

09/24/24 and 09/26/24

THE BOOK OF JOB NOTES Dr. Boyer

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- Job: Boyer's favorite scripture

Tanach/Hebrew Bible

- includes 3 parts, not just the Torah
- no single author - not written by an institution, individual human, or God
 - and no one "back then" thought God wrote it or even that it was "divinely inspired"
- 3 parts:
 - **Torah**: Pentateuch, Book of Moses, conventionally known stories like Genesis, Exodus
 - **Nevi'im** - prophets
 - **Ketuvim** - "writings," songs, Song of Solomon, Job, etc

JOB

- hybrid text - braids different conditions
 - Near Eastern folk tales, Hebrew poetry (prayer often configured as poetry)
- **Babylon Theodicy** + classical Hebrew writing
- Late addition to Tanakh/Hebrew Bible - probably no earlier than 500s, more likely 300s [BCE?]
- NOT poetry or history or even a text - it's a compendium, a book of books, all sorts of narratives & poems & cet. "housed" in the same text
 - i.e. NOT a single, unified text
- generically & formally complex
 - i.e. "in form"
- sections:
 - **Prose** - chapters 1-2, 42
 - **Poetry & dialogue as poetry** - chapters 3-41
 - dialogue was, like, THE THING to do
 - this section divided into cycles of dialogue w/ Job's friends → meditation on wisdom → Job's monologue → Elihu

Poetry

- "It's like pornography, you know it when you see it, but it's hard to define" - Dr. Boyer
- "Meaningless - but they have meaning" - Liam *poems
- truly about language & words
 - i.e. focus on form rather than meaning

ie Job + involved on behalf of the Hebrew Bible
↑ prophets in general aren't original, not in great works - it's the art of presenting them

*theo (God) + dike (justice) - "Justice for God"

"endless array of discomfort & elbows"

↑ Bonq

- content & form ≠ a thing - it's just form
- form generates the illusion of content/meaning
- started off as song & was song/non-static/performative for most of its history
 - * ex. everything from singing the odyssey to medieval troubadours
- rhetorical & figurative language - we use literal language exceedingly rarely; poetry magnifies that turn towards the figurative (intentionally)
- trope: "turning away from the literal use of language"
 - Greeks had a lot of figurative language things, metonymy, synecdoche, chiasmus - all those count as tropes in the sense of the word Boyer/the Greeks meant it
- writing & language = key in religion
 - God spoke the world into existence - that's the 1st law ever! "Here's this world, it follows these rules..."
 - Bible = law when ppl didn't understand above law
 - Jesus = "word made flesh," the law once Bible wasn't enough
 - God's explanations get more & more complicated, less clear (think Jesus' parables) - even as we clearly need clarity, there's something in that and in poetry...

Legal Language

- It's everywhere, ingrained in our DNA - not just something Boyer/Cover are looking out for!
- covenant: mutual agreement btwn ppl to do/not do things, compact, contract, bargain; pledge/promise by 1 of parties - OED
 - OR, archaic: "on the condition that"
 - the covenants we consider here will be highly conditional
- testament: originally a confusion of the Greek for covenant & will (i.e. dying) being the same
 - "tangible proof/tribute" "expression of conviction" "covenant btwn God & the human race" - Merriam-Webster

Commentary on various verses

- "In spite of everything, Job did not sin with his lips" (2:10)
 - emphasis on speaking as significant

- "Yes, happy the man whom God reproves! / do not reject Shaddai's correction. /

He may give pain, but He binds the wound; / He strikes, but His hands bring healing."

- suffering has value and meaning

- Eliphaz, 5:15

- as readers, we're looking for some sort of organization in Job's suffering & therefore some sort of meaning

- Job's body is at this point destroyed by boils, potentially torn out fingernails...

- "If there were some way to weigh my rage, if my disaster would fit in a balance, / they would drag down the ocean's sands; that's why my speech is clumsy. / For Shaddai's arrows are now all around me - / my breath absorbs their venom - / terror of the god invests me." - Job, 6:1

- fear of God's rage

- Job is building towards a (hopeful) future encounter with God, not actually talking to his friends

- Irony: Job can't possibly speak → he talks for the next, like, five chapters

- irony: literal & figurative language @ contradiction v. subtly

- contradiction btwn reality, stated reality (?)

- "breath" absorbs venom - again, emphasis on speech

- "How eloquent are honest words - / How then can you teach effectively? / Do you think you can teach me with words? / Is a speech of despair just wind?"

- Honesty = key to Job

- Job, 6:25

- God's speech is literally wind - Job's speech //s that

- Job continues to set up this idea of meeting/disputing with God

- "Why should I restrain my mouth? - / I speak from a dejected spirit, / complain out of sheer bitterness; / am I Yamm - ocean or the serpent, / that You post a guard over me? / I tell myself, "my couch will comfort me, / my bed will bear a part of my complaint," / Only to have You frighten me w/ nightmares, / panic me with visions of the night - / I'd rather choke -" - Job, 7:11

- Job characterizes his own speech again

- "why restrain mouth?" v. "choke" - Job would rather lose the ability to speak than stay silent voluntarily

- "True, I know that this is so; / but can a mortal beat a god at idw? / If someone chose to challenge Him, / He would not answer even the thousandth part!" - Job 9:1

- again, Job establishes his hope for a legal confrontation

- note Job does challenge God & come out not only whole, but better.

- "and if I summoned him, and if he answered me, / I doubt that he would listen to my voice, / since he crushes me for just a hair, / and bruises me for nothing, / will not let me catch my breath, / feeds me full of poison. / Is it power? He is mighty! / Is it justice? Who can summon him? / I may be righteous, but my mouth convicts me, / innocent, yet it makes me seem corrupt. " - Job 9:15

- power & justice? There's a distinction btwn sovereignty & power

- 9:32-10:34

- God MADE Job, carefully & lovingly - why is God now abandoning him?!

- I give up on individual quotations!

- Job consistently uses God's language in relation to himself, ^{→ "to make a speech" - M-W} speeches for God (ex. commands, "O Earth! do not conceal my blood!") demanding that his suffering be known

- Never questions God's right to rule, but does want to challenge God's ... interpretation of what he's doing to Job

- Job's fear of God is fear of ultimate destruction, "sublime" - Isaiah fear - God can destroy, like, everything

- Meditation on wisdom

- ultimate wisdom = bowing to God
- true knowledge = avoiding sin
- God's wisdom perhaps provides God with God's sublime power

- God's response

- Job has been demanding that God show up; now God is here, but too incredibly powerful and ... godly ... to even debate w/ Job, instead launching into a description of God's own power & glory
- Rhetorical questions emphasize Job's lack of wisdom
- chaos ≠ absence of goodness - it's just that humans really don't understand
- Leviathan & Behemoth: God established things beyond the scope of humans' reality

- Dr. B's conclusion: God is so powerful and nevertheless comes to Job to explain

Godself, who God is. It undoes the idea that Job ≠ power to make claim on God. Job gets justice from that - he doesn't have to adore God, but can make demands of God. God is part of, not outside, Job's paedieic community.