

## The Message of the Book of Job

### 1. Simon N. Kramer, Sumerian Wisdom Text: A Sumerian Variation of the "Job" Motif

Structurally speaking, our poetic tract may be tentatively divided into five sections. First comes a brief introductory exhortation that man should praise and exalt his god and soothe him with lamentations. The poet then introduces the unnamed individual who, upon being smitten with sickness and misfortune, addresses his god with tears and prayers. There follows the sufferer's petition which constitutes the major part of the poem. It begins with a description of the ill treatment accorded him by his fellow men, friend and foe alike; continues with a lament against his bitter fate, including a rhetorical request to his kin and to the professional singers to do likewise; and concludes with a confession of guilt and a direct plea for relief and deliverance. Finally comes the "happy ending," in which the poet informs us that the man's prayer did not go unheeded, and that his god accepted the entreaties and delivered him from his afflictions. All this leads, of course, to a further glorification of his god.

### 1:1-5 Let's meet Job

#### 2. Utz? Bereishit 10:23, 22:21, 36:28; Jeremiah 25:20; Lamentations 4:21

#### 3. Rambam, Guide of the Perplexed 3:22

ותחלת מה שתשתכל בו אמרו "איש היה בארץ עוץ", הביא שם משתתף והוא עוץ, שהוא שם איש "את עוץ בכורו", והוא צווי בעצה ובהנהגה "עצו עצה", וכאלו יאמר "לך השתכל בזאת העצה והתבונן בו והעלה בידך עניניו והבינם, וראה הדעות האמתיות מה הן".

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."

#### 4. Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra to Job 1:1

והאומר שהוא יובב בן זרח מבצרה שמה בחלום ראה זה כי אין לו על מה ישען לא על דברי הנביאים ולא על מה שהעתיקו חכמינו ז"ל.  
One who says this was Yovav ben Zerach of Batzrah perhaps saw this in a dream, for he has no support – not among the words of the prophets and not among the ideas recorded by our sages.

#### 5. "And he sanctified them" Shemot 19:14; Vayikra 8:10

#### 6. Midrash, Psikta Zutrita Esther 2:5

רובם של צדיקים שמם קודם להזכרתם, כענין שנאמר ושמם מנוח (שופטים יג, ב), ושמם אלקנה (ש"א א, א), ושמם ישי (שם יז, יב), ושמם בועז (רות ב, א), אבל רוב הרשעים שמם באחרונה, כענין שנאמר נבל שמו (ש"א כה, כה), גלית שמו (שם יז, ד), שבע בן בכרי שמו (ש"ב כ, א), אבל יש צדיקים שכתוב בהם כזה העניין איוב שמו (איוב א, א), והוא צדיק:

Most righteous people have the word "name" before they are mentioned, like "And his name was Manoach", "And his name was Elkanah", "And his name was Yishai", "And his name was Boaz". But most wicked people have the word "name" last, like "Naval was his name", "Goliath was his name", "Sheva ben Bichri was his name". However, some righteous people have this written for them, like "Job was his name" even though he was righteous.

#### 7. Key items

- Job's adjectives
- 10's?
- Who are the easterners?
- "Job was his name"
- "And were born to him"
- What role do Job's offerings play in this story?

8. Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra to Job 1:6

הגאון רב סעדיה אמר כי השטן בן אדם היה מקנא באיוב... ואמר כי המלאכים אין להם קנאה והנה שכח "ויתיצב מלאך ד' בדרך לשטן לו"... ולבאר סוד אלה הדברים לא יכילם ספר, והמבין סוד מערכות הצבאות והשתנות המעשים כפי השתנות התנועות ידע עיקר השטן. והכלל שהוא מלאך.

Rav Saadia Gaon said that Satan was a person who was outraged by Job... he said that malachim do not experience outrage. He forgot Bamidbar 22:22, "And the malach of Gd stood in the path, to obstruct [//satan] him."... To explain the secret of such matters would be beyond the scope of a book; one who understands the arrangements of the heavenly host and the changes in events based on the changes in [celestial] movements will know the essence of the Satan. The principle is that this is a malach.

9. Satan Bamidbar 22:22; Zechariah 3:1-2; Divrei haYamim I 22:1

10. Rev. William James Caldwell, *The Doctrine of Satan*, The Biblical World 41:1 (1913)

The Satan appears among the angels who form the council of heaven about the king on the throne. It is the duty of the Adversary to challenge and test the good. He is the enemy of sham and false pretensions. He reports for duty to the king and executes his will, and yet he is not a mere instrument; he is an intelligent servant who knows how to offer suggestions for a test-experiment, and he is jealous for the honor of Gd. There is no suggestion of a fallen angel filled with rebellion and hatred to Gd. Satan is a person more than functionally separate from Gd, but always under the divine will and powerless without the divine permission. He is a servant who knows how to disappear when his work is done. When Job's "friends" arrive there is no need for Satan.

11. Talmud, Bava Batra 16a

אמר ר"ל: הוא שטן הוא יצר הרע הוא מלאך המות

Reish Lakish said: He is Satan, he is the *yetzer hara*, he is the malach of death.

12. Rambam, Guide of the Perplexed 3:22

ולפי שתי הדעות, ר"ל אם היה או לא היה, הדברים ההם אשר בפתיחת הספר, ר"ל מאמר השטן ומאמר ד' אל השטן ומסור איוב בידו, כל זה משל בלא ספק לכל בעל דעת, אלא שהוא משל לא כשאר המשלים כולם, אבל משל שנתלו בו פליאות ודברים שהם כבשונו של עולם, והתבארו בו ספקות גדולות וגללו ממנו תעלומות שאין למעלה מהן

Within both views, meaning whether he existed or not, these words from the start of the book – the statements of the Satan and of Gd to the Satan, and placing Job into his hand – all of this is without doubt a parable, to anyone of intelligence. However, it is a parable unlike any other parable, a parable upon which marvelous matters depend, matters which are the secrets of the world, and in which great areas of doubt are explained, and the highest hidden matters are revealed.