

The Poetry, Book 1

Job

The Book of Job, named for its principal character, tells the story of an extremely wealthy oriental prince, a servant of God, whose faithfulness was put to extreme tests. This man endured so much undeserved trouble, torment and tragedy, that in much of the World he is the ultimate symbol of patience, and of unshakeable trust in God.

The book has been recognized by some as the greatest literary masterpiece ever written. Praises for its excellence include the following: Victor Hugo, perhaps the greatest French writer ("Les Miserables") - "The Book of Job is perhaps the greatest masterpiece of the Human Mind." Thomas Carlyle, great Victorian scholar and infidel - "I call this book, apart from all theories about it, one of the grandest things ever written...." "There is nothing written, I think, of equal literary merit."

Philip Schaff, philosopher, theologian, and perhaps the greatest Church historian of the modern era - "The Book of Job rises like a pyramid in the history of literature, without a predecessor and without a rival."

A. Author. The human author is not identified in the book, and his identity is the subject of ongoing controversy. Ancient Jewish tradition ascribes the writing to Moses, prior to the Exodus, during his years of exile as a shepherd in the hills of Midian.

B. The Events: Where and When? Both the scene of the story, and the time of its events, continue to be matters of debate; the answers to these questions, however, are not without evidence.

1. Where? The Land of Uz is no longer on maps. In fact, skeptical, humanistic scholars usually insist that it never was on maps--that it is a mythical place, one which never existed. They place the Land of Uz in the same locale as the Land of Oz: "somewhere over the rainbow," only an imaginary place. They are, however, almost certainly wrong about this. For a place that has not been on maps for almost 3,000 years, there is a surprising amount of evidence to be found, concerning both the existence of Uz, and its location.

a. Evidence from Ancient History and Tradition. Combining the evidence in the Septuagint (about 300 BC), Josephus (ca 37-100 AD), and the great geographer, Ptolemy (ca 90-ca 168 AD), it appears that Uz was associated with Edom, in the border area east of the Jordan Valley, running north-south,

between Canaan to the west and Arabia to the east, and reaching northward as far as Damascus. After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I, the region became a British protectorate called "Trans-Jordan." Since the end of World War II it has been part of the politically created Kingdom of Jordan. According to Jewish tradition, the scene of the Book of Job was Hauran, in the upper part of that border area, east of the Sea of Galilee, south of Damascus and Mt. Herman. It is a well-watered, fertile area, producing much grain and livestock, and was once densely populated. Today what was Huaran is still fertile, and is dotted with the ruins of 300 cities, mute testimony to the greatness it once enjoyed.

b. Evidence from Genesis. The word Uz appears only seven times in the Bible: the first four as proper nouns (names), and the last three as a place (the land of Uz). The very first appearance of the word is in Genesis 10, in the listing of the descendants of Noah. In verse 23 he appears as the son of Aram and the grandson of Shem.

Genesis 36 is a recitation of the offspring of Esau, the father of Edom, and it contains some tantalizing clues. Jobab, in v 33, is believed by some to be an ancestor of Job (the Septuagint identifies Jobab as Job). Eliphaz, Esau's first son (v 3), may have been an ancestor of one of Job's visitors, for Eliphaz had a son named Teman (v 11) who was father of the Temanite tribe, and one of Job's visitors was "Eliphaz the Temanite." Places in that time and region were often named for the ruling family; and Seir the Horite, another descendant of Esau (v 20), either gave his name to Seir, the mountainous region of Edom, or took his name from it. Seir is frequently used in the Bible as a synonym for Edom (e.g. Gen 32:3). This Edomite prince, Seir, had a grandson named Uz who lived in that land (v 28).

c. Evidence in Job. In Chapter 1 the identity the two groups of raiders who descended on Job's grazing livestock is significant. The Sabaeans (1:15) were the Arabs from the border area shared with Edom; and the Chaldeans (1:17) were the people of the Euphrates Valley to the north. This is in perfect harmony with the other evidence for the location of Uz, that is, east of the Jordan River, in the border area with the Arabian desert, from Edom, northward to Damascus.

d. Other Evidence in Scripture. In I Chronicles 1, in the recitation of the generations of Noah, there are 2 descendants of Shem named Uz. In Jeremiah 25 there is the pronouncing of curses on rebellious nations, including "all the mingled people and all the kings of the land of Uz" (v 20). "Mingled people" is clearly suggestive of a border area, where different

populations overlap, interact, and intermarry. Obadiah, in pronouncing judgment on Edom, refers to the destruction of "the wise men out of Edom...and understanding," a possible indirect reference to Job's comforters (Obadiah 1:8). And, to cap the rest, Lamentations 4:21 clearly identifies the land of Uz with Edom ("...Oh daughter of Edom, that dwelleth in the land of Uz.").

e. Conclusion. And so the location of Uz seems to have been east of the Jordan Valley, in the border region between Canaan and Arabia, somewhere between Edom's mountains of Seir on the south, and Damascus on the north. Uz seems certainly to have been at least a northward extension of Edom (Seir); and it probably included all of that region, between the mountains of Seir and Damascus, not just part of it. It seems equally probable that Job was Prince of Hauran, the northern, and most fertile, part of the Land of Uz.

2. When? The book is not dated, but has the flavor of very ancient times, the period of the early tribes descended from Abraham.

a. After Solomon? Because of the similarity of its themes to those of Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon, and repeated references to wisdom, some date the events later, after the time of Solomon (ca 900 to 400 BC).

b. Or Much Earlier than Solomon? Ancient Jewish tradition places the events during the Egyptian captivity (ca 1900-1500 BC). This tradition finds interesting support in an ancient Egyptian inscription, which refers to an enemy prince named Job in the region of Damascus, in the 19th Century (1800s) BC¹. The setting suggests the time of the patriarchs, most likely the time of the Egyptian captivity.

The text clearly indicates the time before the giving of the Law to Moses, for in its lengthy conversations about what is right, and what is wrong, there is no mention of matters of the Law, nor any mention of the Levitical priesthood. It is also significant that, in the discourses, God is consistently referred to as Elohim ("God"), but only once as YAHWEH ("LORD"), and that by Job, who had a very special relationship with the LORD (12:9). This unique name of God was very little known before the time of Moses; thus here is more evidence that the events occurred earlier, in the time of the patriarchs.

¹ These are the Berlin Execration Texts, discovered in Egypt and published by Kurt Sethe, University of Berlin, 1926.

It is noteworthy that Job offers sacrifices for his children, acting as priest to his family, as did patriarchs such as Noah and Abraham, in the period before the giving of the Mosaic Law.

c. Speculations about Sources. It is interesting to think that, if Moses did write the Book of Job in that time and place, then he could easily have heard the story of Job from neighboring Edom. Moses was then a Shepherd of Midian, the Midianites were a far-ranging, nomadic people, and it would have been a current story. Some even speculate that, since Job lived on for 140 years after the events described, Moses could have known Job, and received some of the story from him. This is an interesting possibility, but one for which there seems to be no evidence.

As is the case with all Scripture, however, we should remember that, whoever the human writer was, his ultimate source of the story was the inspiration of the Spirit of God (II Timothy 3:16).

d. Conclusion. All things considered, the story probably took place about 1850 BC².

C. Place and Date of Writing. Ancient Jewish tradition attributes the book to Moses, during his exile in Midian, prior to the Exodus. During those 40 years, tending sheep alone in the hills of Midian, Moses probably had a closer personal communion with the Lord than at any other time of his life; it was during this time that he encountered the burning bush, and received his orders to return to Egypt.

D. Occasion. This book is unique in the glimpses it gives us of events in the heavenly realm, events in the earthly realm, and the interactions of the two. If the story really was given to Moses as he sat on lonely hillsides with his sheep, he must have been thinking how bizarre was all this for a grandson of Pharaoh, reared in the palace with all the education and privilege one could receive. God's purpose appears to have been to help us to understand human tragedy and endure it.

E. Theme. The theme of the book is the problem of undeserved human suffering, against the backdrop of the overall plan and provision of God. Although we probably don't understand this problem today much better than righteous Job did, we have the advantage of the knowledge of the suffering of Jesus, the only completely righteous man. Although God incarnate, He

² Modern critical (humanistic) scholars, of course, ascribe all, or most, of the book to Jewish myth, events which they believe never actually to have occurred. In my opinion, they must disregard all evidence in favor of blind devotion to their preconceived opinions.

became the ultimate participant in undeserved human suffering, and overcame it, according to the plan of God.

F. Was Job a Real Person? Critical, humanistic scholars deny that there was ever a real person such as Job, claiming that he is a mythological character, sort of a literary "Everyman." Unbroken Jewish tradition disagrees; so do the prophet Ezekiel (Ezekiel 14:14), and James, brother of Jesus (James 5:11). It is also significant that Job 5:13 is quoted in I Corinthians 3:19, preceded by the words "it is written," the clause that always identifies what follows as Scripture, the Word of God, not "Jewish myth."

G. Highlights. Highlights in Job include:

1. The Man Who Had it All. (1:1-5)

Job was a man "with everything." He was rich, powerful, had 10 children and huge herds of livestock; and he was at peace with God. Job was a righteous man who "eschewed [rejected] evil," reminiscent of the description of Christ in Hebrews 1:9. Because he "loved righteousness and hated iniquity," God had "anointed [him] with the oil of gladness above [his] fellows³." And Job acted as priest to his family, offering sacrifices for his children in order to keep them rightly related to the Lord. He did this, not only on special occasions, but, "thus did Job continually." Job's righteousness was not an occasional thing, but a way of life for him.

2. A Fascinating Glimpse of the Heavenly Realm. (1:6-12)

Here in the Book of Job we are given a glimpse into the heavenly realm and its workings. What is recorded may create more questions than it answers, yet it is fascinating. Here we seem to see a gathering of heavenly beings, "sons of God" in the presence of God; since what, or who, they are, is not made clear, we are justified in thinking of them as angelic beings⁴.

Into the gathering comes Satan, who was once one of them--perhaps chief among them. When the Lord asks "Whence comest thou?," Satan replies that he has been roaming the Earth (probably "seeking whom he may devour")⁵. Satan accuses Job of being faithful only because the Lord has blessed him so; he argues that if Job's possessions are taken away he will curse God. Job becomes God's champion in a cosmic conflict between

³ When Job is described in v 3 as "the greatest of all the men of the east" it cannot mean that he was greatest in the entire Orient, or in the Eastern Hemisphere; it almost certainly refers to the eastern border region, i.e., east of the Jordan River.

⁴ Revelation 4.

⁵ When the Lord asks Satan "Whence comest thou?" it isn't because He doesn't know the answer; rather, it is apparently a rebuke, as if to say, "What is a creep like you doing here?" See also I Peter 5:8.

good and evil, and it is one that is completely unknown to him. As the beginning of Job's unexplained trials, Satan is given authority to take away all that he has, but no authority to afflict his body.

3. Sudden, Staggering Calamity. (1:13-22)

Like a one-act play, a series of messengers bring terrible tidings to Job with staggering rapidity. One messenger doesn't even finish relating a disaster, before another one rushes in with more tragic news ("While he was yet speaking..."). Poor Job doesn't even have time to comprehend one calamity, let alone adjust to it, before the next is reported. In one uninterrupted succession, he is told: that all his oxen and asses have been seized by Arabs who also killed all his workers; that fire fell from Heaven and consumed all his sheep and shepherds; that Chaldeans have taken all his camels and killed his herdsman; and then, to cap it all off, he is told that a tornado has destroyed the home of his eldest son and killed all his children and their servants. In each case, there has been one survivor to bring the bad news ("I only am escaped alone to tell thee").

So, assaulted by all this unbelievable and unbearable tragedy, what does Job do? Incredibly, he falls down and worships God, and utters his classic response: "...The LORD gave and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD." Job has passed the first test--a test that staggers the mind--and he passes it with flying colors!

4. The Next Level of Trials. (Chapter 2)

Satan returns to the Heavenly Court and gains permission to further the affliction of Job. He may not take Job's life, but is given permission to afflict him with a terrible sickness: miserable boils from head to toe. The onset is sudden, and Job is reduced to sitting in ashes and scraping his lesions with a piece of broken pottery. Although his wife advises him to "curse God and die," Job remains faithful, and "did not sin with his lips⁶."

His three friends, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite, hear of his troubles and come to comfort him. Job is in such terrible condition that they fail to recognize him; when they do, they mourn for his afflictions and sit down with him in the ashes. For 7 days they sit with Job, silently surrounding him with the comfort of their presence⁷.

⁶ The suggestion of Job's wife may be the worst advice any wife has ever given her husband. To curse God would be a terrible enough sin, but then to die with the curses on his lips would make his dying words curses directed at God!

⁷ There is an important lesson here for all of us. When someone is grief-stricken over a tragic loss, such as the death of a loved one, the best thing to say to him is usually nothing. A silent hug, and just being there,

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Introducing the Poetic Portion of Job.

From Chapter 3 through the first 6 verses of Chapter 42, the book is written in poetry containing some passages that have become classic. They may be divided as follows:

In Chapter 3 Job laments his misfortunes, and regrets that he was ever born.

In Chapters 4 through 31, Job's three friends argue that his misfortunes must be his own fault, for they believe that suffering is punishment for sin. Job denies their argument, insisting that he has done nothing wrong.

In Chapters 32 through 37, a 4th visitor, Elihu, appears. He rebukes the first three because they have found no explanation for Job's tribulation, yet have condemned him. He also rebukes Job for what he perceives as Job's self-righteousness. Elihu believes that suffering is sent by God as a prophylaxis, to keep us from sinning.

In Chapters 38 through 42:6, God straightens them all out. Out of a whirlwind He speaks (just His appearance in the whirlwind would have shaken them, even had He not spoken). He speaks of the ignorance, impotence, helplessness and infinite smallness of man, compared with Himself. God's series of rhetorical questions drives Job, in silence, to his knees; his only response is to say, in effect, "I am vile--I won't attempt to answer you". He says that he was already in awe of God, simply by what he had heard; but now, having experienced Him personally, he is even more in awe: "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

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NOTE: Just because we are jumping from Chapter 2 to Chapter 13 does not mean that, in this study, the reader should not read Chapters 3-12. Each verse of every chapter of every book should be read; but every passage will not be selected as a highlight. This is true of the entire study guide, not just to Job. Interesting things can be found even in the lengthy genealogies, as we have just seen, and shall see again. Keep this in mind and, in this study

are what are needed. In such a situation, anything we may say will probably fall somewhere between ineffective and harmful.

guide to Job, to keep our bearings, it may be useful to return, from time to time, to the outline above, **“Introducing the Poetic Portion of Job.”**

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5. Job's Expression of Ultimate Trust. (13:15)

When all in life falls apart, when there seems to be no hope, nor any reason for hope, Job has left us the declaration of ultimate trust and, therefore, hope: "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him...."

6. The Transience and Difficulty of Life. (14:1-2)

“Man that is born of woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth as a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not.”

7. Satanic Metaphor. (18:11-14)

In speaking of the consequences of wickedness, Bildad the Shuhite, utters some beautiful and fascinating metaphor for Satan (eg "the firstborn of death"), the like of which is not to be found elsewhere.

One interesting thing about the passage is that there are obvious antonyms of Jesus, compared with Satan, e.g. “the king of terrors” versus “the Prince of Peace”; another is “firstborn of death versus the Prince of Life.

8. The Riches of Chapter 19.

Here, in the middle of the book (one might say almost hidden, in the tiresome arguments of Job and his visitors), lie treasures of truth and revelation.

a. “Sticks and Stones May Break My Bones.” (19:1-2)

In v 2, Job expresses a fundamental truth concerning our relationships. The origin of the childhood proverb, “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me,” is unknown; but it must have originated from the Father of Lies, for nothing could be farther from the truth. Sticks and stones do indeed break bones, but cruel words can create far worse injuries. In addition, physical injuries begin to heal, naturally, from the moment they occur; but the same is not true of emotional injuries. In fact, emotional injuries, untreated, fester and get worse with the passing of time. Job was speaking figuratively, but not exaggerating, when he said that the effect of the arguments of his visitors was to "break me in pieces with words.”

b. “Escaped with the Skin of My Teeth.” (19:20)

Perhaps verse 20 cannot be classified as one of the “riches” in Chapter 19, but it is too interesting to pass by without noting it. It is probably the origin of the expression, “by the skin of my teeth,” which today means “barely,” or “by the thinnest of margins.” Here in the passage it may have that meaning, just as we use it today; or, it may actually mean that his extreme sickness has caused his teeth to fall out, leaving only his gums.

c. Amazing Visions of the End Times. (19:23-27)

Here we find what is, to me, one of the most amazing things in the entire Bible. Here, out of the misty, fragmentary knowledge and understanding of God and His plans and provision for mankind, that which existed in the times of the Patriarchs before the giving of the Law, come clear, precious, and remarkable revelations of the End Times.

This is even more remarkable in that these revelations come to Job in the time of his darkest trials and deepest despair. Here is a lesson for all of us: that, no matter what the circumstances, God’s faithfulness and trustworthiness are unshakable. Here Job declares concepts that will not be made clear until the passing of nearly 2,000 more years: the doctrine of a living Savior/Redeemer; the Second Advent; the bodily resurrection of the just (and the unjust); the resurrection body; and the promise that we shall then see Jesus face to face⁸. This is simply amazing and truly wonderful to me!

9. The Final Judgment. (21:30)

Another End Times revelation, that of the final judgment of the wicked, appears in Chapter 21. Cults, such as Jehovah’s Witnesses, teach that there is no final judgment for the dead followed by eternal punishment; rather, in the same way that atheists believe is true of all people, they teach that when the unredeemed die, they simply cease to exist (“annihilation”). In verse 30, however, Job clearly speaks of the concept that death will not spare the unredeemed from final judgment, which he refers to as “the day of destruction” and “the day of wrath.”

10. Bildad Prophecies of Christ. (25:1-6)

In the six verses of Chapter 25, Bildad speaks of the sinful smallness of man and his inability to make himself righteous. In the final verse, he makes an amazing statement with a prophetic reference to the coming Redeemer. We may be sure that, like Baalam’s ass, Bildad did not understand the significance of what he said; nevertheless, the Lord placed this glimpse of the future into his mind, and for our benefit. He speaks of

⁸ In this regard, see I Corinthians 13:12.

both ordinary man, and the “son of man,” as worms, to express the human impotence of man, compared with the majesty and power of God. Two things, however, make his statement prophetic: the title “son of man,” one which Jesus will later apply to Himself; and the two different kinds of worms of which he speaks.

In referring to mankind in general, the word he uses for “worm” is, in Hebrew, *rimmah*, an ordinary worm, something powerless, to be despised. In referring to the son of man, however, his Hebrew word for “worm” is *tola* and here there is fascinating significance to this.

The *tola* worm, in ancient times, was a precious worm which contained a crimson dye, later to be used in the sacred furnishings of the Tabernacle (and, still later, the Temple). The dye was symbolic of the blood of the sacrifice lamb which covered the sins of the people; we now know (although the author of Job probably did not) that this foretold the blood of Jesus, which would be poured out 1,500 years later, to purchase our cleansing from sin. In order for Jesus to give his blood to provide forgiveness for us, it was necessary for Him to die. In order for the *tola* worm to provide its precious crimson fluid, it was necessary for it to die. Thus, the *tola* worm is a symbol of Christ. In this regard, see Psalm 22, the classic prophecy of the coming Messiah and the description of His terrible death; in verse 6, He is described as a worm (and the Hebrew word is *tola*)⁹.

11. Glimpses of Things as Yet Unknown.

In Chapters 38 through 41, the LORD enters the argument and straightens all of them out, speaking out of a whirlwind. He tells them that they are just making understanding more cloudy--not more clear--with their ignorance and shallow reasoning (“Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?”) He asks them, rhetorically, where they were (and what part did they play) when He created the Universe. There is rich, beautiful, poetic expression in God’s rebuke (e.g. “when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy”). In the course of putting Job in his place (while the others listened and, we may safely assume, trembled), the Lord seems to speak of some things that will occur far into the future and are, as yet, unknown to man:

- a. The Final Battle. (38:22-23)

⁹ For more on the significance of the Hebrew word *tols*, see the study guide to Ps 22, explanatory **NOTE b**.

The Lord seems to refer to the large and lethal hailstones which He will rain upon the wicked at what most commentators expect to be the final battle, commonly referred to as Armageddon¹⁰.

b. The Diffraction of Light. (38:24)

We now know that white light contains all the colors in the visible light spectrum, and that when white light is passed through a prism it is separated (“scattered”) into its component colors so that we can see them. Water vapor has this prismatic effect on light, which we can see in a rainbow, or in the mist from a garden hose in bright sunlight. Job and his friends, however, did not possess this knowledge, so could not answer God’s question.

c. The Polar Ice Caps. (38:28-30)

Man would not reach the polar ice caps for about 2,500 more years, and would not understand them for nearly another 1,000 years. Yet the Lord speaks of them here.

***NOTE:** Those who wish to hold the position of Bible-believing Christians, yet dabble in the evil practice of astrology, will cite the next 3 verses (vv 31-33), as scriptural justification. Of course, even if this passage seems to affirm the influence of the stars on earthly events, it doesn’t stand alone, and is immediately overwhelmed by the many passages, elsewhere in the Bible, which clearly condemn astrology as occult, demonic, and forbidden.*

How then may we understand the phrase “the sweet influences of Pleiades” in v 31? It is helpful to consider Gen 1:14, another such verse, often cited to “prove” that astrology is scriptural. In this verse God speaks of placing lights in the heavens “for signs and for seasons, and for days and for years,” and it helps us to understand Job 38:31, for it tells us that God placed the lights in the heavens, not to influence and determine events in our lives, but that we may know what to expect in the passing of days, months, seasons, and years. The constellations, visible in the sky, change with the seasons in a predictable, annual, cycle, and so they verify the coming of the next season. Thus the phrase, “the sweet influences of Pleiades,” referring to a constellation visible in the Winter sky, is probably a reference to the coming of Winter, with its life-preserving rains; and “loose the bands of Orion” probably refers to the breaking of Winter’s grip and the coming of Spring.

At any rate, these references to stars and constellations are merely part of what today would be called a “reality check” in which God asks Job,

¹⁰ Revelation 16:16-21.

rhetorically, if he has the power to control the forces of nature, created and set in their places by the Creator of the Universe. In no way can these three verses be “proof” that God approves of astrology (or of any other kind of occult divination).

12. Job’s Response. (40:3-5)

Job responds to the LORD in the only way that a reasonable man could: “I am vile¹¹.” He confesses that he has been speaking of things which he really doesn’t understand, and declares that he will speak no more.

13. The LORD Continues to Clarify Matters.

a. “Behemoth.”

The LORD continues to make the point of man’s smallness and impotence compared with Himself, illustrating His point with a large animal He calls “behemoth.” This huge animal appears to be an herbivore (one which feeds only on plants), and one which spends much of its time in fresh water. This suggests the hippopotamus; yet the reference to a large and powerful tail definitely does not fit the hippo. The large and powerful tail suggests a crocodile and some have been found that are more than 20 feet long; but the crocodile is a carnivore (he eats only meat); so, what do we make of behemoth?

In the final analysis, we simply cannot be sure. Whatever it is (or was), it is an animal known to Job and completely uncontrollable by a man. (40:15-24)

NOTE: *Actually, the animal best fitting the Lord's description, literally, would be a large, herbivorous dinosaur, such as the Alosaurus or Brontosaurus. There is reason to believe that such animals survived until Job's day and that, perhaps, a few survive even today in extremely remote places. For a summary of evidence for this interesting possibility, see "Dinosaurs and Dragons" in Part IV (Selected Topical Summaries).*

b. “Leviathan.” (41:1-34)

While Job’s mind is still staggering with thoughts of his weakness compared with the strength of behemoth, the Lord moves on to another huge creature He calls “leviathan.” Leviathan, another mysterious creature, seems to be a huge and fearsome fish, or sea monster, but one which also

¹¹ In a human sense, Job was not vile; in fact, he was an unusually good, God-fearing man. Compared with the perfection and purity of God, however, all of us are “vile.” Interestingly, Peter will make the same response to Jesus, when he realizes that he is confronted with divinity. Dropping to his knees he will say, “Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord” (Lk 5:8).

breathes fire and smoke¹². In the midst of the LORD's colorful description of leviathan, He makes His central point: if this monster is so fierce that no man dare stir him up, "who, then, is able to stand before Me [emphasis mine]?" The answer, of course, is an emphatic "No one, LORD--no one!" **NOTE:** Verse 23 of Chapt 41 speaks of "the flakes of his flesh" and speaks of their being strongly bound together. Assuming that this aquatic monster is a fish (or fish-like creature) of some kind (the passage also speaks of "his scales" which are so strong and tightly attached as to be like armor--as in a shark). The use of the word "flakes" may well be one of those fascinating examples of God's revealing something unknown in ancient times, but known and understood today. Most modern versions of the Bible translate the word "folds"; however, "flakes," as in the Authorized Version (KJV), may refer to something about fish muscle unknown until modern times. Voluntary muscle in fish is distinctive from voluntary muscle in other vertebrates; fish muscle consists of segments called "myotomes" (literally, "muscle slices"), joined together, but with natural cleavage planes between them. This is why fish, when cooked, tends naturally to break apart, ("flake" apart); the heat of cooking breaks down the proteins which hold the myotomes together in living or uncooked fish muscle tissue, and frees them to separate.

It is also interesting, and perhaps significant, that the Hebrew word translated "flakes" here ("mappal") appears nowhere else in the Bible. Why would it? Unless one is describing the voluntary muscle of a fish, the crystal structure of a snowflake, or a perfectly baked croissant, there is no reason to use the word.

14. Job Gets the Message. Job confesses his infinite impotence and lack of knowledge compared with the knowledge and power of God. He says that, before this day, he had only known things about God, but now has experienced his awesome presence for himself, and is completely broken. He now confesses that he abhors himself, and considers himself worthy only of repentance in dust and ashes. (42:1-6)

15. Next the LORD Deals with Job's Friends. With Job's case settled and his attitude corrected, God turns in great anger to his three friends. He tells them that they have not spoken the truth, but Job has (at least when compared with what they have said). He will spare them only if they perform sacrifices--and--if Job will pray for them (which he does); Job, on

¹² Is it possible for an animal to exhale fire? For some facts concerning this interesting possibility, see "Dinosaurs and Dragons" in Part IV (Selected Topical Summaries).

the other hand, is accepted with no need for a sacrifice. God says that He will not accept their prayers--only Job's (42:7-9)

16. Job's Restoration. When Job prays for his friends, his troubles end, and God restores his former prosperity. In fact, the LORD gives Job twice the numbers of livestock that he had lost, and gives him 10 more children, seven sons and three daughters, as before¹³. In a departure from the custom of the day, Job gave his daughters the same inheritance as his sons. Job's relatives and friends join him, with many gifts, to celebrate the happy ending of his ordeal. After his restoration, Job lives 140 more years, which must have made him 180-190 years old when he died, an extremely long life for that period. (42:10-17)

***NOTE:** There is something wonderful about the restoration of Job's 10 children. His restored material possessions are exactly double what he had lost; yet his second group of children is not double those he had lost--it is exactly the same as those he had lost: seven sons and three daughters. Why did God not give him 20 new children, rather than 10? How can we understand the disparity here? It seems to me that it means that his first 10 children were never permanently lost to him—only temporarily lost, and that he will be reunited with them in the next life. Therefore, the statement in v10 is precisely correct, for he will then end with 20 children, 14 sons and 6 daughters, exactly twice what he had lost in the beginning of his ordeal. All those livestock that he originally had are gone; but somehow, in the economy of God, his original 10 children still live and wait for him. Although commentators seem to have overlooked this (I have never found anyone else who makes this point), to me it seems both obvious, and wonderful.*

One Final Thought

Corrie Ten Boom, an extremely wise and knowledgeable lady, late in her life, observed, "The longer I live for the Lord, the less I understand Him, but the more I trust Him." Job would have agreed.

¹³ These cannot be the same 10 children, somehow recovered from their fatal injuries and restored to life, for he gives them names. His first 10 children had been grown, with homes of their own, and undoubtedly had names of their own.