

THE BOOK OF JOB

It is advisable first to read the Preface in Part 1 before commencing this study. Only a summary of the words of the *Voice of the Lord* (*red italics*) can be conveyed. In chapters 3 to 37, only Job and his friends converse with each other in a threefold series of lengthy speeches. The *Voice of the Lord* is silent in these chapters.

INTRODUCTION

Historically, the Book of Job is the oldest book in the Bible. Job lived before the time of Abraham in the latter part of the 2nd millennium about the 12th century B.C. The account of his life, however, was probably written by an unknown author between the times of King Solomon and the exile in Babylon. The main theme of the Book is the difficult question of undeserved suffering of the righteous in a world created by an all powerful and just Creator God. Although the question is not resolved, light is shed on this theme and on the struggle between the goodness of God and the evil strategies of Satan. There is much knowledge and wisdom expressed in poetic form in the Book of Job. The introductory Prologue and the Epilogue are written in prose.

Read Chapter 1

Job was the greatest and most respected man in the Middle East. God delighted in His faithful servant and had richly blessed him. He had seven sons and three daughters, many servants and possessed great wealth in large herds and flocks of animals. Job lived a reverent, God-fearing and upright life. It was his regular custom to offer burnt offerings to purify his sons from any sins in their celebrations committed against the Lord.

*A good man obtains favour from the Lord.*

Proverbs 12: 2a

On a certain day the angels presented themselves at a heavenly council before the Lord. The first question was asked by God and it was addressed to Satan.

*From where did you come?*

Job 1: 7a

After Satan's answer, the Lord God asked His second question.

*Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil.?*

Job 1: 8



Satan answered that Job only served God for His blessings and if these were removed, Job would curse Him.

The *Voice of the Lord* replied –

*Behold all that he has is in your power, only upon the man himself put not forth your hand.*

Job 1: 12

On another day an evil disaster struck Job. By enemy attack and natural disasters, Job lost his livestock, servants and even his ten children were killed. But Job in his integrity shaved his head, tore open his robe and fell down and worshipped with these words -

*The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.*

Job 1: 21b

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## Read Chapter 2

Again on another day when the angels presented themselves before the Lord, God asked the same question as before; with Satan giving the same answer.

To the Lord's second question concerning His blameless servant Job, Satan answered that Job would curse God if his life and body were afflicted. In Satan's first attack, only Job's livestock, servants, and children were taken away.

The Lord replied –

*Behold, he is in your hand; only spare his life.*

Job 2: 6

Satan then attacked Job's health.

In a painful illness of boils Job developed putrid sores all over his body.

*Job took a piece of broken pottery with which to scrape himself, and he sat down among the ashes.*

Job 2: 8



Job still did not sin; although tempted by his despairing wife to curse the Lord and die.

(Leviticus 24: 10 - 16)

*What? Shall we accept good at the hand of the Lord and shall we not accept misfortune?*

Job 2: 10

## JOB'S FRIENDS

## Read Chapter 3

When Job's three older friends heard about his changed circumstances, they came on a visit to sympathise with him in his extreme suffering. As they approached they did not even recognise Job for he was so disfigured.

They wept, tore their robes and sprinkled dust on their heads as if in mourning.

For seven whole days these aged wise men sat on the ground to comfort him without saying a word.

In their visit and sympathetic silence Job's friends must be commended.

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## JOB'S COMFORTERS

### Chapters 3 - 37

After that long silence, Job was the first to speak. His opening words were a lament for his suffering. He cursed the day of his birth. His physical condition and emotional suffering were so great that Job despised his life and just wanted to die.

Job's friends, Eliphaz (the first to speak), Bildad and Zophar, who came to console him, one after the other, began instead to rebuke him although Job pleaded for their understanding. In the cycle of speeches, his friends accused Job and argued that sin was the cause of his suffering; a chastening from the Lord Almighty.

They urged him to repent. Speech after speech, their accusations became increasingly unsympathetic as these following words of Bildad indicate -

*God will never uphold wrongdoers, He will never cast away a blameless man.* Job 8: 20

Job acknowledged God's almighty power and recognised that his life was sinful, but the degree of his present suffering was undeserved. This was Job's reasoning throughout in his words to both his friends and the Lord God.

*But how can a mortal man be right before God?* Job 9: 2

In the debates Job strongly defended his position despite his physical weakness.

*I will say to God, Do not condemn me! Show me why You contend with me.* Job 10: 2

*Surely, I wish to speak to the Almighty, and I desire to reason my case with God (that He may explain the conflict between what I believe of Him and what I see of Him).* Job 13: 3

*But you are forgers of lies, (you defame my character most untruthfully); you are all physicians of no value.* (Job 13: 4)

Job had become impatient with his three friends and called them miserable comforters. (Job 16: 1)

Today any unsympathetic friends are known as Job's Comforters.

## JOB'S TRUST IN GOD

Although Job did not understand that God had allowed Satan's attack for a higher purpose, he always maintained his trust in the Lord.

*Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him.* Job 13: 15a

*Behold now, I have prepared my case; I know that I shall be justified and vindicated.* Job 13: 18

Likewise, Job's friends did not know that God delighted in His loyal servant Job.

Job's terrible disasters were not punishment for his sins but a testing allowed by God leading to ultimate spiritual gain.

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## JOB'S PLEADINGS

Job not only pleaded with his friends but also with God –

- \* Job's pleaded that his physical suffering should be taken away.
- \* He pleaded to hear the *Voice of the Lord*.

*Then (Lord) call and I will answer, or let me speak, and You answer me.*

Job 13: 22

## JOB'S REDEEMER

As Job sought justice through the help of an advocate in heaven, he cried –

*For look! My witness is in heaven; there is one on high ready to answer for me. If only there were one to arbitrate between man and God, as between a neighbour and his friend.*

Job 16: 19, 21 N.E.B

In those far off days there was no revelation of – *Emmanuel (God with us)* but Job in his speeches reached out to such an Emmanuel.

Attacked both by Satan and his friends, Job was also no longer an honoured and a respected elder in his community. Even God was silent. Job felt deeply hurt and rejected.

In his agony of body, mind and spirit, Job cried out –

*Have pity on me!*

*Have pity on me, O you my friends, for the hand of God has touched me!*

Job 19: 21

And Job wanted the following words written with an iron pen graven on stone.

*For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at last He will stand upon the earth. And after my skin, even this body, has been destroyed, then from my flesh shall I see God.*

Job 19: 25, 26

Again Job expressed prophetically the future time when Christ would come as Redeemer.

## PROSPERITY OF THE WICKED

Chapters 20 - 23

Zophar gave a lengthy account of the deeds of the wicked, that the wrath of God would certainly fall upon them and their joy would be short-lived. Job answered that this argument was false for the wicked often became powerful and prospered. Eliphaz, the most sympathetic of Job's friends, in his last speech also accused Job of great wickedness and called upon him to return to the Lord.

In reply, Job knew that if he could find God to state his case he would be acquitted.

In Job's speeches legal terms of a court room are evident.

*He knows the way that I take. When He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold.*

Job 23: 10

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## JOB'S LAST SPEECH

Chapters 26 - 31

In his last and lengthy discourse, as in earlier speeches, Job showed great understanding of the laws of nature in astronomical and geographical knowledge.

*He it is Who spreads out the northern skies over emptiness and hangs the earth upon or over nothing.* Job 26: 7

*Yet these are but the outskirts of His ways, the faintest whisper of His voice!  
Who can understand the thunder of his magnificent power?* Job 26: 14

Although Job acknowledged the wonders of God's power, he continued to state that the Lord had denied him justice. He was convinced that his friends wrongly accused him.

## WISDOM POEM

Chapter 28: 12 - 28

*But where shall wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding?* Job 28: 12



*The price of wisdom is above rubies.*

*Nor can it be valued in pure gold.* Job 28: 18b, 19b A.V.

*From where then does wisdom come?  
And where is the place of understanding?* Job 28: 20

Job's beautiful and descriptive words of the Wisdom Poem close with the answer -

*Behold, the fear of the Lord - that is Wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.* Job 28: 28

## JOB'S MAINTAINS HIS INTEGRITY

Chapter 29

In contrast to the ways of the wicked, Job continued to defend his integrity, justifying himself in great detail.

Job longed for that time when he had been happy with his sons and daughters around him and blessed by the Lord Almighty. As an honoured elder in the city gates, Job had cared for the poor and those oppressed by the wicked. His afflictions, however, had caused Job to become self righteous, expressing his many acts of kindness, good works and counsel in great detail.

*I was eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame.* Job 29: 15

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## Chapter 30

Job lamented his changed circumstances of loss, bereavement, illness and humiliation. He felt unjustly treated by Man and God; and when he cried to Him there was no answer.

## Chapter 31

At the end of his last discourse, Job again strongly denied the accusations against him, maintained his innocence and loyalty to God.

*Oh, let me be weighed in a just balance and let Him weigh me,  
that God may know my integrity!* Job 31: 6

*The words of Job (with his friends) are ended.* Job 31: 40b

## ELIHU

### Chapters 32 - 37

Job was now silent and also his three friends when Elihu began to speak. As a younger man, Elihu had respectfully waited during the long debates. He alone addressed Job personally by name. Elihu was angry with Job's friends because they condemned Job but were unable to repudiate his arguments. He was angry with Job for he justified himself and not God. Unlike the older counsellors, Elihu based his criticism on Job's own words, for he had said -

*I am clean, without transgression; I am innocent, neither is there iniquity in me.*  
Job 33: 9

However, Elihu misquoted him, for Job did recognise his life was sinful but that the degree of his suffering was undeserved. Job wanted to know the sins for which he was accused.  
(Job 7: 21, 13: 23, 26)

Elihu also rebuked Job concerning his complaint about God being silent. Job's actual complaint was that God gave no answer in his present suffering. Elihu desired Job to repent and be forgiven. Like the three older counsellors, Elihu also did not realise that God delighted in His servant Job and was confident in his loyalty under Satan's attacks.

Elihu, zealous for God's glory, stated – *Job speaks without knowledge.* Job 35: 16

The phrase speaks '*without knowledge*' is used by the Lord in His discourse (38: 2) and by Job in his response (42: 3).

In Elihu's last and fourth speech, he uplifted God's goodness and His glory in Creation; also His justice in rewarding the righteous and punishing the sinful. The latter is contrary to the words in Job's speeches for he expected to be vindicated.  
(Job 13: 18)

## THE VOICE OF THE LORD

### Chapters 38: 1 - 41: 34

The *Voice of the Lord* speaks to Job out of the storm.

The Lord's two discourses are continuous except for a brief response from Job. (40: 3 - 5)

*Who is this who darkens counsel by words without knowledge?  
Gird up now your loins like a man, and I will demand of you and you declare to Me.* Job 38: 2, 3

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## GOD'S QUESTIONS

The Lord proceeded to ask Job many rhetorical questions, both inanimate and animate, to which Job had no answer.

*Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?* Job 38: 4

*Have you commanded the morning since your days began  
and caused the dawn to know its place?* Job 38: 12

*Have you explored the springs of the sea?  
Or have you walked in the recesses of the deep?* Job 38: 16

*Have you entered the treasuries of the snow, or have you seen the treasuries of the hail?* Job 38: 22



*Can you bind the chains of the cluster of stars called Pleiades  
or loose the cords of the constellation Orion?*

*Can you lead forth the signs of the zodiac in their season?  
Or can you guide the stars of the Bear with her young?* Job 38: 31, 32

*Have you given the horse his might?  
Have you clothed his neck with a shaking mane?*

Job 39: 19

*Does the eagle mount up at your command  
and make his nest on a high inaccessible place?*

Job 39: 27



Moreover the Lord said to Job,

*Shall he who would find fault with the Almighty contend with Him?  
He who disputes with God, let him answer it.* Job 40: 2

Job was utterly humbled and found no words to answer.

Again out of the storm the Lord spoke to Job as before. (Job 38: 2, 3)

*Gird up your loins now like a man; I will demand of you, and you answer Me.* Job 40: 7

*Will you also annul (set aside and render void) My judgement?  
Will you condemn Me (your God) that you may appear righteous and justified?*

*Have you an arm like God? Or can you thunder with a voice like His?* Job 40: 8, 9

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## BEHEMOTH

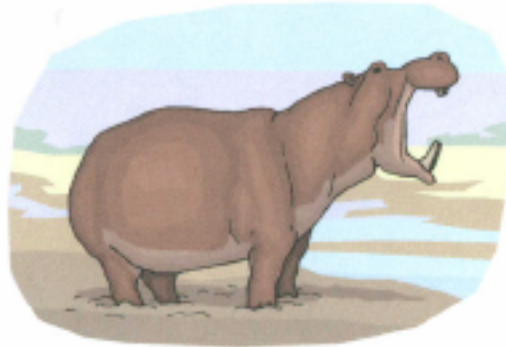
*Behold now the behemoth (the hippotamus), which I created as I did you;  
he eats grass like an ox.*

Job 40: 15

The Lord asked Job many questions concerning this large and powerful creature.

*Can any take him when he is on the watch,  
or pierce through his nose with a snare?*

Job: 40: 24



Hippopotamus amphibius

Leviathan is identified as the crocodile.

Job 41: 1 - 34

## LEVIATHAN



*No one dares stir up the crocodile;  
who then is he who can stand before Me (the beast's Creator)?  
Whatever is under the whole heavens is Mine.*

Job 41: 10,11b

Read Job 42: 1 - 6

Job replied that he had spoken unwisely of things he did not understand –

*I had heard of You only by the hearing of the ear, but now my spiritual eye sees You.  
Therefore I loathe my words and abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes.*

Job 42: 5, 6

Like Job's three friends who had no more words to say, Job was now silent in awe of the LORD Almighty.

Satan also had been silenced.

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## EPILOGUE

Job 42: 7 - 17

The Lord then addressed Job's three older friends - but not Elihu.

*You have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as My servant Job has.*

*Offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and My servant Job shall pray for you, for I will accept his prayer that I deal not with you after your folly.*

Job 42: 7b, 8b

When Job had prayed for his friends, the Lord restored his former prosperity with a double blessing!

He came to possess twice as many animals and once again was blessed with seven sons and three daughters.

### JOB'S DAUGHTERS

His daughters grew up to be the most beautiful in the land.

Job gave them beautiful names and equal rights of inheritance with their unnamed seven brothers.

Their descriptive names may reflect Job's suffering and his deep experience of God causing him to [see](#) the LORD and repent in dust and ashes.

Jemimah means *dove* - a sign of God's spirit of peace given to Job.

Keziah means *cinnamon*, a spice - the fragrance of God in Job's life restored after his illness of putrid bodily sores.

Keren Happuch means *antimony*, an expensive eye shadow making eyes appear larger and more luminous.



Eyes of faith were important to Job for he had declared during his suffering –

*And after my skin, even this body, has been destroyed, then from my flesh shall I [see](#) God.*

Job 19: 25, 26

On hearing the *Voice of the Lord* speaking out of the storm (though Job did not receive a specific answer) his eyes of faith were truly opened. After his humble repentance, Job could [see](#) God's supreme sovereignty, goodness and justice. Job previously had only heard of God but now, in worship, his spiritual eyes saw the Lord.

(Job 42: 5)

*After this, Job lived 140 years, and saw his sons and his sons' sons,  
even to four generations.*

Job 42: 16

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## CONCLUSION

The poetic book of Job, so full of words of wisdom, continues to be a strength and solace to suffering souls today including the terminally ill. Its words speak to the deepest needs of the human heart. The words of Job's friends only caused disagreement and despair. The words of God out of the whirlwind, by contrast, led to Job's repentance, worship, peace of mind, prayer for his friends and God's double blessing. Job had maintained his faith in God throughout his time of tragic suffering. The righteousness of Job is referred to by the prophet Ezekiel and the endurance of Job is commended in the Epistle of James.

Ezekiel 14: 14, James 5: 11

Although Job had heard of God, It should be noted that Job had no knowledge of the lives of the Patriarchs or the Prophets. He had never heard the words of the promised New Covenant prophesied by Jeremiah, who also greatly suffered.

(Lamentations 3: 1 - 23)

In the Hebrew scriptures, there are other verses that point to Christ as Advocate in heaven and as the Redeemer from sin - sent by God to destroy the works of the devil. Job had no knowledge of the limitless love of the Saviour as recorded in the New Testament. Only the Lord Jesus Christ, the Friend of sinners Who suffered and died on the Cross, could have answered Job's questions about his undeserved suffering with such comforting words as these -

*Come to Me -*

*Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart and you will find rest for your souls. My yoke is easy and My burden is light.*

Matthew 11: 28 - 30



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