**Introduction**

The book of Job delves into themes of faith, human suffering, and the nature of God's sovereignty through the experiences of Job, a man of great integrity who faces unimaginable suffering.

**Structure and Argument**

(1) An Outline of Job (Dyer & Merrill, The O.T. Explored, p.377)

I. The Prologue (chapters 1-2)

II. The Dialogue with the Three Friends (chapters 3-31)

A. The First Cycle of Speeches (chapters 3-14)

B. The Second Cycle of Speeches (chapters 15-21)

C. The Third Cycle of Speeches (chapters 22-31)

III. The Four Speeches of Elihu (chapters 32-37)

A. Elihu’s First Speech (chapters 32-33)

A. Elihu’s Second Speech (chapter 34)

A. Elihu’s Third Speech (chapter 35)

A. Elihu’s Fourth Speech (chapters 36-37)

V. The Two Divine Speeches (38:1-42:6)

A. God’s First Speech (38:1-40:5)

B. God’s Second Speech (40:6-42:6)

V. The Epilogue (42:7-17)

A. Reconciliation of Job (42:7-9)

B. Restoration of Job (42:10-17)

(2)The matching of the prologue and epilogue of the Book of Job

The book of Job's ending strikingly mirrors its beginning, underscoring the narrative's thematic unity.

prologue

a introduction: Job lives a righteous life (1:1)

b Job’s children: seven sons and three daughters (1:2)

c Job’s flocks: 7000 sheep, 3000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, 500donkeys (1:3)

d Parties of Job’s family members (they are brothers and sisters) (1:4-5)

e Job’s afflictions (1:6-2:10)

f three friends (names listed) come to Job to console him (2:11)

g friends are silent seven days and seven nights (2:12-13)

epilogue

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friends rebuked for words; seven bulls and seven rams (42:7-8)

f’ three friends (names listed) come to Job to ask for help (42:9)

e’ Job’s afflictions are reversed (42:10)

d’ Party of Job’s family members (his brothers and sisters) (42:11)

c’ Job’s flocks: 7000 sheep, 3000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, 500 donkeys (42:12)

b’ Job’s children: seven sons and three daughters (42:13-15)

a’ conclusion: Job dies old and full of days (42:16-17)

(cf. David Dorsey, Literary Structure of the OT, 170).

(3) The Increasing intensity of the Dialogues (John Napier cf. Zuck, DTS O.T. Notes)

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| **Speech Cycle** | **The Three Friends To Job** | **Job’s Responses** |
| **First** | **Eliphaz:** You are impatient (4:5)  **Bildad:** Your words are a mighty wind (8:2)  **Zophar:** You’re as stupid as a donkey (11:12) | **To All** - My brothers are as disappointing as a wadi (6:15) - You’re not telling me anything new (9:2)  - I’m not inferior to you (12:3; 13:2)  **To Zophar:** Let the animals and birds teach you (12:7-8) |
| **Second** | **Eliphaz:** You think you’re the no. 1 wise man (15:7-9) To All   **Bildad:** Why do you regard us as stupid beasts? (18:3)  **Zophar:** You insult me (20:3) | **To All**  - I can console with words better than you (16:4)  - You torment, crush, insult and abuse me (19:2-3)  - Put your hand on your mouth (21:5)  **To Eliphaz:** What plagues you that you answer? (16:3)  **To Zophar:** Shut up, listen, and then you can mock me (21:3) |
| **Third** | **Eliphaz:** You are no value to God  (22:2)  **Bildad:** You’re a maggot and a worm (25:6) | **To no one**  - I want to present my case to God (23:3-5)  **To Bildad:** What a help you are! (26:2) |

**Significant Themes**

(1) God’s sovereignty and wisdom

“While virtually all the characters of the book claim wisdom, it is only at the end that God speaks out of the whirlwind to settle the issue once and for all. There is no contest; no human has a legitimate claim. God alone is the source of wisdom, and he distributes wisdom as he sees fit.” (Dillard, 208) The proper human response is humble repentance.

(2) Suffering/Evil

The book refutes the doctrine of retribution (sin happens because we do ‘bad’ stuff). While it doesn’t give us the reason for suffering, it does give us the correct way to respond to suffering - with faith in God’s wisdom. The book tells us that we cannot understand God’s reasons for allowing suffering/evil. If we can’t understand (1) his creation and (2) how it operates, how do we expect to understand a more complex issue such as the why of human suffering? Even if God did tell us, we wouldn’t be able to understand/ appropriate it! Thus, we don’t need to know why God allows evil to know He has a good reason.

(3) Faith

Dr John Napier writes that the book's primary message is “the necessity of placing one’s faith in the Person and Character of God, regardless of the appearances of circumstance.” The nature of the challenge between Satan and God reinforces this. God boasted to Satan about Job’s faith (1:8). Satan retorted that Job only believed because God protected and blessed him (1:9-10). Job only trusted God for what he could get from God, and more than this, God could only get people to trust him by blessing them. Satan believed that if God would remove his blessing from Job, Job would ‘curse’ him, and Job’s faith, in effect, would crumble.

The word ‘curse’ (1:5, 11; 2:5, 9) means more than verbal abuse. It “carries the force of declaring one’s independence from another, or bidding farewell--in this instance declaring independence from God.” It is the ordinary word for ‘to bless’ (barak cf. Gen 31:55; Josh 22:6), but here (and in 1 Ki 21:10; Ps 10:3), it means to renounce. Thus, Satan believes Job will renounce or bid farewell to God should God withdraw His blessing. The rest of the book gives the result of this challenge. As Napier says, God is vindicated by Job’s response: "…the more he suffered, the more he longed for God. Yes, there were occasions when Job sinned amid his suffering...However, he never once wished to break his relationship with God [cf. Job 13:15].”

**Points of Interest**

1. Dating Job, the Book’s Historical Background

The book is set in the patriarchal era. Like Abraham, Job has great wealth and offers sacrifices for his family, “an act unthinkable after the formal priesthood was established at Sinai. Furthermore, Job’s age exceeds those of the patriarchs. He lived 140 years after his restoration (42:16). Most telling is that Job is a non-Israelite. Uz, while not definitely located, is clearly not within the boundaries of Israel...Job is best understood as having lived before the Abrahamic covenant, which narrows the covenant community to a particular family” (Dillard, An Introduction to the OT, 200)

(2) The nature of Job’s illness (cf. Zuck, Everyman’s Bible Commentary pp.18-19)

Zuck summaries the possible illnesses from which Job may have suffered, along with a list of his symptoms:

The two Hebrew words translated ‘sore boils’ were used of one of the ten plagues in Egypt (Exod. 9:8-11; Deut. 28:27) and of Hezekiah’s illness (2 Kings 20:7). Some scholars say that the disease may have been smallpox. Others suppose it to be elephantiasis, so-called because of swollen limbs and back, wrinkled skin resembling the hide of an elephant. It was apparently some skin condition with scabs or scales, such as chronic eczema, leprosy, psoriasis, pityriasis, keratosis, or pemphigus foliaceous. The later seems to fit best the symptoms of Job’s afflictions - inflamed, ulcerous sores (2:7), itching (2:8), degenerative changes in facial skin (2:7,12), loss of appetite (3:24), depression (3:24-25), worms in the boils *(7:5),* hardened skin and running sores (7:5), difficulty in breathing, figuratively if not literally (9:18), dark eyelids (16:16), foul breath (19:17), loss of weight (19:20; 33:21), continual pain (30:17), restlessness (30:27), blackened skin (30:30), and fever (30:30). It may have lasted for several months at least, because Job referred to his ‘months of vanity’ (7:3) and the ‘months gone by’ (29:2).

The nature of Elihu’s speech

Commentators are divided over whether Elihu’s speeches are good, bad, or indifferent. Here are some of the arguments:

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| Negative  (just like the three friends) | * introduced as an angry young man (32:3-5) * he is ignored in the prologue and epilogue. * he repeats many of the claims of the three friends (see Bullock, An Introduction to the O.T. Poetical Books, pp.80—81) |
| Positive  (representing God’s wisdom) | * his speeches pave the way for God’s speeches. * God or Job does not condemn him. * he criticises Job’s dialogue and does not infer sin as the cause of his troubles. * Elihu was angry, just as God was (42:7) |

**New Testament Connections**

(1) Jesus, the Suffering Saviour

“As Andersen states it (73), ‘That the Lord himself has embraced and absorbed the undeserved consequences of evil is the final answer to Job and all the Job’s of humanity.’ In Jesus, God enters into the world of human suffering in order to redeem humanity.” (Dillard, An Introduction to the OT, 210)

(2) The need for an intercessor

Job repeatedly wished he had someone who could take his case to God (Job 9:19,33). At the time, Job didn’t realise that he didn’t need someone to tell God how innocent he was; rather, he needed someone to take away his guilt (cf. 1 John 2:1-2).

(3) The Resurrection?

There is disagreement between commentators over the meaning of Job 19:25-26:

“I know that my Redeemer lives and he shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God.”

Many have taken it to mean Job believed he would survive death and, from his body, see God (cf. Merrill). Others take it as a reference to Job’s faith in conscious communion with God after death (see Bullock).