satisfy the desolate and waste ground, and to cause the bud of the tender herb to spring forth? **28** Hath the rain a father? Or who hath begotten the drops of dew? **29** Out of whose womb came the ice? And the hoar-frost of heaven, who hath gendered it? **30** The waters are congealed like stone, and the face of the deep is frozen. **31** Canst thou bind the chains of the Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion? **32** Canst thou lead forth the Mazzaroth in their season? Or canst thou guide the Bear with her sons? **33** Knowest thou the ordinances of the heavens? Canst thou establish the dominion thereof in the earth? **34** Canst thou lift up thy voice to the clouds, that abundance of waters may cover thee? **35** Canst thou send forth lightnings, that they may go, and say unto thee: 'Here we are'? **36** Who hath put wisdom in the inward parts? Or who hath given understanding to the mind? **37** Who can number the clouds by wisdom? Or who can pour out the bottles of heaven, **38** When the dust runneth into a mass, and the clods cleave fast together? **39** Wilt thou hunt the prey for the lioness? Or satisfy the appetite of the young lions, **40** When they couch in their dens, and abide in the covert to lie in wait? **41** Who

provideth for the raven his prey, when his young ones cry unto God, and wander for lack of food?

39:1 Knowest thou the time when the wild goats of the rock bring forth? Or canst thou mark when the hinds do calve? **2** Canst thou number the months that they fulfil? Or knowest thou the time when they bring forth?

39:26 Doth the hawk soar by thy wisdom, and stretch her wings toward the south? **27** Doth the vulture mount up at thy command, and make her nest on high? **28** She dwelleth and abideth on the rock, upon the crag of the rock, and the stronghold. **29** From thence she spieth out the prey; her eyes behold it afar off. **30** Her young ones also suck up blood; and where the slain are, there is she.

(Job's Closing Response Job 42:1-17 In this complicated and seemingly contradictory final section, Job acknowledges his lack of understanding the LORD's ways and repents for his arrogance. The three **friends** of Job are rebuked by the LORD for their simplistic retribution view that faith and righteousness are always rewarded, and disobedience and sin are always punished. Yet the LORD has the three friends make a sacrifice to HIM and have Job pray over them. Once done, the LORD restores Job's wealth, in fact twice as much as before, along with his children and health, suggesting that a truly obedient servant of the LORD would be rewarded. Is there some sort of divine yet incomprehensible cosmic retribution after all? Perhaps Job was just being tested by the LORD? But do we really know that Job was being rewarded for his longstanding piety or for the simple act of praying over others? Perhaps we are left with the realization that we can never really know the why we suffer or the why we are rewarded. We should simply resign ourselves to the omnipotence and sovereignty of the LORD's will. Leave the driving to the LORD. If this is the case, the position of Job's fourth friend, Elihu, was thus prophetic, though he himself is not acknowledged in this final section.)

42:1 Then Job answered the LORD, and said: **2** I know that Thou canst do every thing, and that no purpose can be withholden from Thee. **3** Who is this that hideth counsel without knowledge? Therefore have I uttered that which I understood not, things too wonderful for me, which I knew not. **4** Hear, I beseech Thee, and I will speak; I will demand of Thee, and declare Thou unto me. **5** I had heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth Thee; **6** Wherefore I abhor my words, and repent, seeing I am dust and ashes.

7 And it was so, that after the LORD had spoken these words unto Job, the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite: 'My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends; for ye have not spoken of Me the thing that is right, as My servant Job hath. **8** Now therefore, take unto you seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to My servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt-offering; and My servant Job shall pray for you; for him will I accept, that I do not unto you aught unseemly; for ye have not spoken of Me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath.' **9** So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went, and did according as the LORD commanded them; and the LORD accepted Job. **10** And the LORD

changed the fortune of Job, when he prayed for his friends; and the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before. **11** Then came there unto him all his brethren, and all his sisters, and all they that had been of his acquaintance before, and did eat bread with him in his house; and they bemoaned him, and comforted him concerning all the evil that the LORD had brought upon him; every man also gave him a piece of money, and every one a ring of gold. **12** So the LORD blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning; and he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she-asses. **13** He had also seven sons and three daughters. **14** And he called the name of the first, Jemimah; and the name of the second, Keziah; and the name of the third, Keren-happuch. **15** And in all the land were no women found so fair as the daughters of Job; and their father gave them inheritance among their brethren. **16** And after this Job lived a hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, even four generations. **17** So Job died, being old and full of days.

(Regardless of how you interpret and understand the story of Job, it is insightful to compare the relationship Job had with the LORD with the relationship of Abraham and the LORD. How are they similar and different? What implications might be drawn from each story on how humanity is to relate to the LORD?)