

Forget Jewish – did he exist?

1. Talmud, Bava Batra 15a-b

"Moshe wrote his book, the passage of Bilam and Job." This supports Rabbi Levi bar Lachma's statement: Job was in Moshe's time. Job 19:23 uses the word אפר and in Shemot 32:16 Moshe used the word אפרו. But then he could have been in Yitzchak's time (Bereishit 27:33) or Yaakov's time (Bereishit 43:11) or Yosef's time (Bereishit 37:16)! Don't think that; Job 19:23 also uses the term יוהקו, and Moshe was called מהוקק, as in Devarim 33:21.

Rava said Job was in the Spies' time; Job 1:1 says, "There was a man in the land of עוץ, and his name was Job," and Bamidbar 13:20 says, "Is there an עץ." But are they similar? One is עוץ, the other is עץ! True; Moshe was saying to the Jews, "There is a man whose years are as long as a tree's span, and who protects his generation like a tree."

A sage before Rabbi Shemuel bar Nachmeni said: Job did not exist and was not created; he was a parable.

- Rabbi Shemuel bar Nachmeni said: To you it says, "There was a man in the land of Utz, and his name was Job!"
- But then Shemuel II 12:3, "The pauper had naught but one small lamb he had bought, and he nurtured her, etc." – was there such a person? He was a parable, and so too here!
- But then why tell his name and city?

Rabbi Yochanan and Rabbi Elazar said: Job was among those who ascended from the [Babylonian] Diaspora, and his study hall was in Tiberias.

- But we have learned, "Job's years were from the time Israel entered Egypt until they left!" It means "like from the time they left Egypt until they left."
- But we have learned, "Seven prophets prophesied for the nations of the world: Bilam, his father, Job, Elifaz of Teman, Bildad of Shuchah, Tzofar of Naamah and Elihu ben Berachel haBuzi!" Well even according to you, wasn't Elihu Jewish? It says he was "from the Romm family"! Elihu [was Jewish, and he] prophesied for the nations, and the same is true for Job. But didn't all prophets prophesy for the nations of the world? Yes, but their main prophecy was for Israel; here, their main prophecy was for the nations.
- But we have learned, "There was a pious non-Jew, his name was Job, and he entered the world only to be rewarded. Gd made him suffer and he began to blaspheme. Gd doubled his reward in this world, to chase him from the next!"

This question [whether Job was Jewish] is the subject of a debate of the mishnaic sages, as we have learned:

- "Rabbi Elazar said: Job was in the time of the Judges, as in Job 27:12, 'You have all seen; why do you speak *hevel*?' What generation was entirely *hevel*? This was the generation of the Judges.
- Rabbi Yehoshua ben Karcha said: Job was in the time of Achashverosh, as in Job 42:15, "No women as beautiful as Job's daughters was found in the entire land." In what generation did they seek beautiful women? The generation of Achashverosh." But perhaps this was Dovid's time, as in Melachim I 1:3, "And they sought a beautiful girl?" That was "in the entire boundary of Israel," here it was "in the entire land."
- "Rabbi Natan said: Job was in the time of the nation of Sheba, as in Job 1:15, 'And people of Sheba fell upon them and took them.'
- And the Sages said: Job was in the time of the Chaldeans, as in Job 1:17, 'Chaldeans came in three branches.'
- And some say Job was in Yaakov's time, and he married Dinah, daughter of Yaakov. Job 2:10 says, 'You speak like of the *nevalot*,' and Bereishit 34:7 said, 'A *nevalah* was done in Israel.'

All of those sages believed that Job was Jewish, other than the "some say" author, for if Job was not Jewish, was the Shechinah manifest upon idolaters after Moshe's death? Have we not learned, "Moshe requested that the Shechinah not be manifest upon idolaters, as in Shemot 33:16, 'And I and Your nation shall be set apart!'"

2. Rambam, Guide of the Perplexed 3:22

The incredible matter of Job is of the type we have been discussing, a parable to explain human views regarding Divine supervision. You already know their explanation, and how some have said, "Job did not exist and was not created; he was a parable," and how those who thought he existed and was created and his story is about a real event knew neither his time nor his location... This strengthens the view that he did not exist and was not created...

3. "Mashal" Devarim 28:37; Shemuel I 24:13; Melachim I 5:12

4. Rambam, Guide of the Perplexed 3:22

The beginning of that which you should examine is its statement, "There was a man in the land of Utz". It brought a name with multiple meanings, Utz, which is the name of a person – "his first-born, Utz" – as well as an instruction regarding counsel and behaviour, as in Isaiah 8:10, "*Utzu etzah* [take counsel]". It is as though the text said, "Go examine this counsel and contemplate it, and raise its issues in your hand and understand them, and see what the true ideas are."

5. Midrash, Pesikta Rabti 26

Jeremiah said: When I ascended to Jerusalem I lifted my eyes and saw a woman seated atop the mountain... Jeremiah said to her: Your blows resemble those of Job. Job's sons and daughters were taken from him, and your sons and daughters were taken from you. I took Job's silver and gold, and I took your silver and gold. I cast Job into the heap, and I made you a heap of manure. And just as I returned and comforted Job, so I will return and comfort you. I doubled Job's sons and daughters, and I will double your sons and daughters. I doubled Job's silver and gold, and I will do so for you. I moved Job from the heap, and regarding you Isaiah 52:2 says, "Shake yourself from the dust, arise, return to Jerusalem"...

Jew / Not a Jew

6. Devarim 32:39, Job 10:7

Psalms 107:40, Job 12:21

7. Satan

Bamidbar 22:22; Zechariah 3:1-2; Chronicles I 21:1

8. Commentary of Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra to 2:11

ההקדוב אלי כי הוא ספר מתורגם על כן הוא קשה בפירוש כדרך כל ספר מתורגם

The most likely explanation is that it is a translated book, and therefore it is hard to interpret, like all translated books.

9. Ezekiel 14:13-14

10. Talmud, Sanhedrin 106a

...שלושה היו באותה עצה, אלו הן: בלעם איוב ויתרו. בלעם שיעץ נהרג, איוב ששתק נידון ביסורין, ויתרו שברח זכו בני בניו...

Three were in the plot [to throw baby boys into the river in Egypt]: Bilam, Job and Yitro. Bilam counseled it and was killed. Job was silent and was punished with suffering. Yitro fled, and his children merited...

Why does it matter?

11. Avot d'Rabbi Natan 7:1b – "Members of your household"; Be proactive!

"Paupers should be members of your household" – Not literally the members of your household; rather, that paupers should speak of what they eat and drink in your home, as paupers would speak of what they ate and drank in Job's home. When they encountered each other, one would say to another, 'From where did you come?' 'From Job's home. Where are you going?' 'To Job's home.' And when Job experienced the great suffering, he said before Gd: 'Master of the Universe! Did I not feed the hungry and give drinks to the thirsty?' As in Job 31:16, 'Did I eat my bread alone, without an orphan eating therefrom?' "And did I not clothe the unclothed?" As in Job 31:20, 'Did he not warm himself with the shearing from my sheep?'

Nonetheless, Gd replied to Job: Job! You did not reach even half of Abraham's measure. You sit and wait in your home and guests enter to you. You feed wheat bread to one who normally eats wheat bread. You feed meat to one who normally eats meat. You give wine to one who normally drinks wine. Abraham did not do this; rather, he went out into the world and circulated, and when he found guests he brought them into his home. He gave wheat bread to those who did not normally eat wheat bread, he gave meat to those who did not normally eat meat. He gave wine to those who did not normally drink wine. Not only that, but he built great halls near the roads, and placed there food and drink. Anyone who entered ate and drank and blessed Gd. Therefore, I gave him *nachat ruach*. And anything the mouth requested was found in Abraham's house, as it is written, 'And he planted an eshel in Beer Sheva.'

12. Rashi to Job 38:2

ואיוב ענהו "מי זה מעלים עצה" אילו הייתי יודע עצתך לא הייתי מרבה בדברים, והקב"ה השיבו והלא אברהם לא היה יודע ועמד בעשר!

Job replied, "Who is this who conceals counsel" – Had I known Your counsel, I would not have increased my words. To which Gd replied, "Abraham did not know, and he withstood ten [tests]!"