

Job 1-37: A Review

R' Mordechai Torczyner – torczyner@torontotorah.com



Recordings of previous sessions

- Audio (downloadable) - <http://www.yutorah.org/browse/browse.cfm#speaker=81072&category=234868>
- Video - http://koshertube.com/videos/index.php?option=com_seyret&Itemid=4

Basic structure of the book

- Chapters 1-2 Dialogue between Gd and Satan
- Chapter 3 Job suffers, and comes to curse his own birth
- Chapters 4-14 First round of debates: Eliphaz, Job, Bildad, Job, Tzofar, Job
- Chapters 15-21 Second round of debates: Eliphaz, Job, Bildad, Job, Tzofar, Job
- Chapters 22-26 Third round of debates: Eliphaz, Job, Bildad, Job
- Chapters 27-31 Job's closing arguments
- Chapters 32-37 Elihu's arguments
- Chapters 38-41 Gd addresses Job
- Chapter 42 Job responds, and Epilogue

- Chapter 1 Gd seeks to prove the possibility that a human being could want a relationship with Gd
Satan strikes Job's children and property; this begins the Trial of Man by Gd
Job responds by acknowledging the Divine right to all that is his
- Chapter 2 Job suffers physically
Job rebukes his blasphemous wife, but is less pious
Visitors arrive from afar, express their grief with actions, and remain in silence for 7 days
- Chapter 3 Job lashes out against his birthday/the stars
Job desires to roll back his own creation, and perhaps all of Creation
- Chapter 4-5 Round One: Does approaching Gd lead to a happy ending?
Eliphaz argues for a narrative of hope – Gd helps those who seek it
People deserve their suffering, for their wickedness
One cannot be more righteous than Gd
Eliphaz urges Job to appeal to Gd
- Chapters 6-7 New element: Job's anger at Gd
Job rebukes Eliphaz for not helping; the lack of empathy makes Job bitter
Job makes a statement about Gd:
1. Either Job challenges Gd to leave him alone, or
2. Job claims that Gd does not run the world, as that would be beneath Him
There is no hopeful narrative; I will turn to Gd, but in defiance, not for help
- Chapter 8 Bildad defends Divine justice
Bildad offers two plant parables:
The Thirsty Reed – Those who are wicked will perish
The Lush Plant – May be the same as the Reed, or may be describing suffering ending in prosperity, proving that the pain was actually building toward a positive end
- Chapters 9-10 New element: Job's desire to sue Gd in court
A trial of Gd by Man, instead of a trial of Man by Gd
Job rebukes Bildad; I cannot convince Gd that I am right, and Gd is hostile to me
The world is run unjustly, and I cannot even get a day in court!
If I were to talk to Gd, it would be to challenge Him for what He has done to me

- Chapter 11 Tzofar says that Gd's wisdom involves hidden elements, beyond human ken
An example of a hidden element: One may be judged for failure to fulfill potential
Turn to Gd, and life will improve
- Chapters 12-14 New element: Job insists that he is the pious one
Job responds to the entire set of speakers from the first round
You cannot convince me that there is justice in this world; you only mock me with your speech
I will speak truth, regardless of what Gd does to me
I am the true believer. You are false flatterers who misrepresent Gd, and Gd will punish you.
Job wishes to bring Gd to justice in court, on three claims:
1: I am righteous
2: Even if I have sinned, I am insignificant and unworthy of Your attention
3: I am temporary and lowly, and therefore I am no threat to You
There is no hope for a happy ending, including resurrection of the dead
- Chapter 15 Round Two: Do the wicked suffer?
Eliphaz tries again, arguing that Job fails to value righteousness, and is arrogant
The wicked may not appear to suffer, but they suffer psychologically
The wicked lack a future
- Chapter 16-17 New elements: Gd as Enemy; A plea for empathy
Job demands that Eliphaz stop judging him; if I were in your shoes, I would offer empathy
Gd has become my enemy
I demand justice from Gd
- Chapter 18 Bildad rebukes Job, or his fellow visitors, for not listening
Wicked people cause their own suffering
Wicked people lose everything – as Job did
Wicked people lack a future
- Chapter 19 New element: An elaborate plea for empathy, companionship, and aid with his cause
Job responds that the visitors are making him miserable
Job feels surrounded, crushed and estranged from all around him
Job pleads for someone to record his words, creating his posterity
In a cryptic ending, Job says that someone, someday, will take his side – and that the visitors, and those who take their side, will be punished.
- Chapter 20 Tzofar responds to Job's insults by becoming personal
Wicked people suffer as a result of their wickedness
- Chapter 21 New element: Job contends that there is no reasonable narrative for the universe
The wicked are not punished; they thrive
Suffering is not proof of wickedness
- Chapter 22 New element: Actual charges against Job
Eliphaz alleges that Job harmed the vulnerable and warped justice
Eliphaz still says that Gd would take Job back
Does Eliphaz truly believe the charges he is laying against Job? Or are they rhetorical?

- Chapters 23-24 New element: Job adds a layer of complication by contradicting himself
 Job longs for a trial of Gd, but cannot get such a trial
 Job closes the speech by saying the wicked do suffer.
- Has he changed? Is this sarcasm?
 - Is Job trying to confuse them? Or to send a message?
- Chapter 25 Bildad briefly says that power and justice are with Gd
- Chapter 26 Job agrees with the greatness of Divine might, just not with Divine actions
- Chapter 27 Job's Closing Address, Part I: Summary of Hatred for the Visitors
 Gd will punish your wicked flattery
- Chapter 28 Job's Closing Address, Part II: The Search for Wisdom
 New: A rejection of the Wisdom Dialogue altogether
 Precious metals and minerals are available, but terminal
 Wisdom is not available to humans
 Wisdom is in Divine action
- Chapters 29-31 Job's Closing Address, Part III: Summary of what Gd has done
 Life was wonderful: I helped others, and was honoured
 Now I am mocked by the lowly, and I suffer brutally
 And I do not deserve this; I have not sinned
- Interlude: Did the Satan win?
- The original test: Will Job abandon "awe of Gd" and "curse to His face"?
 - "Awe of Gd" = belief in a just Gd, and loyalty to that Gd
 - Did Satan win?
 - YES: Job called Gd his enemy, and declared Gd unjust
 - NO: Job persisted in declaring that his position is loyal to Gd
- Chapters 32-33 Elihu Begins
 Elihu may be a philosopher, a Jew, harbinger of Gd, or outside observer
 Point 1: Gd communicates with Man through visions, and then suffering
 Gd takes people back when they acknowledge their deeds and express regret
- Chapter 34 Elihu's Second Speech: Divine Justice
 If Gd were malicious, He would destroy society instantly
 Point 2: Gd is the reason society survives. Gd watches all, and punishes all fairly.
 When you repent, accept that you will not sin again
- Chapter 35 Elihu's third speech: Why be good?
 Human deeds do not affect Gd
 Point 3: Human deeds affect others, and Gd punishes those who harm others
- Chapters 36-37 Elihu's fourth speech: Two lessons
 Point 4: Gd helps you by harming you; this provides a warning and atonement
 Point 5: See the beauty and distance of Gd's thunderstorm; this is found in all Divine deeds
 Job: What do you know of Gd, anyway?