

JOB

Introduction

Author. While much of the book consists of the words of Job and his three friends it is unlikely that Job wrote the book. The author was evidently an Israelite since he uses the covenant name YHWH some 25 times in chapters 1-2 and 38-42. The unknown author probably had access to oral and or written sources which he used under divine inspiration to compose the book we now have. Indeed, only through divine revelation could a man be privy to the events of chapters one and two.

Date. The events of the book probably occurred in the times of the patriarchs (circa 2000 B.C.) for the following reasons. The length of Job's life corresponds to those in the patriarchal period. His wealth is reckoned in terms common among the patriarchs (1:3). Job's daughters are heirs to his estate which would not have been the case under Mosaic Law. There is a complete absence in the book of references to Mosaic institutions. Job's function as the priest of the clan fits the patriarchal time period well. The date of the events must be distinguished however from the date of composition. Because of the wisdom motif which is prevalent the book may have been composed at about the same time as the rest of the wisdom literature, around Solomon's time, circa 1000 B.C.

Occasion. No occasion is noted in the work itself. The message itself suggests that the book was intended to offset a strong retribution theology. That is, the book refutes a rigid one-dimensional view that a man's spirituality can be divined from an examination of his fortunes. As with the rest of wisdom literature this is a message that is transdispensational. It surely was particularly appropriate however for the covenant people who lived under a system which emphasized blessing as the result of obedience and discipline for disobedience.

The purpose of the book has been interpreted as an answer to why the righteous suffer (to glorify God) or the purposes in suffering (to purify the believer). These do not seem to be the aims of the text, however. The best clue may be found in the introduction where Satan challenges God that Job only serves him because it is profitable to do so (1:9-11). It is from this challenge that the testing of Job seems to be initiated and it is from this perspective that the book must be interpreted. The book answers the question "Why should a believer serve God" or perhaps "what is the basis of the relationship between God and man?" Or as Dr. Gregory Parsons has proposed the purpose of the book "to show that the proper relationship between God and man is based

solely upon the sovereign grace of God and man's response of faith and submissive trust."¹ Thus the suffering of Job "was introduced only as a means of isolating and intensifying the question of the proper basis of man's relationship to God."

Message Statement. *The basis of serving God, that is, living righteously, is a full recognition of who God is rather than a desire for the benefits of serving Him.*

Argument

- 1A PROLOGUE 1:1--2:13
The importance of this section is difficult to overstate. Although the players in the drama were not privy to this metaphysical background it is absolutely necessary to the message of the book.
- 1B A Description Of Job 1:1-5
Throughout the first three quarters of the book Job is charged with having hidden sin by his friends. This section lays to rest any suggestion that Job's suffering is due to sin. Four times in the first verse the righteousness of Job is declared. Job is pictured as faithfully fulfilling his responsibilities as the priest of the family clan in a pre-levitical society.
- 2B The Supernatural Background 1:6--2:10
This section provides the point of the testing and of the book: the proper relationship between Job and God. Satan charges that the basis of their relationship is little more than a contractual business agreement in which Job serves God for profit. The essence of their relationship will be seen to be one of sovereign grace on God's part and submissive trust on the part of Job, though at this point, Job does not fully comprehend this.
- 3B The Human Visitors 2:11-13
Job's three friends arrive at this point and sit in silence with Job for one week.
- 1B DIALOGUE 3:1--27:23
This section is structured into three cycles of speeches, each one including monologues by Job's friends and his response to them. In the progression of the dialogue the speeches of the friends become progressively shorter and Job's responses grow longer suggesting Job's verbal victory over his three friends. In fact in the third cycle the last speaker, Zophar is completely silent. This design tends to shift the focus away from human dialogue and prepares the audience for the confrontation of Job first by Elihu (32-37) and, more importantly, then God (38-42).
- 1B Job's Opening Monologue: Personal Lament 3:1-26
Job's words here are spoken before any of his friends speak. The sum of his words is simply despair. It is evident that Job himself honors the one dimensional theology of moral retribution in which there is a direct correspondence between sin and suffering. Unlike his friends who have the luxury of supposing some hidden sin in Job which allows them to retain their theology, Job can only respond to the conflict between his theology and experience with despair. His desire for death is quite clear.
- 2B Three Cycles of Dialogue Between Job & His Friends 4:1--27:23
- 1C First cycle 4:1--14:22
- 1D Eliphaz' first speech: affirmation of retribution theology 4:1--5:27
Eliphaz opens his speech with a word of deference that Job had often counselled others and now it is time for him to receive counsel (4:1-6). He then proceeds with a clear articulation of retribution theology, "Consider now: Who, being innocent, ever perished?" (4:7). He then uses the universality of sin as an encouragement to Job not to be afraid of admitting his sin. Eliphaz insists that this truth was given

¹Gregory Parsons, "A Biblical Theology of Job 38:1--42:6", Th.D. dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1980, p. 61.

- him by divine revelation in some kind of night vision (4:12-16). He closes with the counsel that God will bless the repentant sinner (5:8-27) with the obvious implication that God will be merciful to Job if he but repents.
- 2D Job's first reply to Eliphaz 6:1--7:21
Job's basic reply to Eliphaz may be summarized as "My fate is not deserved." In the first part of his response Job states his disappointment with his friends. They have not relieved his situation and they are undependable and cruel. Then Job's frustration with his situation spills over into a complaint against God. At this point he wonders why God pays so much attention to his life, given its transitory nature.
- 3D Bildad's first speech: Job is wrong in challenging the "justice of God" 8:1-22
Bildad is insisting upon the same moral equation that Job and Eliphaz have espoused. In fact throughout the speeches of the three friends there is no new approach to truth or theology. The friends are completely unresponsive to Job's claims of innocence and make no attempt to deal with them except to assume either his naivete or bald hypocrisy. Bildad's speech is simple and direct if not cruel. He first expounds the principles of retribution theology (8:1-7), stating that "When your children sinned against him he gave them over to the penalty of their sin" (8:4). He then cites the hoary tradition of retribution theology for his confidence in it (8:8-19). Finally his application to Job comes in a recommendation to repent (8:20-22).
- 4D Job's first reply to Bildad 9:1--10:22
This is the first time that Job introduces his desire to contend with God. He has come to the conclusion that because he is blameless God is therefore unjust to make him suffer. If he could only have his day in court with God he could be vindicated. Job recognizes however that God is much too powerful for him to approach. It is in this dilemma that Job cries out for a mediator who could stand up to God, declare his case, and silence God (9:33-35). Job goes further in chapter 10 actually stating that God is unfair and negligent to his creation. The seriousness of Job's charges are reflected in the responses of his friends.
- 5D Zophar's first speech 11:1-20
Zophar flatly states that Job speaks as a fool who mocks God. If the first two friends have been gracious with Job, Zophar prefers the direct route of accusation. He insists that Job should be grateful because God has even overlooked some of his sin (11:7). If Job were only to get what was really coming to him he would be in real trouble. In the end, however, Zophar has introduced no new teaching into the dialogue, only a higher degree of zeal and antagonism.
- 6D Job's first reply to Zophar 12:1--14:22
Job responds to Zophar's duplication of the friend's speeches with "I've heard this all before." In order to outdo his detractors Job first preaches a sermon declaring God's sovereignty which eclipses their descriptions. He then expresses disappointment with his friends (13:1-12) and wonders out loud how they would endure the scrutiny of the God whose ways they so confidently proclaim. Job once again finds himself requesting an audience with God. He recognizes the peril in which this places him but he feels he must be honest (13:20-28). This being his only alternative, Job laments the ephemeralness of life (14:1-22).
- 2C Second cycle 15:1--21:34
- 1D Eliphaz' second speech 15:1-35
In this second speech Eliphaz quickly loses his temper with Job. He first accuses Job of speaking like a fool (15:1-6), then of rejecting the collective wisdom of the ages (15:7-13), then of falsely claiming righteousness (15:14-16). Then rather than assuring Job in a positive manner that God would hear him, he negatively reviews the fate of the wicked.
- 2D Job's second reply to Eliphaz 16:1--17:6

- Job first states his frustration with the tired arguments of his friends. Because he basically holds to the rigid retribution theology and yet cannot deny his own integrity he is left in despair (16:6-17). The only solution Job can see to his despair is to stand before the bar of God's justice and adjudicate his case directly with God (16:18--17:5). In the end Job affirms his integrity and invites his friends to try again (17:6-16).
- 3D Bildad's second speech 18:1-21
It is clear that Job's friends are tiring of his claim to righteousness. Perhaps they are feeling personally threatened by his claim. If it is possible to suffer without sin then they might be vulnerable. At any rate it is clear that their concern for protecting their theology is quickly eclipsing any concern for Job's comfort.
- 4D The second reply of Job to Bildad 19:1-29
Because he can find absolutely no consolation in man Job is forced to trust in God. No matter what kind of confusion and disappointment may confront him his only recourse is to trust in his redeemer. His heart is thrilled with the prospect of final vindication and he warns his friends against an attitude which would condemn him lest they be condemned.
- 5D Zophar's second speech: against sin! 20:1-29
Zophar delivers here a marvelous theology of sin and its punishment. The only problem is that it is completely irrelevant to Job. Once again, his motivation to defend his theology comes to the fore in this otherwise vain argument.
- 6D Job's second reply to Zophar: retribution theology may not be valid 21:1-34
In this passage Job first begins to question the direct equation of retribution theology which is so clearly at the heart of his friends counsel. He begins to question the teaching that the righteous always enjoy life and that the wicked always suffer. He first calls upon his friends to listen (21:1-2), implying that they are more intent on delivering their speeches than in responding to Job. Job acknowledges that it is right for the wicked to suffer but notes that often they do not. His conclusion is that a strict moral equation between sin and suffering is nonsense (21:34).
- 3C Third cycle 22:1--27:22
- 1D Eliphaz' third speech 22:1-30
Eliphaz feels that Job is becoming much too personal with God. He affirms that God is not affected by any man's righteousness. Before this Eliphaz was content to insist upon the fact of Job's sin but here he begins to catalogue them. Because of the prologue we recognize that none of these things are true; nevertheless, Bildad will follow the example of Eliphaz.
- 2D Job's third reply to Eliphaz 23:1--24:25
Job seems so disappointed in the replies of his friends that he fails to even acknowledge them. In this section Job longs again to take his case directly to God. As before, however, he has mixed emotions, feeling that if he did actually gain an audience with the almighty that God would simply destroy him (23:13-17). He then again rehearses certain weaknesses of retribution theology (24:1-25).
- 3D Bildad's third speech 25:1-6
This final speech of Bildad is noticeably shorter, betraying his poverty of thought. It appears that he speaks more out of the fear that remaining silent will only encourage Job rather than from the conviction that he has something of value to contribute. Indeed Zophar does not even venture a word at this point implying that Job has beaten his friends at the debate. Their speeches become shorter and resort more to diatribe and denunciation rather than reasoned response.
- 4D Job's third reply to Bildad 26:1--27:23
As with Eliphaz Job realizes that he need not dignify their empty answers and

instead summarizes his feelings up to this point. He agrees with the friends that God is all powerful. He disagrees, however, with their assertions of his hidden sin. He does affirm that the wicked deserve punishment.

- 1C POST-DIALOGUE 28:1--42:17
- 1B Job's Poem of Wisdom 28:1-28
After the heated debate with his friends Job delivers here, in logical fashion, his philosophy of life. He begins by acknowledging the ingenuity of man. Yet, in spite of man's achievements he can not find wisdom: its only source is in God. Finally Job closes with a succinct statement concerning wisdom, "The fear of the Lord--that is wisdom, and to shun evil is understanding" (28:28). This verse is a close paraphrase of God's description of Job in 1:1 and serves to vindicate Job after the heated exchanges with and charges from his friends.
- 2B Job's final monologues 29:1--31:40
In this final defense of his integrity Job is not speaking to his friends nor God, rather it is a personal musing upon the past which reveals the inner thoughts of the man. He begins by reflecting on the past and his happiness with God and man. He thoroughly enjoyed his responsibilities as the head of his clan (29:1-25). This happy state is compared with his present predicament (30:1-31). He is now ill-treated by society and by God. His final plea of innocence (31:1-40) evidences the highest ethical standards found in the Old Testament. Whereas before his friends had ventured to catalogue his sin, Job now correctly catalogues his innocence. The whole chapter is cast in the form of an oath, "If my character is not like this may God curse me!"
- 3B The Speeches of Elihu 32:1--37:24
Elihu is evidently a young bystander who has witnessed the dialogue between Job and his friends. He recognizes that Job has silenced his friends and feels that someone needs now to silence Job. He agrees with the basic theology that Job has sinned but is more sensitive to his situation. Elihu will succeed in silencing Job. Although he is not faultless in his theology he is not charged with sin by God at the end of the book as the others are. The function of his speeches in the narrative serve to bring Job to the point where he is willing to listen to God when God appears.
- 1C The introduction of Elihu 32:1-22
Elihu introduces himself and defends his right to speak.
- 2C Speech #1: response to Job's charge that God is silent 33:1-33
Elihu has listened to Job's charge that he can not find God and that God is silent. Elihu contends that God has been speaking all the time. The problem is not with God's silence but rather Job's deafness. His conclusion is that God does speak and therefore Job should listen more carefully.
- 3C Speech #2: Response to Job's charge that God is unjust in dealing with man 34:1-37
Elihu first insists that Job's innocence is impossible (34:1-9). Another impossibility, according to Elihu, is that men could charge God with injustice. If God were not just, the moral universe would collapse (34:10-20). Finally, in a less abrasive way, but just as firmly, Elihu expounds retribution theology (34:21-37).
- 4C Speech #3: response to Job's charge that there is no profit in serving God 35:1-16
Elihu points out that man's righteousness does not benefit God. It only benefits man. If a man is unrighteous, God will not hear him.
- 5C Speech #4: The magnificence & glory of God 36:1--37:24
Elihu's emphasis in his final speech is on the magnificence of God in relation to man and creation. His conclusion is that God's greatness should preclude any man from requesting redress from God's treatment. The only proper response of any man consists of reverence toward God (37:24).

In these four speeches it is true that Elihu has not advanced much beyond the theology of the three friends. Yet his focus seemed to be more centered upon the majesty and glory of God rather than a self-serving defense of his theological system. Thus, while unable

to convince Job, he was at least able to succeed where the others failed in silencing Job. At this point, then, Job is prepared to listen to God.

- 4B The Interaction Between God and Job 38:1--42:6
While this section may not answer the questions of Job, one must remember that it does answer the proper questions. It brings Job to the point of repentance and trust where God desired him. The basic thrust seems to be that as Job trusts God in the natural processes of nature, so also he should trust him in all areas of his life. God goes for two rounds with Job challenging him to consider various features of the created order.
- 1C The first round 38:1--40:5
God appeals to Job to consider His majesty (and in turn Job's finiteness) as manifest both in the physical universe (38:4-38) and in the animal universe (38:39--39:30). After God has finished questioning Job he challenges him to answer. This is just the opportunity for which Job begged throughout the book. Now when he gets his chance he quickly admits his finiteness and his insufficiency (40:3-5). He does not yet repent, though, so God goes another round with him.
- 2C The second round 40:6--42:6
God's challenge to Job is much more pointed this time with the challenge, "Would you discredit my justice? Would you condemn me to justify yourself" (40:8)? He then proceeds to challenge Job to function as deity, "Then adorn yourself with glory and splendor, and clothe yourself in honor and majesty" (40:10). The point is that in challenging God's justice Job has put himself on an equal level as God. "If Job has asserted himself in this way, perhaps he can function as deity in other ways as well" is the challenge. The specific challenges here involve the taming or domestication of two mighty wonders of the created world, behemoth (40:15-24) and leviathan (41:1-34). Job's response to this challenge is more advanced than previously. This time he not only admits his smallness but also submits to God's authority and repents (42:1-6). In this repentance, Job is not repenting of sins done before his suffering, but rather of his arrogance of charging God with injustice. Through this encounter with God (38-42) he has come to know God in a "first-hand" sort of way. It was not his suffering per se but the encounter with God which taught him the necessity of trusting God whatever the circumstances. Indeed, Job has learned that his response of submissive trust is the only appropriate response to and the summary of his responsibility to God.
- 1D EPILOGUE 42:7-17
- 1B God's Rebuke of the Three Friends of Job 42:7-9
God's rebuke of Job's three friends provides the necessary filter to evaluate their theology expressed in the earlier parts of the book. Evidently, their theology of "retribution" was insufficient to describe the way in which God deals with men.
- 2B God's Restoration of the Fortunes of Job 42:10-17
Some have felt that the close of this book serves to affirm the teaching of retribution theology. However, it should be noted that Job's suffering was not the result of sin. His confession concerned his sin of arrogance which arose in the midst of his suffering not before it. Secondly, God's restoration of his fortunes must be understood in light of the teaching of the book as a whole. Job's restoration is not meant to teach that God always or immediately blesses the righteous. The message of the book would have been just as powerful and God's ways just as blameless if Job had simply died. God's ways may often be beyond the ability of men to understand but they will always be consistent with his loving and wise character. His blessing of the righteous may not be immediate but it is ultimately inevitable.

Outline

1A	PROLOGUE	1:1--2:13
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1C	His character	1:1
2C	His prosperity	1:2-3
1D	His family	1:2
2D	His wealth	1:3
3C	His piety	1:4-5
2B	<u>The Supernatural Background</u>	1:6--2:10
1C	Satan's first test of Job	1:6-22
1D	The setting	1:6-11
1E	God's approval of Job	1:6-8
2E	Satan's accusation	1:9-11
3E	God's permission	1:12
2D	The affliction : loss of wealth and family	1:13-19
1E	loss of wealth	1:13-17
2E	loss of children	1:18-19
3D	The response	1:20-22
1E	his words	1:20-21
2E	God's evaluation	1:22
2C	Satan's second test of Job	2:1-10
1D	The setting	2:1-6
1E	God's approval of Job	2:1-3
2E	Satan's accusation	2:4-5
3E	God's permission	2:6
2D	The affliction: personal suffering	2:7-8
3D	The response	2:9-10
1E	his words	2:9-10a
2E	God's evaluation	2:10b
3B	<u>The Human Visitors</u>	2:11-13
1C	Their purpose	2:11
2C	Their reactions	2:12-13
2A	DIALOGUE	3:1--27:23
1B	<u>Job's Opening Monologue: Personal Lament</u>	3:1-26
1C	His disappointment at life: wishing he had never been born	3:1-10
2C	His desire: to have never been born	3:11-19

3C	His despair: over the conflict between his experience and theology	3:20-26
2B	<u>Three Cycles of Dialogue Between Job & His Friends</u>	4:1--27:23
1C	First cycle	4:1--14:22
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1E	message of rebuke	4:1-6
1F	Job has given advice in the past	4:1-4
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1F	the source of the message: divine revelation	4:12-16
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2F	God will hear the cry of the repentant	5:8-16
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2D	Job's first reply to Eliphaz	6:1--7:21
1E	disappointment with his friends	6:1-30
1F	Job's difficult situation not relieved by his friends	6:1-7
2F	Job desires death to avoid blasphemy	6:8-13
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1G	they are undependable	6:14-23
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1F	his life is transitory	7:1-10
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2F	the reason: the power of God	9:4-13
3F	the cause: Job's hopelessness due to God's perversion of justice	9:14-31
4F	his hope: a mediator who could contend with God	9:32-35
2E	Job's accusation: God is unfair	10:1-22
1F	God is unfair	10:1-7
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5D	Zophar's first speech	11:1-20
1E	a rebuke of Job	11:1-12
1F	introduction	11:1-3
2F	God's infinity	11:4-9
3F	God's justice/Job's sinfulness	11:10-12
2E	an exhortation to repent	11:13-20
6D	Job's first reply to Zophar	12:1--14:22
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1F	Job's equality with his peers	12:1-3
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	2E	God's transcendence	12:7-25
	3E	Job's disappointment with his friends	13:1-12
	4E	Job's request of his friends: listen as he prepares his case	13:13-19
	5E	Job's demand for justification from God	13:20-28
	6E	Job laments the brevity of life	14:1-22
	1F	God has determined the length of man's days	14:1-6
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	1E	Eliphaz' accusation	15:1-16
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	1E	His disappointment with his friends	16:1-5
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	2F	the friends lack of insight	17:10-16
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	1E	Job charges his friends with misrepresenting the facts of the case	19:1-6
	1F	the friends have been cruel	19:1-3
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	2E	God has not listened to him	19:7-12
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	5D	Zophar's second speech: against sin!	20:1-29
	1E	introduction	10:1-3
	2E	the destiny of the wicked	20:4-11
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	5E	the wicked enjoy life	21:27-33
	6E	conclusion: retribution theology is wanting	21:34
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	1D	Eliphaz' third speech	22:1-30
	1E	Job's sin is the cause of his calamity	22:1-11
	1F	God is not aroused by righteousness	22:1-4
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	1E	Job's desire to stand before God	23:1-12
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3A	POST-DIALOGUE		28:1--42:17
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¹Gregory Parsons, "A Biblical Theology of Job 38:1–42:6", Th.D. Dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1980, p. 61. Page 185