

The Book of Iyov (Job)

1. Introduction

- Book has had an influence on non-Jewish as well as Jewish thinkers...

"I read the Book of Job last night. God does not come out too well." (Virginia Woolf)

"The Matterhorn of the Old Testament"

"The Book of Job is the greatest work of Hebrew Literature that has come down to us, and one of the great poetical works of the world's literature."

"Great as the summer midnight, as the world with its seas and stars! There is nothing written, I think, in the Bible, or outside of it, of equal merit... A noble Book, all Men's book. It is our first, oldest statement of the never-ending Problem – man's destiny, and God's ways with him here on earth." (Tennyson & Carlyle)

"The incomparable literary masterpiece of the Bible... Better to sweep aside all conventional categories and say at once that the Book of Job is a unique spiritual epic, a supreme drama of the human soul" (Rev. Dr. Cohen, Soncino edition)

- Very relevant to *Shoah* (Holocaust) theology.

2. Iyov in the Tanach

- Controversial inclusion in the Canon: contradictory and theologically problematic

3. Iyov in the liturgy

- No place in the liturgy, *but* – it can be studied during Shivah...
- Sephardim read it on Tisha B'Av
- The Mishnah quotes that Job could – as first choice – be read to The High Priest Erev Yom Kippur to keep him awake! (Yoma 1:6)

4. Date, location and authorship

- We don't know....much disputation over this.
- Prologue and Epilogue stand out...
- Talmud names Moshe as author (Bava Batra 14b)
- But dating in Bava Batra 15a ranges from the time of the Judges to Achashverosh.
- Ezekiel mentions that there are 3 "righteous" men in Tanach: Job, Noah & Daniel.

5. Who is Iyov?

- Was he Jewish? Was he real?
- Reality of history vs. reality of meaning.

6. (a) Chavruta Text Study (1:1-12)

Questions: What do we learn about Job from this passage?
What exactly is the wager between God and Satan?
What is the power balance between God and Satan?
Why does God choose to test Job in this way?

(b) Text Study (1:20-22)

Question: Does Job pass the test?
Chapter 2 Read through...
Question: Does Job pass the test second time?

7. Structure of the Book (see handout)

Nothing else like this exists in the Tanach:

- I. Prologue (chapters 1-3)
- II. Dialogues (chapters 4-31)
 - Highlight: Example of Comforter's comment (8:1-5)
 - Highlight: Example of Job's response (9:1-3, 30-35)
 - Highlight: Example of God's apt answer to Job (38:1-9)
- III. The Intrusion of Elihu (chapters 32-37)
- IV. The Appearance of God (chapter 38-42)
- V. Epilogue (chapter 42)

8. Underlying themes of the Book

- Theodicy
- The book is a theatre
- This struggle can be expressed in a series of questions:
 1. Why do good people suffer?
 2. What is God up to up there?
 3. Why can't we have things explained to us in our lifetime?
 4. Why does our experience clash with dogma?
 5. How does reward and punishment work?
 6. Is God good – when it doesn't seem like it?
 7. Is it ok to get angry about all this?
 8. Is it ok to ask these questions?

LSJS TANACH COURSE

Outline of the Book of Job (*Sefer Iyov*)

Chapter	Structure	Issue	Key Quote, (verse), and speaker
1	Prologue	Test 1	"There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job, and that man was perfect and upright, one that feared God and shunned evil" (1) Narrative
2		Test 2	"But put forth thy hand now and touch his bone and his flesh... and he will curse Thee to thy face" (5) God to Satan
3		Pain	"why did I not perish from birth?" (1) Job
4	Poetic dialogues between Job and the 'comforters': Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar	"Comfort"	"Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished, being innocent?" (7) Eliphaz
5		More "helpful" advice	"But as for me, I would seek unto God" (8) Eliphaz
6		Pity me!	"Yea, you would cast lots upon the fatherless, and dig a pit for your friend." (27) Job
7		Suffering	"My flesh is clothed with worms and clods of dust; my skin closes up and breaks out afresh" (5) Job
8		How dare you!	"Does the Almighty pervert justice?" (3) Bildad
9		Despair	"It is all one – therefore I say: he destroyed the innocent and the wicked" (22) Job
10		Challenge	"I will say unto God: do not condemn me: make me know why thou contends with me" (2) Job
11		Arrogance	"But Oh that God would speak, and open His lips against thee" (5) Zophar
12		Sarcasm	"No doubt but ye are the people and wisdom will die with you." (2) Job
13		Confidence	"Will you speak unrighteously for God? And talk deceitfully for him?" (7) Job
14		Reflection	"If a man die, may he live again? (14) Job
15		Rebuke	"Your own mouth condemns you, not I" (6) Eliphaz
16		Shut up!	"I have heard many such things: sorry comforters are ye all" (2) Job
17		Humiliation	"And I am become one in whose faces they spit" (6) Job
18		Resentment	"Wherefore are we counted as beasts, and reputed dull in your sight?" (3) Bildad
19		Strength	"But as for me, I know that my redeemer lives, and he will witness at the last upon the dust (25) Job
20		Warning	"If he flee from the iron weapon, the bow of brass shall strike him through" (24) Zophar
21		Rejection of dogma	"How often is it that the lamp of the wicked is put out?" (17) Job

22	[ctd.] Poetic dialogues between Job and the 'comforters': Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar	It's nothing personal...	<i>"Is it any advantage to the Almighty that thou art righteous?" (3) Eliphaz</i>
23		Frustration	<i>"Oh that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come even to His seat" (3) Job</i>
24		God's indifference	<i>"From out of the populous city, men groan, and the soul of the wounded cries out; yet God imputes it not for unseemliness." (9) Job</i>
25		Outrage	<i>"How then can man be just with God? Or how can he be clean that is born of a woman?" (4) Bildad</i>
26		Struggle	<i>"...and how small a whisper is heard of him! But the thunder of his mighty deeds who can understand?" (14) Job</i>
27		Determination	<i>"Far be it from me that I should justify you: till I die I will violate my integrity." (5) Job</i>
28		Wisdom	<i>"And unto man He said: Behold, the fear of the Lord – that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding." (28) Job</i>
29		Past glories	<i>"Oh that I were in the months of old, as in the days when God watched over me (2) Job</i>
30		Present misery	<i>"And now my soul is poured out within me; days of affliction have taken hold upon me." (16) Job</i>
31		Plea	<i>"Let me be weighed in a just balance, That God may know my integrity" (6) Job</i>
32		Intrusion of Elihu	Anger
33	Fairness		<i>"If thou hast anything to say to say, answer me; Speak, for I desire to justify thee." (32) Elihu</i>
34	Attack		<i>"What man is like Job? Who drinks up scorning like water?" (7) Elihu</i>
35	Sharper attack		<i>"For Job opens his mouth in vanity; he multiplies words without knowledge." (16) Elihu</i>
36	Praise of God		<i>"Behold, God is lofty in power; who is a teacher like unto him? (22) Elihu</i>
37	Advice		<i>"Hearken unto this, O Job; stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God" (14) Elihu</i>
38	Appearance of God	Whirlwind	<i>"Gird up now thy loins like a man; I will demand of thee..." (3) God</i>
39		Rhetoric	<i>"Hast thou given the horse his strength? Hast thou clothed his neck with fierceness? (19) God</i>
40		Incredulity	<i>"Wilt thou even make void My judgment, wilt thou condemn Me, that thou may be justified? (8) God</i>
41		How God works	<i>"Who hath given me anything beforehand, that I should repay him? Whatsoever is under the whole Heaven is mine." (3) God</i>
42	Epilogue	Reconciliation	<i>"And the Lord changed the fortune of Job... and the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before." (10) Narrative</i>