

# **THE BOOK OF JOB**



**By**

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# **THE BOOK OF JOB**

(Study Notes)

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## THE BOOK OF JOB

### ***INTRODUCTION***

1. The Book of Job is the literary masterpiece of the wisdom movement. It is perhaps the most profound and original book of the whole Old Testament. Within the Dialogue in it, there are many reminiscences of the hymns and lamentations of the Psalms. The author is a Jew, but we know nothing about him, not even the name.
2. The Prologue and the Epilogue are in prose and probably are older in time of the poetry of the Dialogues which constitutes the bulk of the book and its originality.
3. Job is not a Jew: the character is an upright person who comes from a tradition attached to the land of Edom, on the border with Arabia, a region re-known for its wise men. He is mentioned in Ezekiel 14:14,20 together with other two wise men: Noah and Danel.
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5. There is no reason to affirm or to deny the historical existence of Job. The allusion to his patience in James 5:11 implies his historicity no more than the parable of the Good Samaritan demands a historical background.

6. The book offers no concrete evidence of its date. It seems very probable that the discussion of the problem of the book did not occur in Israel until the time of the Exile or afterwards; on this basis most scholars believe it was composed around the 5<sup>th</sup> century.
7. As the wisdom of man is demonstrated in the management of his life, so the wisdom of God is manifested in the management of the universe. The world is full of the mystery of God's wisdom; in spite of its paradoxes, it doesn't fall apart, it does not return to chaos. Of the world man, and one man in particular, are but a small part. Job must accept the world as it is and from this accept God as He is. This is not a speculative solution. The author does not offer Job's experience as a way to understand evil, but as a way to live with it. The experience of Job is that one can put up with evil only when one experiences a theophany: an insight into the reality of God. Without this insight, the conclusion can be that there is no difference between good and evil, but life is an absurd, a nonsense. In front of evil human wisdom and human reason are bankrupt. The Book of Job ends with the conviction that only faith makes evil tolerable, faith which brings insight through the experience of God which is within reach of one who desires it (John McKenzie, S.J.)

## ***DETAILED STRUCTURE*** (by chapter)

### **1-2 PROLOGUE**

The story of Job introduces the poem-dialogue and continues in the epilogue whereby the story ends.

1:20-22 "Then Job stood up, tore his robe and shaved his head. Then, falling to the ground, he prostrated himself and said: *Naked I came from my mother's womb, naked I shall return again. Yahweh gave, Yahweh has taken back. Blessed be the name of Yahweh!* In all his misfortune, Job committed no sin, and he did not reproach God."

## **DIALOGUE : first round**

3 Job (1) curses the day of his birth and wishes to die

4 Eliphaz of Teman (1): God is good, He rewards the good and punishes the crook

5

6 Job (2) : feels abandoned by God and friends

7 *“Man’s life on earth is toil...”*

8 Bildad of Shuah (1) : Experience teaches that God abandons only the crooked

9 Job (3): Man is small and weak and God does to him as He likes

10

11 Zophar of Naamash (1): indicts Job: you have spoken like a fool, correct yourself...

12 Job (4): proclaims his innocence and calls on God...

13

14 *“Man, born of a woman, short of days and full of trouble, is like a shadow...”*

## **Second round**

15 Eliphaz (2): tries to convince Job of his guilt.

16 Job (5): asks God to recognize his innocence in front of everybody

17 *“God is the Avenger of blood for Job...”*

18 Bildad (2): Job is behaving like the evil people and will share their end.

19 Job (6) abandoned by all, he puts his trust in God: God will intervene...

19:25 *“I know that my Avenger lives...without my flesh, I shall see God..”*

20 Zophar (2): Job has offended everybody, he will not escape God’s punishment.

21 Job (7) Why are the evil men successful and lucky?

### **Third Round**

22 Eliphaz (3) : Is Job insinuating that God has punished him because he is good? Absurd!

23 Job (8) He asks to meet God because the human beings cannot understand him.

24

25 Bildad (3) : How does Job dare to challenge God's greatness?

26-31 Job (9) Job makes fun of the help received by his friends and appeals to God's justice.

27

28 The structure of the world shows God's wisdom and is known fully only by God.

29 Conclusion of the dialogue by Job: memory of the happy past;

30 Comparison with the present which is tragic and threatens despair,

31 especially because it appears without a reason, a justification.

### **THE SPEECHES OF ELIHU**

32 Introduction of Elihu and first speech: he reproaches the friends and exhorts Job to pay attention to God's speech.

33

34 Second speech: Job is wrong to accuse God to be insensitive to the vicissitudes of humans...

35 Third Speech: Man's actions don't touch God who at any rate does not remain indifferent.

36 Fourth Speech: God is just and almighty and man must acknowledge his greatness.

37

### **DIALOGUE BETWEEN God and Job**

38 God challenges Job to explain the secrets of nature: mineral life, animal life....

39

40:3-5 Job answers: *“I will put my hand over my mouth. I will speak no more...”*

God continues to challenge Job: 2 examples of strength in the world created by God: the hippopotamus and the crocodile(Leviatan)...

41

42:1-6 Job says: *“I have spoken without discerning about things above my understanding... I change my mind and I express my sorry in dust and ashes”*

## **EPILOGUE**

42:7-17 God reproaches Job’s friends and rewards Job with health and prosperity. Job’s three daughters are the most beautiful women with very fanciful names and he gives them inheritance like to the boys. “Then, old and full of days, Job dies”.

## ***CONTENT AND EVALUATION***

The writer puts the case of the good person who suffers. This is a paradox for the conservative view then prevalent that actions are rewarded or punished here on earth. This iron rule is plainly enunciated, so far as a nation as a whole is concerned, by the classic texts of Deuteronomy 28 and Leviticus 26; its working out in history is demonstrated by the books of Judges and Kings and the same idea underlines the teachings of the Prophets.

With Ezekiel (chapter 18) the conception of individual responsibility finds clear expression, though it was already latent and occasionally expressed Deuteronomy 24:16, 2 Kings 4:6, Jeremiah 31:29-30. But even Ezekiel has only earthly retribution in mind and is therefore brought sharply up against harsh reality. When a community is concerned, it may well be that the faults of a society as society prevail, and that the good are therefore punished with the wicked.

But if it is the rule that the individuals are to be recompensed for their own actions, how is it that the good suffers? Yet this is the fact, and Job is an example. The reader is indeed informed in the Prologue that Job's distress is not God's doing but Satan's and that it is a test of his fidelity.

But Job doesn't know this nor do his friends. These offer the old solutions: the happiness of the wicked is short-lived: see Psalms 37 and 73; the suffering of the good tests their fortitude: see Genesis 22:12 or possibly punish faults committed unwittingly or out of weakness: see Psalms 19:12 and 25:7.

The three friends propose these explanations while they think Job more or less innocent. But the cries that pain wrings from him and his impatience with God persuade them that his guilt goes deep: only great sins can explain distress like this.

The speeches of Elihu take up and develops these solutions: the suffering of those who are commonly judged upright is an expiation of sins of omission or thoughtlessness, or possibly (the most original contribution of this section) a safeguard against still more serious faults and a cure for pride. But like the three friends, though not as harshly, Elihu holds that sin and suffering are connected, one with the other.

Job protests about this rigorous theory of cause and effect with the vigor of conscious innocence. He doesn't deny the principle of earthly recompense, indeed he lives in the hope of it, and God gives it in the end (see the Epilogue).

But the recompense is here and now withheld: this is Job's problem and he seeks in vain for the meaning of it all. In his anguish he reaches out for God; God eludes him but Job still trusts in his goodness. When God does appear it is to tell how inscrutable are his person and his designs, and Job falls to silence.

This is the book's lesson: faith must remain even when understanding fails. At this stage of divine revelation the author could go no further. More light cannot be thrown on the mystery of the suffering innocence until God opens up the prospect of a future life in which recompense is made (see the parable of "The Rich Man and Lazarus") and reveals the worth of suffering when it is united with the sufferings of Christ.



Two texts of Paul give Job his answer: “All that we suffer in this life is nothing in comparison with the glory which is destined to be disclosed for us” (Romans 8:18) and “It makes me happy to be suffering for you now, and in my own body to do what I can to make up all that is still to be undergone by Christ for the sake of his body, the Church (Colossians 1:24).

*(New Jerusalem Bible)*

## **NOTES**

### **Chapter 1, verse 6**

“Sons of God”: They are the angels, among them Satan: “the Accuser, the Adversary”, he is different from the others, jealous... The figure of Satan will develop and become the Devil, the adversary of God, the being envious of the humans, the one who introduces death into the world because of his disobedience, rebellion, the Serpent:

*Genesis 3: the Fall*

*Wisdom 2:24* “Death came into the world only through the Devil’s envy, as those who belong to him find at their cost”.

*Revelation 12*: “The great Dragon, the primeval Serpent, known as the Devil or Satan, who has led the world astray...” (The same expressions are in *Revelation 20:2*).

*Luke 10:17-18* “The seventy two came back rejoicing: ‘Lord, they said, even the devil submits to us when we use your name’. He said to them: “I watched Satan fall like lightning from heaven”.

In any case, Satan is a creature, not a principle of evil powerful as God, but a fallen angel. God is one, and he is good, this is the message of the Jewish and Christian bible.

### **Verse 8**

The Leviathan, the primeval serpent, can swallow the sun (eclipse)...

**Chapter 19:25-26** “I know that I have a living Defender and that he will rise up last, on the dust of the earth. After my awakening, he will set me close to him, and from my flesh, I shall look on God”.

The word “*Go’el*”, approximately translated “Defender” is a term of Jewish law (Cf. *Number* 35:19 “The Avenger of blood will put the murderer to death”. The avenger of blood was the victim’s closest relative; he was also the legal protector of his relations. He was especially bound to prevent the alienation of their landed property.

By extension, God is called the *Go’el* of Israel: *Psalms* 19: “May the words of my mouth always find favor, and the whispering of my heart, in your presence, Yahweh, my rock, my redeemer (*Go’el*)”.

God as Avenger, Savior and Rescuer from death of his people and his servant: *Isaiah* 41:14 “Don’t be afraid, Jacob, my worm! You little handful of Israel, I shall help you, declares Yahweh; your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel”. The term *Go’el* is often used of God, the Savior of his people and the Avenger of the oppressed. Sometimes it applies to the Messiah: Defender/Avenger/Redeemer.

Job, slandered by his friends, awaits a Defender who this time is God himself: Cf. 16:18-21 “Cover not my blood, o earth, and let my cry mount without cease! Henceforth I have a witness in Heaven, my Defender is there on high”. But Job still believes his happiness to be lost forever and his death to be at hand. When God undertakes to avenge his cause, it will be after his death.

Nonetheless, Job hopes to witness this and see his vindication. Cf. 14:10-14 “...will no one hide me in Sheol and shelter me there till your anger is past, fixing a certain day for calling me to mind? Can the dead come back to life? Day after day of my service, I shall be waiting for my relief to come”.

Job envisages a temporary shelter in Sheol and here it would seem that he is counting on a brief return to earthly life to see his vindication accomplished and that is what eventually happens: he is restored to health and prosperity. The power of Yahweh to bring back people from Sheol is present in the written tradition of the Scripture: *1 Samuel* 2:6, in the canticle of Hannah it is said: “Yahweh gives death and life, brings down to Sheol and draws up...”.

This faith of Job momentarily defies horizons of mortality in his desperate need for justice: it prepares us for the explicit revelation of bodily resurrection like in *2 Maccabees* 7:9 “... the King of the world will raise us up, since we die for his laws to live again forever”.

**Chapter 42:8** “...while Job my servant offers prayers for you, I shall show him favor”.

Job acts as intercessor like Abraham (*Genesis* 18:22-32 for Sodom and Gomorrah), Moses (*Exodus* 32:11-14 after the episode of the Golden Calf: Moses stood in the breach, Cf. *Psalms* 106:23 “He thought of putting an end to them, had not Moses, his chosen one, taken a stand in the breach and confronted him, to turn his anger away from destroying them”);

Samuel (*1 Samuel* 7:5 “I shall plead with Yahweh for you”; *1 Samuel* 7: the whole chapter: Samuel, Judge and Liberator, interceding to God against the Philistines; *1 Samuel* 12:19 “They all said to Samuel: Pray for your servants to Yahweh, your God, to save us from death: for to all our sins we have added this wrong of asking for a king”.);

the High Priest Onias (*2 Maccabees* 15:14-16 Onias, the High Priest, prays for the community and Jeremiah appears to intercede for the Holy City: “This is a man who loves his brothers and prays much for the people and the Holy City-Jeremiah, the prophet of God. Then Jeremiah stretched out his right hand and presented Judas (Maccabeus) with a golden sword as a gift from God: with it you will shatter the enemy”);

*Jeremiah* 11:14 “Yahweh said to me: you, on your part, must not intercede for this people, nor raise either plea or prayer on their behalf, for I will not listen when their distress forces them to call to me for help”);

*Ezekiel* 14:14.20 Noah with Daniel (unknown) and Job are shown as intercessors even if unsuccessful.

Job’s painful ordeal has apparently given power to his prayers. In the background, we descry (we see a long way away) the Servant of Yahweh (*Isaiah* 53:12) whose suffering is unequivocally an expiation for the sins of others.

**ANTHOLOGY** (The following are the passages chosen in the Liturgy of the Hours, 8<sup>th</sup> & 9<sup>th</sup> week of the Ordinary Time of the Year) Here, we will write down the passages, encode some of the text and add some considerations.

## **1. Job 1:1-22 Job is deprived of his possessions.**

Verses:

20-21: “Then Job stood up, tore his robe and shaved his head. Then, falling to the ground, he prostrated himself and said: Naked I came from my mother’s womb, naked I shall return again. Yahweh gave, Yahweh has taken back. Blessed be the name of Yahweh. In all his misfortune, Job committed no sin and he did not reproach God”.

Commentary:

The expression represents a graphic, powerful and stirring description of our human condition and at the same time a very profound witness of natural and biblical religiosity: the faith that our life is in God’s hands and therefore, even in the realization of our mortality, a gift from God, the Creator who deserves our worship, since we are conscious of our situation and we are capable of gratitude and adoration. Like the expression that follows in chapter 2.

The sentence of Job is a summary of deep religiosity. He will come back to this attitude at the end of his diatribe with God, hopefully with a deeper awareness. The poem is a development of the feelings of an innocent who is convinced that he is unjustly treated since he suffers and he knows that he is innocent. The end of the poem is an act of surrender to God even in front of the fact that no answer was given to the inquiry but only a description of God’s omnipotence and an invitation to rely on his goodness. So the statement of the beginning befits the conclusion with the difference that God appreciates Job who complained because of his innocence more than those who bowed down in front of God unquestioningly but may be did not show such a trust in God as Job. Because of this, the three friends are asking Job to pray for them, as God has instructed them. His intercession is more powerful.

## **2. Job 2:1-13 Job is afflicted with an ulcer and is visited by his friends.**

Vv 7-10: “Satan struck Job down with malignant ulcers from the soul of his feet to the tip of his head. Job took a piece of pot to scrape himself and went and sat among the ashes. Then his wife said to him: Why persist in this

integrity of yours. Curse God and die. That is how a fool of a woman talks, Job replied. If we take happiness from God's hands, must we not take sorrow too?. And in all this misfortune, Job uttered no sinful word".

Commentary:

"If we take happiness from God's hands, must we not take sorrow too?" This sentence implies a deep religiosity. There is the concept that God is good, therefore implicitly even if he gives us sorrow, this must be for our good, even if we do not understand. The whole moral of the book is already here, in the beginning. To the same attitude of resignation in God's hands Job will eventually return, after his tale of complaining and his remonstrations of innocence. Moreover, the distinction is clear between evil physical and moral. "And in all this misfortune, Job uttered no sinful word".

### **3.Job 3:1-26 Job's Dirge**

Dirge: Usually a song sung at a burial or for a dead person. Here: a mournful song.

"In the end it was Job who broke the silence and cursed the day of his birth. This is what he said: Perish the day in which I was born, and the night that told of a boy conceived. May that day be darkness, may God on high have no thought of it, may no light shine on it...Why was not I still-born, and why did I not perish as I left the womb? Why were there knees to receive me, breasts for me to suck? Now, I should lie in peace, wrapped in a restful slumber...or put away like an aborted child, like little ones that never see the light. Down there the wicket bustle no more, there the weary rest; prisoners, all left in peace, hear no more the shouts of the oppressors. High and low are there together, and the slave is free of his master...For me, there is no calm, no peace; my torment banish rest".

Commentary

This cry of wounded humanity is found also in Jeremiah 20:14-18 and in Psalm 88. Such despair is rarely expressed in the Bible, because the overall message is that life is good as a creation of God who is essentially good. So, this cry of wounded humanity is like a blasphemy which is allowed only to express the depth of anguish and confusion. It is not a definitive statement about life but the expression of a momentary, unspeakable pain and sorrow. Jeremiah 20:14-18: "A curse on the day I was born... Why ever did I come

out of the womb to see the toil and sorrow and end my days in shame?”. Jeremiah, however, remains convinced that Yahweh is the God of grace, and, even in the depth of his anguish, utters a cry of hope (20:11-13)”.

Psalm 88 is utterly dark: “For I am filled with misery, my life is on the brink of Sheol; already numbered among those who sink into oblivion, I am as one bereft of strength, left alone among the dead like the slaughtered lying in the grave, whom you remember no more, cut off as they are of your protection...All that I know is darkness”.

#### **4. Job 7:1-21 Job calls to God out of his weariness of life.**

“Is not human life on earth just conscript service? Do we not live a hireling’s life? Like a slave, sighing for the shade or a hireling with no thought but for his wages, I have months of futility assigned to me, nights of suffering to be my lot. Lying in bed I wonder: When will it be day ? No sooner up than: When will evening come?...What are human beings that you should take them so seriously, subjecting them to your scrutiny, that morning after morning you should examine them? Will you never take your eyes off me, long enough for me to swallow my spittle?...For soon I shall be lying in the dust, you will look for me and I shall be no more”.

Commentary

Here the futility of human life contrasts with judgmental attitude of God. God is experienced as a demanding judge, not allowing humans out of his control, a sensation of suffocating, as he breaths down your neck, not allowing a moment of respite (even to swallow my spittle!) and yet human life is so transient as to appear irrelevant...Yet, God’s demands of holiness, in their strictness, gives value to us human beings...The solution will be the revelation that human life is destined to outlast death, to extend beyond time into eternity.

#### **5. Job 11:1-20 Zophar outlines an answer to the riddle.**

“These were your words: My conduct is pure, in your eyes I am free of blame. Will no one let God speak, open his lips and give you answer, show

you the secret of wisdom which put all darkness to shame? Then you will realize that God is calling you to account for your sins. Can you claim to fathom the depths of God, can you reach the limit of Shaddai? It is higher than the Heavens: what can you do? It is deeper than Sheol: what can you know?”.

Commentary

The traditional doctrine that if you suffer it is because of your sins is contradicted by Job who proclaims/revenges his innocence. The problem is not God’s omniscience, but the acute consciousness of the innocent who remonstrates with God, and this stands against God’s infinite wisdom: the solution is in God, but without denying the innocence of the sufferer. The infinity of God’s goodness embraces also the mystery of the innocent suffering as it will make sense in Christ’ Passion and salvific suffering. A prophecy of this are the Songs of the Servant of Yahweh in Deutero-Isaiah.

## **6. Job 12:1-25      God’s dominion over all human wisdom.**

Job wants to ask God the reason of his sufferings because he is innocent and sees the guilty unpunished. He is not questioning God’s overwhelming wisdom.

“In his hand is the soul of every living thing and the breath of every human being. Can the ear not distinguish the value of what is said just as the palate can tell one food from another? Wisdom is found in the old and discretion comes with great age. But in him there is wisdom and power too, and good counsel as well as discretion. What he destroys no one can rebuild; whom he imprisons no one can release”.

Commentary

Job does not deny the omnipotence and omniscience of God which is plain to him from the order of creation. So, because of this and not notwithstanding this, he wants to question God about the problem which is vital to him. His accusers do not listen seriously and honestly to Job, they assume that he is guilty. They do not think that he has the right to question God.

## **7. Job 13:12-14:6      Job makes his appeal to the judgment of God.**

“Your received ideas are maxims of ash, your retorts, retorts of clay. Be quiet! Let me do the talking, happen to me what may. I am putting my flesh between my teeth, I am taking my life in my hands: let him kill me if he will: I have no other hope than to justify my conduct in his eyes. And this is what will save me, for the wicked would not dare to appear before him”...

“For his part, he crumbles away like rotten wood, or like a moth-eaten garment, a human being, born of woman, whose life is short but full of trouble. Like a flower, such a one blossoms and withers, fleeting as a shadow, transient. And this is the creature on whom you fix your gaze, and bring to judgment before you. But will anyone produce the pure from what is impure? No one can! Since his days are measured out, since his tale of months depends on you, since you assign him bounds he cannot pass, turn your eyes from him, leave him alone, like a hired laborer, to finish his days in peace”.

### Commentary

The beginning of Chapter 14 is an elegy of human misery and fragility (See the comparison with a tree: vv. 7-12 “The is always hope for a tree”). This is an experience of humility and an invitation to self-acceptance, without being a reason for irresponsibility. The consciousness of our mortality and irrelevance, on the other hand, shows the tender care of God for the most precious of his creature, the only one that can answer God in love.

## **8. Job 28:1-28      Wisdom rests with God alone.**

“Silver has its mines, and gold a place for refining. Iron is extracted from the earth and smelted rocks yield copper....Man attacks the flint, upturning mountains by their roots. He cuts canals through the rock, on the watch for anything precious. He explores the sources of rivers, bringing hidden things to light. But where does wisdom come from? Where is intelligence to be found? No human being know the way to her, she is not to be found on earth where they live....God alone understands her path and knows where she is to



be found....Then he said to human beings, “Wisdom”? – that is fear of the Lord; “Intelligence”? – Avoidance of evil”.

### Commentary

This passage is mysterious and its position in the book is questionable. There is a similarity with *Proverbs* 8:22-36 and *Baruch* 3:9-38; 4:1-4: here God’s wisdom is given to Israel and it is the Law of Yahweh that stands for ever: the Ten Commandments. Here, however, the writer is speaking of a wisdom inaccessible to human beings. The idea may be stated thus: Wisdom, having inspired God’s plan, having the key of all his works and incarnating his Providence, is beyond the intellectual reach of the human mind; despite all efforts and discoveries, human beings can never penetrate the final mystery of a Wisdom far surpassing their scope.

The difference between the various passages is not so relevant, if we take into account that in any case, even when wisdom makes herself available to humans, his true nature is divine, so infinitely out of reach of the human mind.

### **9. Job 29:1-10; 30:19-23 Job’s lament in his affliction.**

“Will no one bring back to me the months that have gone, and the days when God was my guardian, when his lamp shone over my head, and his light was my guide in the darkness? Shall I ever see my days of harvest again when God protected my tent; when Shaddai still dwelt with me, and my children were around me; when my feet were bathed in milk, and streams of oil poured from the rocks? ....On hearing me, people congratulated me; on seeing me, people deferred to me, because I freed the poor in distress and the orphan who had no helper... And I used to say: I shall die in honor, after days as numerous as sand...My glory will be forever new, and the bow in my hand forever strong”. “And now, I am a laughing stock of people that are younger than I am and whose parents I would have disdained to put with the dogs guarding my flock... I cry to you and you give me no answer; I stand before you, but you take no notice...”.

### Commentary

The description of the previous good fortune is expressed by the respect and veneration of the people of the community...The appearance in public is a sign of common esteem and it goes together also in the just man of the Old

Testament with the concern for the poor, the orphan and the widow. The sudden overturn of fortune, unexplained and shocking in its diminishing details, becomes an argument against God's justice, an urgent questioning which doesn't seem to elicit an answer from God.

## **10. Job 31:1-8; 13-23; 35-37 Job's Apologia.**

"I had my last word, now let Shaddai reply! When my adversary has drafted his writ against me, I shall wear it on my shoulder and bind it around my head like a royal turban. I shall give him an account of every step and go as boldly as a prince to meet him". Ends of the words of Job.

Commentary

In this passionate protestation of innocence, Old Testament morality reaches its highest stage of development, directly prefiguring the morality taught in the Gospel. The form of this protestation of innocence is that of a conditional imprecation against oneself, required of the accused by law, Cf. *Exodus 22:9-10; Numbers 5:20-22*. This attitude so insistently assumed by Job is his originality and it is appreciated by God more than a formal acceptance of guilt for something that the person is not aware to have done. This sincerity is a more genuine attitude and therefore approved by God even if its request receives no direct answer.

## **11. Job 32:1-6; 33:1-22 Elihu speaks of the mystery of God.**

Note: There is nothing leading up to Elihu's intervention in the Dialogue and no reference to him in the Epilogue. It looks like an addition or interpolation.

"How could you say in my hearing – for the sound of your words did not escape me – 'I am clean, I am sinless, I am pure without fault. But he keeps inventing excuses against me and regards me as his enemy. He puts me in the stocks, he watches my every path?', in saying so, I tell you, you are wrong: for God is greater than any human being. Why then quarrel with him for not replying to you word by word?"

## Commentary

God speaks to men in dreams and admonishes by means of sickness. Sometimes, there is a “Mediator” near God to suggest that he spares the person, has pity and rescues the sick from death and corruption: this “Mediator” can be an angel of God or a good person who intercedes or even expiates for the other (Cf. Isaiah 53, the Servant of Yahweh). So, the conclusion is for Job to keep quiet: “Pay attention, Job; listen to me: keep quiet, I have more to say. If you have anything to say, refute me, speak out, for I would gladly accept that you are upright. If not, then listen to me: keep quiet and I will teach you wisdom” (33:31-33).

## **12. Job 38:1-20 God confounds Job.**

“Then, from the heart of the tempest, Yahweh gave Job his answer. He said: Who is this obscuring my intentions with his ignorant words? Brace yourself like a fighter; I am going to ask the questions, and you are to inform me...Have you visited the place where the snow is stored? Have you seen the stores of hail, which is kept for times of distress, for days of battle and war? Who bores a channel for the downpour or clears the way for the rolling thunder so that rain may fall on lands where no one lives, and the desert void of human dwelling, to meet the need of the lonely wastes and make grass sprout on the thirsty ground? Has the rain a father? What womb brings forth the ice, who give birth to the frost of heaven when the waters grow hard as a stone and the surface of the deep congeals?”

## Commentary

A poetic description of the wonders of nature makes the Book of Job remarkable: the natural phenomena, the earth, the sea, the weather (the rain, the snow, the ice) and the different animals, then in chapter 40-41: the two most remarkable creatures: the hippopotamus and the Leviathan (the crocodile).

The answer of Job is to accept defeat, to be happy with God’s grandeur without expecting an answer to his question of the suffering of the innocent. He is asked to make an act of blind trust.

### **13. Job 41:1-14; 42:1-6 Job’s Surrender.**

“My words have been frivolous: what can I reply? I had better lay my hand over my mouth. I have spoken once, I shall not speak again; I have spoken twice; I have nothing more to say” (40:3-5). The same in 42:1-6 “I retract what I have said; I repent in dust and ashes”.

God reproaches Job’s friends and says that Job shall pray for them to be forgiven of their foolish words. God restores the fortunes of Job.

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