

## The Structure of the Book of Job

1. “Once upon a time”/the prose introduction (1:1-2:13)
  - a. Introduction to Job (1:1-5)
  - b. The First Test: loss of possessions (1:6-22)
  - c. The Second Test: skin disease (2:1-10)
  - d. The Visit of the Three Friends (2:11-13)
  
2. The poetic dialogues among Job, his friends, and the LORD (3:1-42:6)
  - a. Job’s opening speech: “I wish I’d never been born” (3:1-26)
  
  - b. Round 1 (3:1-14:22)
    - i. Eliphaz (4:1-5:27)
    - ii. Job<sup>1</sup> (6:1-7:21)
    - iii. Bildad (8:1-22)
    - iv. Job<sup>2</sup> (9:1-10:22)
    - v. Zophar (11:1-20)
    - vi. Job<sup>3</sup> (12:1-14:22)
  
  - c. Round 2 (15:1-21:34)
    - i. Eliphaz (15:1-35)
    - ii. Job<sup>1</sup> (16:1-17:16)
    - iii. Bildad (18:1-21)
    - iv. Job<sup>2</sup> (19:1-29)
    - v. Zophar (20:1-29)
    - vi. Job<sup>3</sup> (21:1-34)
  
  - d. Round 3 (22:1-27:23) [we do get neither speech by Zophar nor reply from Job]
    - i. Eliphaz (22:1-30)
    - ii. Job<sup>1</sup> (23:1-24:25)
    - iii. Bildad (25:1-6)
    - iv. Job<sup>2</sup> (26:1-27:23)
  
  - e. “Wisdom”: a poem out of the blue whose author is not named (28:1-28)
  
  - f. Job’s closing speech: a series of oaths that function to subpoena God (29:1-31:40)
  
  - h. A new speaker, Elihu, attempts to do a better job than the three friends (32:1-37:24)
  
  - g. The LORD’s dialogue with Job (38:1-42:6)
    - i. The LORD: “Where were you when I . . . ?” (38:1-40:1)
    - ii. Job<sup>1</sup> (40:3-5)
    - iii. The LORD: “Let me tell you about Behemoth and Leviathan” (40:6-41:34)
    - iv. Job<sup>2</sup> (42:1-6)
  
3. “And they lived happily ever after”/prose epilogue (42:7-17)

### **The Prose Introduction (Job 1:1-5)**

There was once a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job. That man was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil.

### **The First Test (Job 1:6-22)**

One day the heavenly beings came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them. The Lord said to Satan, “Where have you come from?” Satan answered the Lord, “From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it.” The Lord said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man who fears God and turns away from evil.” Then Satan answered the Lord, “Does Job fear God for nothing? Have you not put a fence around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But stretch out your hand now, and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face.” The Lord said to Satan, “Very well, all that he has is in your power; only do not stretch out your hand against him!” So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord.

*After Job loses everything—some of his livestock stolen and farmhands killed by rustlers, the rest of his stock and servants lost in a wildfire, his children killed when a tornado struck the house where they were gathered—he responds piously.*

Then Job arose, tore his robe, shaved his head, and fell on the ground and worshiped. He said, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there; the Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrongdoing.

### **The Second Test (Job 2)**

One day the heavenly beings came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them to present himself before the Lord. The Lord said to Satan, “Where have you come from?” Satan answered the Lord, “From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it.” The Lord said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man who fears God and turns away from evil. He still persists in his integrity, although you incited me against him, to destroy him for no reason.”

Then Satan answered the Lord, “Skin for skin! All that people have they will give to save their lives. But stretch out your hand now and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse you to your face.” The Lord said to Satan, “Very well, he is in your power; only spare his life.”

So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord, and inflicted loathsome sores on Job from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. Job took a potsherd with which to scrape himself, and sat among the ashes.

### **The Friends Show Up (Job 2:11-13)**

Now when Job's three friends heard of all these troubles that had come upon him, each of them set out from his home—Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. They met together to go and console and comfort him. When they saw him from a distance, they did not recognize him, and they raised their voices and wept aloud; they tore their robes and threw dust in the air upon their heads. They sat with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his suffering was very great.

### **Job's Opening Statement (Job 3:1-4)**

After this Job opened his mouth and cursed his birthday.  
 "Perish the day I was born and the night [I was] conceived.  
 As for that day, 'Let there be darkness.'

### **From the Dialogue between Job and his friends (Job 4-27)**

*Job begins to imagine taking his case directly to God and having a judicial hearing about his righteousness.*

I will present my case before the Almighty;  
 I want to testify against God.  
 [then addressing the friends who won't shut up]  
 Let me have silence and I will testify  
 and let come on me what may.  
 Look I have prepared my case.  
 I know that I will be found innocent.

Oh, that I knew where I might find [God]?  
 I would lay my case before him  
 and fill my mouth with arguments.  
 There an upright person could reason with him,  
 and I would be acquitted forever by my judge.

### **Job's Closing Statement (Job 31)**

*In Job 31, Job issues a series of oaths. According to ancient thinking, an oath was language that demanded God pay attention to the situation ("By God, I'll be damned if . . .," that is, "let me be damned if what I'm saying isn't true").*

*Job's oaths function as a series of subpoenas.*

“If I have walked with falsehood, let me be weighed in a just balance”

“if my step has turned aside from the way, then let me sow and another eat”

“if my heart has been enticed by a woman, then let my wife grind for another”

“if I have rejected the cause of my male or female slaves, what shall I do when God rises up and makes inquiry?”

“if I have withheld anything that the poor desired or caused the eyes of the widow to fail, if I have raised my hand against the orphan, then let my shoulder blade fall from my shoulder”

“if I have made gold my trust, if I have looked at the sun when it shone, this would be an iniquity to be punished by the judges”

“if I have rejoiced at the ruin of those who hated me”

“if I have concealed my transgressions as others do”

*Still in the same speech, Job interrupts the sequence of oaths to lament,*

“O that I had one to hear me! O that I had the indictment written by my adversary!”

*But he finds the breath to make a final oath,*

“If my land has cried out against me,  
and its furrows have wept together;

if I have eaten its yield without payment,  
and caused the death of its owners;  
let thorns grow instead of wheat,  
and fowl weeds instead of barley.”

## **The LORD Responds to the Subpoena and Answers Job**

*God gives two speeches, the first in Job 38-39; the second in Job 40-41. In the first speech God takes Job on a magic carpet ride above the world in order to show him how exquisitely complicated reality is.*

Then the LORD answered Job out of the tornado:

“Who is this that sullies my design by words without knowledge?  
I will question you, and you shall declare to me.”

“Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?”

*God talks about the weather.*

“[Where were you] when I made the clouds a garment? . . .  
Have you entered the springs of the sea? . . .  
Have the gates of death been revealed to you? . . .  
[Do you know] the way to the dwelling of light?”

“Who has cut a channel for the torrents of rain,  
and a way for the thunderbolt,  
to bring rain on a land where no one lives,  
on the desert, which is empty of human life,  
to satisfy the waste and desolate land,  
and to make the ground put forth grass?”

*Then God goes where the wild things are.*

“Can you hunt the prey for the lion? . . .  
Who provides for the raven its prey  
when its young ones cry to God,  
and wander about for lack of food?  
Do you know when the mountain goats give birth . . .”

“Who has let the wild ass go free?  
Who has loosed the bonds of the swift ass?”

“Is it at your command that the eagle mounts up  
and makes its nest on high?  
It lives on the rock and makes its home  
in the fastness of the crag,  
from there it spies the prey;  
its eyes see it from far away.  
Its young ones suck up blood;  
and where the slain are, there it is.”

*Then the LORD ends his first speech.*

“Shall a plaintiff file a grievance with the Almighty?  
Anyone who testifies against God better be prepared to respond.”

*Then Job responds:*

“What shall I answer you?  
I have spoken once, and I will not answer further.”

*Then the LORD begins another speech.*

Then the LORD answered Job out of the tornado,  
“Gird up your loins like a man;  
I will question you and you declare to me.”

“Look at Behemoth that I made just like I made you.”

“Can you put a rope around Leviathan’s nose,  
or pierce its jaws with a hook?  
Will Leviathan cut a covenant with you?”

*Then Job gives his reply to the LORD’s second speech.*

Job 42:5-6 KJV

“I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear  
But now mine eye seeth thee  
Wherefore I abhor myself,  
and repent in dust and ashes.”

Job 42:5-6 (my translation)

By the hearing of the ear I had heard you  
But now my eye has seen you.  
Therefore I withdraw my case  
and I resign myself to dust and ashes (that is, the human condition).

### **The Prose Epilogue (Job 42:7-17)**

After the Lord had spoken these words to Job, the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite: “My wrath is kindled against you and against your two friends; for you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has. Now therefore . . . go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you, for I will accept his prayer not to deal with you according to your folly; for you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has done.” So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went and did what the Lord had told them; and the Lord accepted Job’s prayer.

And the Lord restored the fortunes of Job when he had prayed for his friends; and the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before. . . . The Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning.

He also had seven sons and three daughters. He named the first Jemimah, the second Keziah, and the third Keren-happuch. In all the land there were no women so beautiful as Job's daughters; and their father gave them an inheritance along with their brothers.

After this Job lived one hundred and forty years, and saw his children, and his children's children, four generations. And Job died, old and full of days.