

Lecture 21: Job (and Ecclesiastes = Qoheleth).

Reading:

Kugel 635-643;

JSB intro to Job;

Job 1-3, 28, 38-42;

Some biblical texts that mention *satan* or *the satan*:

- 1 Kings 11:14, 23, 25;
- Psalm 109:6; Zechariah 3:1-2;
- Numbers 22:22, 32.

<http://onpoint.wbur.org/2013/10/10/book-of-job>

Standard/Positive (or Orthodox as Kugel calls it) Wisdom (Proverbs; many Psalms)
vs. Speculative/Negative Wisdom (Qoheleth and Job).

Standard Wisdom: Virtue is rewarded, a life of virtue is a good life. Folly is punished, a life of folly is a bad life.

Qoheleth and Job share many characteristics of Wisdom lit:

- International, cosmopolitan:
 - ✦ Job and friends are all non-Israelite;
 - ✦ No references to Israelite history (contrast Qoheleth 9:14-15), practices, or figures; the virtues that are mentioned (e.g. alms, industry, self-control) are not Israelite specific;
 - ✦ Job's piety is generic piety (Job 31);
- The literature is upper class: by and about the wealthy; Job is wealthy, Qoheleth talks about the transfer of wealth (2:18-19);
- praise of Wisdom (Job 28).

Negative (speculative) wisdom: rejects classic wisdom teaching. There are some analogues to this in ANE, but nothing quite like Qoheleth or Job.

Qoheleth is about death, Job is about suffering.

Qoheleth (Ecclesiastes):

- Traditionally assigned to Solomon, but his name nowhere appears in the book and the Hebrew is clearly "late" (Kugel).

Themes:

- all is vanity or vapor or futility; no apparent plan or purpose; futility of toil and the accumulation of wealth;

- death the great leveler; rich and poor, righteous and wicked, humans and animals;
- enjoy the life that you have; enjoy your youth while you have it.

Qoheleth often called “pessimistic”; perhaps “realistic” is better.

Amazing that Qoheleth is in the canon!

Like Qoheleth, **Job** too is ambiguous

- Date and setting much debated (see intro)
- Narrative frame (1,2, 42) reflects a prior-existing folk-tale (“patience of Job” James 5:11)(we call it a folk-tale because of the ending)
- Structure of the central portion of the book (Job and each of his three friends gives a speech in turn, with Job responding to each) shows signs of growth (Elihu, Lord of the Whirlwind) and omission (dialogue cycle not complete); place of chapters 27-28 in the argument is not clear (see JSB intro)

Why do the righteous suffer?

First answer: suffering as a test

- Bet of God with Satan?! Satan not mentioned anywhere in the body of the book or the epilogue.
- Who is Satan?
- Some biblical texts that mention *satan* or *the satan*:
 - ✦ 1 Kings 11:14, 23, 25: God raised up an adversary / trouble-maker against Solomon;
 - ✦ Psalm 109:6; Zechariah 3:1-2: an accuser stands at his right side;
 - ✦ Numbers 22:22, 32: an adversary, to be an adversary.
- In Job “the adversary” (*ha-satan*) is not yet a proper name; he is a member of the divine court; the prosecuting attorney;
- Not yet cosmic dualism; Satan/Beliar/Mastema/the Dragon will emerge in later second temple Judaism, and find a home in some apocalyptic works, some brands of Judaism, and especially Christianity;
- Job and the three friends agree that God is somehow responsible for Job ‘s suffering.
 - ✦ This is unusual in Wisdom lit. which does not as a rule appeal to divine providence in spite of the fact that in Job as in Proverbs there is melding of Wisdom with theodicy (Job 28:28 “Fear of the Lord is Wisdom; to shun evil is understanding”).

Second answer: Job must have done something wrong – this is the argument of the three friends.

- Job protests his innocence (esp. Job 31). God is a bully and unfair.

- No one seems to wonder about the death of his children! Death of children part of punishment of parents.
- Job's three friends, who uphold traditional wisdom teaching, are in the end declared to be wrong – Job must intercede with God on their behalf (Job 42:7-10).
 - ♦ Job as intercessor: Ezekiel 14:14.

Third answer: there is no answer; Lord's two speeches out of the whirlwind/tempest: God created the world (Job 38-39), including the primordial monsters (40-41), and can do with his creation as he sees fit. Who does Job think he is? In response Job concedes that he understands nothing (42:1-6).

- Wisdom lit. as a rule has no divine revelation; human reason or wisdom is supreme. But here God appears to Job and Job concedes limits of Wisdom.
- Seems to be the point of Job 28: Job says that only God knows where true wisdom is to be found.

Fourth answer: in the end all will be well; God rewards Job and doubles his wealth.

- In Job the final reward is in this world. No hereafter.
- Ignores the individuality of Job's children; seems to ignore Ezekiel 18.
- Similarly Qohelet rejects any notion of reward/punishment in the hereafter (3:19-21).
- Later Jews and Christians elaborate theories of reward and punishment in the hereafter.

Job is an anti-wisdom book.