

Old Testament Survey

The Book of Job

The Theme of Job

1. The basic theme of the Book of Job is that of the theoretical problem of pain and disaster in the life of the righteous.
2. The answer to the question, "Why do the righteous suffer" is answered in a threefold way:
 - a. God is worthy of love regardless of how he does or does not bless us.
 - b. God may permit suffering in order to strengthen and mature us.
 - c. God has a purpose in our suffering that transcends our human understanding.
3. The issue of the sufferings of Job is carried on through the book by looking at the interaction between Job and three "comforters" who struggled with the question of why the righteous suffer.

An Outline of Job

- I. Prologue - Job's Test - Job 1:1-2:13
- II. False Comfort - Job 3:1-31:40
 - A. First cycle - Job 3:1-14:22
 1. Job's lament - Job 3:1-26
 2. Eliphaz' reply - Job 4:1-5:27
 3. Job's reply to Eliphaz - Job 6:1-7:21
 4. Bildad's reply - Job 8:1-22
 5. Job's reply to Bildad - Job 9:1-10:22
 6. Zophar's reply - Job 11:1-20
 7. Job's reply to Zophar - Job 12:1-14:22
 - B. Second cycle - Job 15:1-21:34
 1. Eliphaz' reply - Job 15:1-35
 2. Job's response to Eliphaz - Job 16:1-17:16
 3. Bildad's reply - Job 18:1-21
 4. Job's response to Bildad - Job 19:1-29
 5. Zophar's reply - Job 20:1-29
 6. Job's response to Zophar - Job 21:1-34
 - C. Third cycle - Job 22:1-31:40
 1. Eliphaz' reply - Job 22:1-30
 2. Job's response to Eliphaz - Job 23:1-24:25
 3. Bildad's reply - Job 25:1-6
 4. Job's response to Bildad - Job 26:1-31:40
- III. The Speeches of Elihu - Job 32:1-37:24
 - A. First speech - God instructs man through affliction - Job 32:1-33:33
 - B. Second speech - God's justice and prudence vindicated - Job 34:1-37
 - C. Third speech - the advantages of piety - Job 36:1-16
 - D. Fourth speech - God's greatness and Job's sin in accusing God of being unfair - Job 36:1-37:24
- IV. God's Speaks from the Whirlwind - Job 38:1-42:6
 - A. First speech - God's omnipotence in creation; Job's self-condemning confession - Job 38:1-40:5

- B. Second speech - God's power and man's frailty; Job's humble response - Job 40:6-42:6
- V. Epilogue - God's Rebuke of Job's Comforters; Job's Restoration - Job 42:7-17

Authorship

1. The text does not indicate the author and there is no tradition to point to the identity of the author.
2. Rabbinical writings suggest that the author lived prior to Moses but offers no proof for this.
3. Some say that Moses is the author, finding the story in some Aramaic form and preserving it in its current form. This would account for its canonical status and possession by the Hebrews.

The Date of the Events in Job

1. It is not easy to assign a date to Job since there are no historical events in the book which can furnish reference points and since it is distinctly non-Jewish in tone.
2. J.H Raven supports a pre-Mosaic time for the events due to the following evidences:
 - a. Job exhibits a patriarchal form of family structure common to Abraham's time.
 - b. Job offers sacrifices for his family rather than going to the priests which would point to a pre-Mosaic timeframe.
 - c. The usage of the term *qesita* as a piece of money suggests a time as early as Joshua and more likely a time closer to Abraham.
3. However, apart from Mosaic influence, the events in Job point to a time somewhere in the second millennium B.C. It is therefore safe to place the date of these events in the patriarchal period of the Old Testament, close to the time of Abraham.

The Date of Job's Writing

Although the time of the events may be placed with a great deal of certainty, the date of the writing of Job is far less clear. The following dates have been offered for the composition of the Book of Job:

1. **Before the time of Moses.** Some pro and con arguments include:
 - a. It would be natural to assume that the composition of Job would occur soon after, if not contemporaneous with, the events in the book of Job.
 - b. However, some would argue that there is no compelling reason to believe that the effects of the Mosaic law would be felt in the land of Uz or Teman even as late as 1,000 B.C.
 - c. If Job had been written close to the events, then most likely it would not have originally been written in Hebrew but was later translated to Hebrew from some other language.
 - d. Some point out that the worship of the sun and moon mentioned in Job 31:26 point to a late date, however, it has been shown that the sun and moon were worshiped far back into the Patriarchal age.

- e. Some say that just because the Book of Job excludes any references to the Mosaic law, that does not mean that it had to be written prior to the law. However, it is hard to believe that the total commitment to monotheism displayed by Job and his companions would be explained without any reference to Israel, had they been a nation at that time.
 - f. Some see references in Job 24:2-11 to the Mosaic laws against keeping pawned clothes overnight, the gleaning of fields, and the removal of boundary markers. However, a closer reading of the passage indicates that this is what was happening and not that it was a violation of any law.
 - g. The best evidence points to a pre-Mosaic authorship as listed below:
 - 1). There is no hint of the Mosaic law in Job.
 - 2). There is no acknowledgement of a monotheistic nation of Israel in Job.
 - 3). There is no mention of Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob in Job, an anomaly only seen in Job since every other OT book presupposes Abraham or the law.
2. **During the reign of Solomon.** This view is commonly held by many prominent scholars based on the following reasons:
- a. Solomon's age was prosperous and hence was fertile for the writing of wisdom literature like Job.
 - b. Solomon's age was very much interested in wisdom, and hence it would be natural for a book like Job's to have been written during Solomon's time.
 - c. Proverbs 8 and Job 28 view wisdom similarly.
 - d. A wide knowledge of foreign cultures exist in Job that would be much easier to explain in Solomon's time than in Moses' time.
 - e. Problems with this view include the following:
 - 1). How could events which occurred several centuries earlier been accurately recorded?
 - 2). If these are not historical events, then they need to be seen as some sort of drama in which the events are not as important as the moral truth being taught.
3. **In the reign of Manasseh.** Manasseh's age was an age of moral degeneracy in which questions raised in the Book of Job would have been common. Unfortunately, there is no solid evidence for this position.
4. **The period of Jeremiah in the late seventh century B.C.**
- a. This is based on supposed similarities between Job and Jeremiah. In fact, only Job and Jeremiah mention the Land of Uz.
 - b. Additional evidence for this position is the similarities between Jeremiah cursing the day he was born (Jeremiah 20:14) and Job cursing the day he was born (Job 3:3).
5. **The Babylonian Exile, sixth century B.C.**

- a. This is based on categorizing Job as mere fiction or legend.
- b. Others point on similarities between Deutero-Isaiah (Isaiah 40-60) and Job to point to this time. These include comparing Job with the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 52-53 and examining the resemblances between Job's "highly developed" theology and that of II-Isaiah.

Integrity of the Text of Job

Rationalists have attacked the unity and integrity of Job from the time of Eichhorn on. These attacks can be seen as follows:

1. The prologue and epilogue, being written in prose and not poetry, would point to them being composed by a different author.

However, literature in other cultures show the same pattern. This can not be shown to prove different authors.

2. The mood and viewpoint of the prologue and epilogue are different than the rest of Job.

However, if we examine the purpose of the prologue and epilogue, they fit very well into the overall theme and flow of the Book of Job.

3. Chapter 27 is seen as an interpolation, that is, it appears to support a view more in line with Job's comforters rather than God's.

By reading the context, however, one sees that Job is commenting that he is righteous and that his accusers should expect to suffer due to their unjust criticism of Job.

4. Chapter 28 is contested as even being part of Job.

In Job 28, Job is showing that true wisdom does not reside in man but in God. It fits very well into the flow of the Book of Job.

5. The speeches of Elihu are seen to be later additions since he is not mentioned in the prologue or epilogue and since he appears to repeat what others have said.

In Job 32, however, we see that Elihu was not present at the first but appeared later after Job had spent some time with his "comforters." Furthermore, Elihu did repeat what others had said but only to lend credence to his own arguments regarding the pharisaic approach of Bildad, Zophar, and Eliphaz.

6. The speeches of Jehovah are considered later additions since they do not relate directly to the comments made earlier by Job and his companions.

What God is doing is chiding Job by showing that if Job cannot understand the rudimentary issues of creation then how can he understand the infinite purposes of God.