

Job

The title of the book of Job comes from the primary character in the story. Who wrote the book of Job and when are not certain. The culture and language of the book suggest that Job lived in the patriarchal period. However, the final form of the book could have been written later.

The books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job are considered wisdom literature. While narrative uses stories to reveal the character of Yahweh and the nature of humanity, and poetry is the expression of human emotions to Yahweh, wisdom literature instructs and provides the practical skills to obtain a good and full life. The books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job are all asking the question “What does it mean to live well in the world?” Each book explores what it means to have the good life, with three different perspectives.¹ The good life is directly connected to the retribution principle, which means that the righteous will be rewarded justly for good behavior and the wicked will be punished justly for bad behavior. It is not possible to have a good life if there is no justice for good and bad behavior in the world.

Proverbs provides the perspective of Lady Wisdom who is a wise teacher, who believes that Yahweh is wise and just, and there is a clear cause and effect between doing the right thing and being rewarded or doing the wrong thing and suffering. Ecclesiastes speaks as the cynic who makes the observation that this is not always true. Life is not just; sometimes bad things happen to good people and good things happen to foolish people. And Job is the old man who has seen and suffered a lot in his life and questions the justice of Yahweh when good people suffer. All three of these books together address the wisdom of Yahweh and how one is to live wisely and obtain the good life in a fallen world.

Purpose

The purpose of the book of Job is to show that when humans suffer, they should not try to understand the suffering as a reflection of Yahweh’s justice but instead learn to trust Yahweh’s wisdom. The book of Ecclesiastes has already shown that the world is not always just, which could be an accusation against the character of Yahweh and the way that He runs the world. The book of Job makes the point that Yahweh does not run the world with justice but with His wisdom.² Not that Yahweh is not a just God, but the free choice of humanity in a fallen world has made the system extremely complicated, and so the wisdom of Yahweh is required to run the world. Therefore, Yahweh does not rule creation with justice but with wisdom. Other books in the Bible make it clear that Yahweh executes justice in the afterlife and will bring universal and complete justice in the second coming of Christ.

The book of Job is also not about why we suffer but about how Yahweh runs the world and how we should respond to Him. The question being asked is, “Why is Job righteous?” not, “Why is Job suffering?” No explanation is ever offered in the book for why suffering takes place, but there is a lot of discussion on what righteousness is. We do not have to understand Job’s suffering, but we do need to understand his righteousness. The issue is whether Job’s righteous devotion to Yahweh will be sustained when Yahweh’s policies of how He runs the world are

¹ See Temper Longman III. *Proverbs*, pp. 61-63.

² See John H. Walton and Tremper Longman. *How to Read Job*, pp. 19-20.

incomprehensible and nothing seems to make sense.³ It is more about how we respond to Yahweh when we are suffering than about why we are suffering.

Structure

The Prologue (1:1-3:26)

Dialogues (4:1-27:23)

Cycle One: Eliphaz, Job, Bildad, Job, Zophar, and Job (4:1-14:22)

Cycle Two: Eliphaz, Job, Bildad, Job, Zophar, and Job (15:1-21:34)

Cycle Three: Eliphaz, Job, Bildad, Job, Zophar, and Job (22:1-27:23)

Interlude: Wisdom Hymn (28:1-28)

Discourses (29:1-42:6)

Series One: Job (29:1-31:40)

Series Two: Elihu (32:1-37:24)

Series Three: Yahweh (38:1-42:6)

Epilogue (42:7-17)

Prologue (1:1-3:26)

The book of Job begins with an introduction to who Job is. In four different ways the narrator describes Job's character, making it clear that Job was truly a righteous man (Job 1:1). And once again, in Job 1:8, Yahweh Himself emphasizes that Job is a righteous man. The narrator is clearly establishing that Job is truly a righteous man. The narrator also establishes that Job is a very wealthy and prosperous man who has been tremendously blessed by Yahweh. He was the greatest man in the East (Job 1:2-3).

Then the narrator switches to the divine council of Yahweh, when all the sons of God were presenting themselves to Yahweh.⁴ Here *the satan* also presented himself before Yahweh. This is not Satan for many reasons.⁵ First, in the Hebrew the word *satan* is preceded by the definite article *the*. In Hebrew, like in English, proper names are never preceded by the definite article. It is not *the* David or *the* Mary. Thus, this word *satan* cannot be understood as the proper name of a being.

Second, the Hebrew word *the satan* means "adversary" and is always translated as "adversary" except in three places (Job 1:6-12; 2:1-7; 1 Chr. 21:1; Zech. 3:1-2) with no real contextual or theological evidence for why translators have interpreted as Satan. All other times the Hebrew word *the satan* appears, it is translated as the noun "adversary" (Num. 22:22, 32; 1 Sam. 29:4; 2 Sam. 19:22; 1 Kgs. 5:4; 1 Kgs. 11:14, 23; 1 Chr. 21:1; Ps. 109:6) or the verb "accuser" (Ps. 38:20; Ps. 71:13; Ps. 109:4; Ps. 109:20; Ps. 109:29; Zech. 3:1). The word *the satan* ("adversary") is not always used in a negative way, such as when the angel of Yahweh (Num. 22:22, 32) and

³ See John H. Walton and Tremper Longman. *How to Read Job*, p. 16.

⁴ See Cory Baugher. "The Divine Council of Yahweh" at www.knowingthebible.net/topics/the-divine-council-of-yahweh.

⁵ See John H. Walton and Tremper Longman. *How to Read Job*, pp. 50-56.

Yahweh (1 Chr. 21:1) are both called *the satan* (“adversary”). In Job 1:6-12; 2:1-7 and Zech. 3:1-2, there is nothing in the context to suggest that these *satans* (“adversary”) should be seen as diabolical beings, as will be discussed in the following points. And in the case of 1 Chr. 21:1, the parallel passage of 2 Sam. 19:22 makes it clear that *the satan* (“adversary”) of that passage is Yahweh.

Third, *the satan* (“adversary”) in Job 1:6-12; 2:1-7 and Zech. 3:1-2 does not function as a diabolical being. In Job 1:6-12 and 2:1-7, he merely questions Job’s motives, and in Zech. 3:1-2 he questions whether Joshua is righteous enough to be priest. Both of these are legitimate questions to ask. In Job it is Yahweh who commands that *the satan* (“adversary”) strike Job’s family, belongings, and eventually his health (Job 1:12; 2:6). So, in both of these cases *the satan* (“adversary”) submits to the authority of Yahweh. In the Second Testament, Satan, the devil, is portrayed as a diabolical being who does not submit to Yahweh, opposing and seeking to destroy His kingdom and His people. By the Second Testament, the devil was seen as the most ultimate *the satan* (“adversary”) so that it was used of him as a proper name. There is no definite article before Satan in the Greek Second Testament.

Fourth, the only way any being can enter the righteous and holy presence of Yahweh is if they are without sin or are saved through sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Satan/Devil has neither, so he cannot enter the presence of Yahweh. It took Jesus dying on the cross to enable sinful humans to enter Yahweh’s presence so there is no way that Satan/Devil is going to be able to. Yet *the satan* (“adversary”) in Job 1:6-12; 2:1-7 and Zech. 3:1-2 is standing in the presence of Yahweh. These points make it clear that *the satan* (“adversary”) in the book of Job is merely an angelic being on the divine council of Yahweh who at this moment has questions about how Yahweh is running the world and about the motives of Job.

The adversary (*the satan*) asked Yahweh the question, “Does Job fear God for nothing?” (Job 1:9-11) In other words, does Job serve Yahweh because he is a righteous man and loves Yahweh regardless of what happens to him, or does he serve Yahweh because he receives blessings and when they cease he will abandon his devotion to Yahweh? The adversary’s accusation could be built on the potential implications of Job 1:4-5 that he has observed in his roaming (Job 1:7b). The narrator had stated that whenever Job’s sons and daughters had feasts, Job would then make sacrifices to Yahweh on their behalf, thinking perhaps they had sinned against God and the sins needed to be atoned for. This is an odd observation for the narrator to make and could portray Job as making sacrifices out of a fear of what Yahweh might do if he does not atone for a sin his children might have committed. Based on this possibility, one might think that Job is motivated by fear of being attacked by an unreasonable and capricious deity. One might also think that Job believes such a god can be bought. The conclusion of that thought is that Job is only righteous because he wants to win the blessings of this god.⁶ So the adversary proposed to strip Job of all his blessings to see whether he truly serves Yahweh for nothing.

However, this is not the deeper issue on which the adversary is challenging Yahweh. The main focus is not on whether Job is righteous but on whether Yahweh is running the world correctly. This challenge against Yahweh’s policy has two parts. The first part of the challenge suggests that Yahweh’s policy of blessing righteous people is flawed because it seems to buy people’s loyalty and righteousness. People are only obedient to Yahweh because He will bless them. The second part of the challenge is seen when Job begins to complain that it is a bad policy that

⁶ See John H. Walton and Tremper Longman. *How to Read Job*, p. 61.

Yahweh allows righteous people to suffer. These two challenges set up the focus of the book. It is not good policy for righteous people to prosper, for that undermines true righteousness by providing an ulterior motive. But it is also not good policy for righteous people to suffer, for they are good people and do not deserve to suffer. This is the tension that Yahweh must manage in running the world.⁷

Job is not the one who is on trial. It is Yahweh and His policy of blessing righteous people that are on trial. The question is whether Job will retain his integrity. His integrity is defined by whether he will keep his focus on his righteous devotion to Yahweh in the midst of his suffering or pursue a strategy to recover the benefits of a righteous life. If his focus is on his benefits, it will show that the challenge posed against him is a correct assessment. He does not serve Yahweh for nothing (Job. 1:9).⁸ As a result, it will reveal Yahweh's policy of blessing righteous people as being flawed.

It is not important whether we understand Job better. His character does not provide a guide for how one should think or act. He is a flawed person whose theology and actions are not perfect. Job's righteousness is not based on whether he is perfect in his thinking and behavior but on whether he stays loyal and devoted to Yahweh regardless of whether he is blessed or not. Thus, Job is the test case for how Yahweh runs the world and how one should think about Yahweh when life seems to fall apart.

Job's Dialogue with His Friends (4:1-37:24)

The narrator then switches to the dialogue between Job and his friends. Here, each of Job's three friends give several speeches about why they have the true wisdom as to why Job is suffering, and Job responds to each one. There are three cycles of their speeches (Job 4-31; refer to the *Structure* section). Though Job and his three friends claimed to be wise, the end of the book reveals that only Yahweh is wise. The narrator gives so much attention to their empty wisdom in order to reveal the flawed thinking and the futility of human wisdom when trying to understand the complicated issues of life and how Yahweh and the world function.

Throughout the book, Job believes he is righteous and does not deserve to suffer and that, therefore, Yahweh is unjust for letting him suffer (Job 9:22-24; 19:7-12; 30:18-25). The reader knows Job is correct about his righteousness (Job 1:1, 8). The issue of whether Yahweh is just is what the book is addressing. Job believes that Yahweh has treated him as a wicked person and believes that he is on trial as the defendant in a criminal case. He demands a hearing before Yahweh, where he can file his complaint against Yahweh for unjustly making him suffer. Throughout his speeches he accused Yahweh of being petty and causing him to suffer for technicalities in the law (Job 7:17-21; 16:7-17). Since Job is so righteous, Yahweh must be punishing him for some very minute, petty, legalistic sin that he is completely unaware of committing and is nothing in comparison to his overall righteousness. Therefore, Yahweh is a petty, legalistic, and unjust God. Job was so confident in his own righteousness that he was willing to criticize Yahweh's justice in order to maintain his righteousness. This makes Job self-righteous, of which he is accused by Elihu later in the book (Job 33:9-12; 34:34-37) and by Yahweh at the end of the book (Job 40:8).

⁷ See John H. Walton and Tremper Longman. *How to Read Job*, p. 15.

⁸ See John H. Walton and Tremper Longman. *How to Read Job*, p. 14.

Despite Job's bad theology and his willingness to accuse Yahweh of being unjust, there is one thing he got right, and it is the most important thing. Job retained his integrity. Not once did he make sacrifices to win Yahweh's favor, curse Yahweh, or renounce his service and faith to Yahweh. Job's theology and character are not the issues, rather whether he would stay devoted to Yahweh. A relationship with Yahweh is not based on theology and character but on one's faith and devotion to Yahweh. If the faith is there, Yahweh will work out our theology and character in our relationship with Him as He did with Job at the end of the book. The book is not concerned with Job's theology or character but whether he succeeds as a witness for the defense of Yahweh.

Job experienced pressure from two groups to violate his righteousness and prove the adversary right. Job's wife pressured him to curse Yahweh and walk away (Job 2:9). Job renounced her thinking as foolishness and did not renounce his devotion to Yahweh (Job. 2:10-11). His three friends pressured him to take actions that would conceivably lead to the restoration of his prosperity, which means he would be trying to win Yahweh's favor through works rather than serving Yahweh for nothing.

At first Job's three friends were good friends, sitting silently with him and mourning with him (Job 2:11-13). But then they began to talk and argued that they believed Job was on trial for sins he had committed and needed to confess. Job's three friends embraced the retribution principle. The three friends represent the wisdom of the ancient Near East with an Israelite modification.

In the ancient Near East, when people suffered, they believed it was because their gods had abandoned them and left them vulnerable to all kinds of calamities. They did not believe they were being punished for moral sins, for they would know if they had committed an ethical offense like theft, adultery, murder, etc. They believed they were innocent of any wrongdoing as far as they knew. Therefore, offenses were generally assumed to have taken place in the realm of ritual. It was easy to commit ritual offenses without knowing it. Did they eat some food forbidden by the gods? Did they accidentally step on a sacred space of the gods? Did they perform a sacrificial ritual incorrectly?⁹ The usual solution was to make an offering to the gods in order to appease them and buy back their favor.

Job's three friends did not consider Job's offense to be in the realm of ritual, nor did they advise ritual strategies for restoration. But they did seek to help Job confess his wrongdoing and appease a god that was angry with him in order that he might be restored to favor and prosperity. Therefore, confess your sin, and your blessing will be restored. This has more to do with what one gets from Yahweh rather than an intimate and devoted relationship with Yahweh. If Job gave in to their advice, then the adversary would be right.

Although the three friends all embraced this thinking, they expressed it in different ways. Eliphaz gave the most weight to his personal experiences. Bildad relied on the wisdom of the ancient Near East. Zophar was more likely to see everything as black and white. In the first cycle of speeches, the friends offered advice to Job. They used generalizations, exhorted Job, and held out hope for restoration. In the second cycle, they turned their attention to the fate of the wicked. They repeatedly insulted and humiliated Job with insinuations. In the third cycle, they directly

⁹ See John H. Walton and Tremper Longman. *How to Read Job*, p. 25.

accused Job.¹⁰ Yet in all this Job defended his innocence and did not give in to their pressure and try to appease Yahweh and win His blessing back.

The narrator then introduces Elihu (Job 32:1-5), who had been sitting with Job and the other three friends the entire time but did not speak because he saw them as older and wiser. Elihu immediately rebuked the three friends for condemning Job while being unable to name any sin he had committed. Elihu also rebuked Job for his self-righteousness, that he was willing to dispute Yahweh's character in order to justify himself.

Job's self-righteousness is the basis for Elihu's argument (Job 32-37). Elihu agreed with Job in that he had done nothing wrong to deserve suffering, but he disagreed with Job's belief that Yahweh was unjust. Elihu argued that Yahweh was just and that His judgment sometimes preceded a person's offense, that Yahweh might cause someone to suffer before they commit a sin in order to reveal flaws in their character. Thus, Job's suffering was necessary to reveal the problem of self-righteousness in his life. In this way Elihu's thinking is more in alignment with the adversary, who questioned Job's motives for his devotion to Yahweh. Elihu was not questioning Yahweh's policies of running the world but suggesting a modified retribution principle of why Job's suffering was just.

Elihu is closest to the truth in maintaining the justice of Yahweh and the righteousness of Job but still not totally correct in why Job was suffering. Job and his friends did not show any true wisdom as to what was happening with Job. Yet in the end, Job showed that he did serve Yahweh for nothing—by not by abandoning Yahweh and not trying to buy back Yahweh's blessing. The adversary had been proven wrong. Job did indeed serve Yahweh for nothing, and Yahweh's policies are not flawed. Still, Yahweh was going to deal with Job's accusations against Him of being unjust.

Yahweh Confronts Job (Job 38:1-42:6)

Throughout the book Job has demanded an audience with Yahweh, and now Yahweh shows up, but it would not be what Job had expected. There are two things that should be noted in Yahweh's divine arrival. First is the use of the name of Yahweh. The name Yahweh is consistently used in the first two chapters, even by Job. But throughout the book (Job 3-37), Yahweh had been referred to only by the titles of El Shaddai or Elohim. Now He is consistently referred to as Yahweh, which is His name, not a title, and communicates His sovereignty and relational nature with humanity. Yahweh, the divine God of the universe, was personally entering Job's life in order to speak to him.

Second is that Yahweh came in the whirlwind of His wrath to judge Job. Whenever the whirlwind or storm is mentioned, it always refers to the appearance of Yahweh in judgment or His using of a foreign military against another nation in judgment (Job 30:21-23; 36:27-33; 38:1-3; 40:6; Ps. 11:6; 50:3-4; Prov. 1:24-27; 10:24-25; Isa. 40:23-24; Jer. 22:22; 23:19; 30:23; Ezek. 1:4; 10; 30:3; Jonah 1:4; Nahum 1:3; Zech. 7:14; Heb. 12:18). Whereas at the beginning Yahweh praised Job's righteousness (Job 1:8), now Job is the one who darkens His council and speaks without knowledge (Job 38:1). Though Job was righteous in his devotion, his understanding of Yahweh and his theology were wrong and inappropriate. Yahweh referring to Job as one who darkens His council shows that Job's understanding is not in the light but is dark

¹⁰ See John H. Walton and Tremper Longman. *How to Read Job*, p. 67.

and sinister. Yahweh would rebuke Job for unjustly condemning Him of being unjust as an attempt to justify himself when he knew nothing about the complexities of the world and running it (Job. 40:8).

Yahweh gave two speeches addressing the folly of Job's wisdom (Job. 38:2-40:2 and 40:6-41:34). Yahweh's words were not about Job's righteousness or His own justice. He defended neither in His speech. The main issue was how Job should correctly think about and approach Yahweh.

In the first speech (Job 38:2-40:2), Yahweh began with a series of questions dealing with the operations of the cosmos (Job 38:4-38) and the animal world (Job. 38:39-39:30). By describing the operations of the cosmos and animals, Yahweh was making the point that the cosmos is way more complicated than Job could ever imagine. Yahweh is not saying, "I am God and you are not." A loving God would not give such an uncompassionate answer to one who is crying out, "I am suffering—do you see me and care?" Rather, Yahweh is saying that Job did not have the understanding nor the ability to run the cosmos successfully. The point is that Job was incapable of taking control of the cosmos and implementing his idea of justice. Therefore, Job had no right to condemn Yahweh for the way He is running the world when he was so ignorant of everything.

Job thought he understood how the world operated and assumed that the retribution principle governed the world justly. His experience of suffering has shown this is not correct. Thus, he thought Yahweh was not just and was not running the world properly. Yahweh responded to this by stating that the world is not run according to justice. Just because Yahweh is just does not mean that the world operates justly. Yahweh makes this point when He states that the rain falls even in the desert where no one lives and nothing can grow (Job 38:25-27). If the world were just, then the rain would fall only on those who deserve it. There are many truths about creation that operate and affect people regardless of whether people are righteous or wicked (the point of Ecclesiastes).

After Yahweh's first speech, Job responded with humility and submission, but he did not recant his accusation against Yahweh (Job 40:4-5). He was intimidated in the face of Yahweh's power and anger but refused to speak and change his view. He still did not understand the folly of his thinking and accusation.

In the second speech (Job 40:6-41:34), Yahweh asked a series of questions concerning the cosmic creatures of the Behemoth (Job 40:15-24) and Leviathan (Job 41:1-34). Yahweh began by challenging Job to take the mantle of God and work his own salvation in the world by crushing the proud and the wicked (Job 40:8-14). Yahweh sarcastically stated that if Job could victoriously defeat the evil in the world, then He would acknowledge Job as God.

Yahweh then brought attention to the Behemoth and the Leviathan in order to make His next points. It is clear when reading the descriptions of these creatures that they are more than a hippopotamus or crocodile, as some claim. They are also more than proof of dinosaurs living with humans, for the anti-atheist argument. They must be viewed in the context of the ancient Near Eastern culture and how they are being used literarily in the book of Job. In the context of the ancient Near East, these animals represented chaos creatures or anti-cosmos creatures. They were part of the ordered world but served as agents of non-order by virtue of their mindless nature. They are creatures Yahweh created; therefore, they are not morally evil, but they can do

serious harm. They are not enemies of Yahweh, but they can wreak havoc among humans.¹¹ They represent the powerful and destructive elements of creation that are out of the control of humans and bring chaos and destruction in life.

These creatures are not described as evil, nor do they take the position of adversary against Yahweh or Job, and Yahweh never mentioned the need to subdue them. Yahweh does not defeat nor harness these creatures in order to show His superiority, nor did He challenge Job to do so. Yahweh is far superior to anything in His creation to need to defeat anything. And no feat of any human could ever come anywhere close to Yahweh's grandeur or making a point about human greatness. Yahweh used these two creatures to address the question of what Job's posture and attitude ought to be towards Yahweh.

The main point made about the Behemoth is its stability in the surging waters (Job 40:23). Yahweh also compared and contrasted the Behemoth with Job. The Behemoth was made along with Job; it is content, well fed, made strong, ranks first among Yahweh's kind, and is cared for and sheltered just as Job is. But the Behemoth is not alarmed by the raging river (chaos); it is secure and invulnerable (cannot be captured or hooked in the nose), as should be true of Job as well. The point is that humans should respond to the raging waters (chaos of life) with security and trust in Yahweh as the Behemoth does.¹²

Yahweh did not speak of Job doing anything to the Behemoth, but when He discussed the Leviathan, the first eight verses use the second person. This switch suggests that the Leviathan is to be compared to Yahweh. The Leviathan cannot be controlled and will not beg for mercy; it cannot be wounded, subdued, roused, or bridled, is dangerous when riled, is invulnerable, has no equal among the creatures, and dominates all who are proud just like Yahweh. The point is that humans should not think that they can challenge or domesticate Yahweh since they cannot even challenge or domesticate the Leviathan, who is inferior to Yahweh.¹³

In Job 40:11 Yahweh challenged Job to "look at all who are proud and bring them low." In Job 41:34 Yahweh identified the Leviathan as the one who looks down on all who are haughty and is the king over such a person. Humans are not to be proud and haughty and think that they are wiser or better than others or Yahweh. Their character and attitude should be above such arrogance ("look down on all who are haughty"). Job is seen by Yahweh as incapable of taking on the role of the Leviathan.

These creatures make the points that Job needed to find stability in the rough waters of life and that he needed to have more respect for Yahweh. He should be confident in Yahweh's wisdom and ability to run the world and take care of His creation.

Job's second response to Yahweh shows that he understood the points that Yahweh was making (Job 42:1-6). He acknowledged his ignorance and finiteness in the presence of Yahweh, and he repented of his accusation against Yahweh.

¹¹ See John H. Walton and Tremper Longman. *How to Read Job*, pp. 80-81.

¹² See John H. Walton and Tremper Longman. *How to Read Job*, p. 83.

¹³ See John H. Walton and Tremper Longman. *How to Read Job*, p. 83.

Epilogue (42:7-17)

Yahweh then turned on the three friends and rebuked them for not speaking rightly about Him. Yahweh stated that they had not spoken rightly as Job had in his response to Yahweh (Job 42:1-6). Yahweh commanded the three friends to go to Job with sacrifices, saying that Job would pray for them and that He would forgive them. When Job acted as priest earlier with his children, it exposed a flaw in his theology and his motivations (Job 1:4-5). Now when Job acts as priest for his friends, he does it as a reflection of Yahweh's character, not in suspicion of Yahweh's unjust character.¹⁴

Then Yahweh blessed Job with prosperity and more children. This was not a return to the retribution principle, nor was it meant to erase the grief over what Job had lost. First and foremost, the adversary had been proven wrong about Yahweh's policies of running the world, so Yahweh's blessings on Job make a clear statement that Yahweh would continue to act as He did before; His wise policies have not changed. Prosperity is not a reward that Job deserved or something Yahweh is required to provide. This was a generous gift from Yahweh, who is a good God.¹⁵ The blessings are also not a replacement for Job's children or given to remove his grief. Job's suffering and loss were real, and there is no changing that. However, there still can be new joys in the middle of one's loss. Many people find joy and hope in having other children after the loss of a child. It does not undermine the loss or pain but rather provides hope for the future. Yahweh delights in bringing prosperity to the righteous, and He takes seriously the responsibility of punishing the wicked. Thus, He restores Job.

Conclusion

The retribution principle offers no guarantees in life. And the world is fallen and extremely complicated. There is no way one can fully understand the operations of the universe or the policies Yahweh holds to in running the world. And Yahweh and His policies cannot be reduced to a simple equation. That is why it is better to describe and focus on what Yahweh is like. Rather than the book of Job defending Yahweh's justice, it defends His wisdom.

“God's justice is portrayed as an accepted fact, but it is also indiscernible. Technically, one should not claim that God is just—that appears to make him accountable to an external system. It is also a less-than-meaningful statement if we can never really have sufficient information to demonstrate that God is acting justly. Instead, we should say that justice emanates from the person of God. At the same time, however, we recognize that the justice that emanates from him does not stamp itself indelibly on the world in which we live. Consequently, though we affirm that justice is found in him, we cannot base our expectations in life or our understanding of how the world runs on that premise. The book therefore does not contest God's justice but removes it from the table for discussion and focuses attention elsewhere. God does not endow the world with justice, though he is able to enact justice as his wisdom dictates.”¹⁶

The wisdom of Yahweh is the key to the message of the book. As the reader grasps the overwhelming complexities of creation and the sovereign kingship of Yahweh over creation, and

¹⁴ See John H. Walton. *Job*, p. 434.

¹⁵ See John H. Walton. *Job*, p. 436.

¹⁶ John H. Walton and Tremper Longman. *How to Read Job*, pp. 47-48.

as they become impressed with the wisdom of Yahweh, they are encouraged to trust Yahweh rather than trying to figure out what He is doing and why. We are to trust that His ways are best, which is rooted in the understanding that He loves us and wants to bless us with life and joy to the fullest. He runs the world and makes this all happen through His wisdom. Yahweh is not in need of our vindication, nor could we make a reasonable or adequate system in order to hold Him accountable. Yahweh is not accountable to us.

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