THE GENRE OF SUFFERING IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN LITERATURE, THE HEBREW BIBLE, AND IN SOME EXAMPLES OF MODERN LITERATURE.

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of M.A. in Hebrew and Jewish Studies.

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Declaration.

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Roeland Middelkoop.

Signed by candidate

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

O God, you are my God; early I will seek you: my soul thirsts for you,
my flesh longs for you in a dry and thirsty land where no water is.
To see your power and your glory as I have seen you in the sanctuary
Because your loving kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise you.
Thus will I bless you while I live: I will lift up my hands and call on your name. (Ps. 63: 1-4)

I wish to thank Prof.Y.Gitay for his wisdom, his inspiration, and his guidance, the Kaplan Centre for their support, my colleagues for sharing this journey, and of course Kari, my wife, for allowing me the freedom to escape into my books.

Roeland Middelkoop.

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THE GENRE OF SUFFERING IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN LITERATURE, THE HEBREW BIBLE, AND IN SOME EXAMPLES OF MODERN LITERATURE.

INTRODUCTION.

The aim of this thesis is to compare works of drama regarding the suffering of the human being in the context of life and literature and in relation to the issue of justice, which revolves around the impact of Justice, Humanity and God. My aim is to look at the development of the genre of suffering starting with the Ancient Near Eastern Literature, to define the genre in its development and to characterise its features in the various literatures discussed, especially with respect to the Book of Job.

The book of Job is well known for its input in world literature on the theme of suffering. It is therefore important to trace the genre of suffering from its literary origins in the ancient near east and from there to Job.

Hence I will look at ancient works on suffering from Sumeria, from Babylon and from Egypt, and then at the book of Job. I will compare and examine the differences in their approaches and their understanding of god and of justice.

In the Greek *Prometheus Bound*, Aeschylus presents the justice of a tyrant, and Prometheus suffers for deliberately going against the wishes of Zeus. In *The Testament of Job*, Job deliberately, with knowledge of the consequences, attacks Satan. I will compare *Prometheus* and *The Testament of Job* with Job.

But the drama of suffering in its literary shape did not cease with Job. The book of Job has become the vehicle for poets, playwrights and philosophers to elaborate and explore the essence of suffering and the justice of god.

I will consider three modern dramatists who have questioned suffering by following the book of Job.

Robert Frost, in '*A Masque of Reason*' has Job confront God directly on the reason for his suffering. Archibald MacLeish has *J.B.*, a modern Job, suffer the loss of his riches, his children, his health and then find his own way back. Peter Krummeck has a South African Job Goodman face '*Trials*' at the hands of a persistent Satan, until God restores his blessings.

In the ancient texts, suffering is seen as punishment. The Collins dictionary defines punishment as a penalty inflicted for a crime. In the execution of justice a punishment may be imposed or a reward may be merited. The Oxford dictionary further defines justice as the exercise of authority in the maintenance of right. Rules are determined to guide the people as to what is right. The oldest set of rules known is the Sumerian Law of Ur Nammu, c. 2050 BCE (Ringgren 1973:40). The laws were set by the gods, and the authority and responsibility for law and justice was held by the king, who was appointed by the gods. The laws of the state were meant to correspond to and express the divine ordering of the world.

The common person owed worship and obedience and provided daily offerings to their personal god. As a diligent and obedient servant they would be rewarded with health, wealth and social success. Without the goodwill and protection of their personal god, evil demons could attack bringing illness and misfortune.

National disaster was seen as divine punishment on the king for cultic offences or omissions, (Frankfort 1946:220).

National disaster today, in modern works, is not seen as punishment, but someone is to blame. The priests, the poets and the politicians blame the king, the government, industry or society, but they don't blame God.

Man has learnt to blame man, but they question God.

But this does not solve the problem of the reality of the righteous sufferer which is examined in the Book of Job. This work examines selected literary creations in order to shed light on the treatment, in literature of the individual who feels that they are suffering without cause.

All the extracts from the Ancient Near Eastern Texts (ANET), (Egyptian, Sumerian and Akkadian) that we are studying here, are grouped by Pritchard under the heading of Wisdom Texts.

In the past 200 years, since Napoleon's expedition to Egypt, archaeologists have brought forward writings from the Ancient Near East, from Mesopotamia and from Egypt, which, because they were of a similar nature and style as some found in the Bible, were also given the title of Wisdom Literature. The wisdom literature of the Old Testament includes basically, Job, Qoheleth and Proverbs, where the aim is 'to know wisdom and instruction,' (Prov1:2) and to learn wisdom in the fear of the Lord. From the Apocrypha, Ben Sira and the Wisdom of Solomon are included.

Lambert observes that 'wisdom' should not really be applied to Babylonian literature, 'since it is really the O.T. classification that has been pressed into service to describe the comparable phenomenon in the other literatures.' (Murphy 1981:9)

If the Book of Job was reduced to the story of a good man who suffered, there are also stories of suffering in the Wisdom literature of Mesopotamia and Egypt. Because of a perceived similarity they were given names such as the Sumerian Job, the Babylonian Job and the Egyptian Job, and, as they were of an earlier date, were suggested as possible sources of the Book of Job. Notwithstanding the special covenant the people of Israel had with their God, the Hebrew Bible is part of Ancient Near Eastern literature. But Andersen, (1976:24), warns against taking the extreme, of viewing the culture of the ancient Near East as being uniform over an area that stretched

from the Persian Gulf around to the upper reaches of the Nile, over a period exceeding 2000 years.

Terrien in his commentary on Job suggests that, the theme of the righteous man who suffers because he is being tested by rival deities or divine beings, probably belongs to the international folklore of the ancient east (1954:879). The theme of suffering is universal [1], but the interpretation of Justice and the relationship between man and god is influenced by culture and religion. I have not hesitated to call the works to be studied literature, and not just writings or texts. I will apply Eagleton's definition which states that 'literature transforms and intensifies ordinary speech...the words are in excess of their abstractable meaning,'(1983:2). These works are not tables of facts, but presentations of human experience in poetry and in prose in identifiable literary forms such as the lament, the psalm of praise, and the narrative with an artistic use of metaphor and imagery and, as Wellek further states, 'Literary language conveys the tone and attitude of the speaker or writer and it also wants to influence the attitude of the reader, persuade him and ultimately change him.'(1966:23)

By identifying the aim of the writer, through that which they want the reader to accept, I hope to discover a pattern in these works.

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1. The theme of suffering is possibly taken to its furthest extent by the philosophy of the Four Noble Truths of Buddhism, 6th Century BCE, which sees all life as suffering:

The First Noble Truth is the truth of suffering. (*Duhkha,* also including that which is unsatisfactory or impermanent; birth ,decay, sorrow, sickness, death)

The Second Noble Truth is a craving, or desire for life, for success which leads to tension and suffering.

The Third Noble Truth teaches that suffering ends when desire ends.

The Forth Noble Truth shows the practical way of dealing with desire.

Western Cape Education Dept., Life Orientation Resource Book, 2001.)

Once a theme has been identified we tend to associate all other works on the same theme with the best known. Therefore there is a Babylonian Job, an Akkadian Job and an Egyptian Job. Yet it is exactly these parallels, to the book of Job, which earned them their classification, that I wish to investigate.

The obvious themes of suffering and of justice.

2.1

Sumerian Wisdom Text. A Lamentation to a man's god.

(2500 – 1800 BCE.) Translated by S.N.Kramer. (ANET:589-591)

In the southern half of Mesopotamia, in the flat lands around the rivers Tigris and Euphrates, lies Sumer. A land with no rocks or trees for building, so the Sumerians used clay. They built with clay bricks and baked bricks, and they developed a system of writing on clay tablets. This script, cuneiform, outlasted the Sumerian civilisation and was taken over by their Semitic, Babylonian and Assyrian successors. And the clay tablets with cuneiform, outlasted those civilisations, to be discovered 3000 years later. Examples of cuneiform writing were available in Europe as early as the seventeenth century, and the first lines were deciphered by Georg Grotefend in 1802. Henry C. Rawlinson, Edward Hincks and Jules Oppert were the pioneers who, from 1850, unravelled the Babylonian script and exposed the Sumerian original, (Kramer 1963:13-32).

The archaeologists have provided thousands of clay tablets which have allowed the oldest records of an economy, of history, society, religion and literature to be revealed.

The Sumerian theologian described a heaven populated by human-like, immortal gods, who promoted justice and truth, but there also existed deities in charge of the immoral and unethical modes of human conduct. A person's life, according to Kramer, was beset with uncertainty and haunted by insecurity since they did not know the destiny decreed them by the unpredictable gods, (1963:123). Trouble and unmerited suffering could happen at any time.

In this work, compiled from fragments of tablets excavated at Nippur, the poet cites the case of a young man who had been successful materially and socially, who without notice, was overwhelmed by sickness and

suffering. He does not blame or blaspheme the gods, but humbly, with tears and lamentations, approaches his personal god to intercede on his behalf. His god is pleased at his approach and answers his prayers and delivers him from misfortune.

'Let a man utter constantly the exaltedness of his god.' (1)

These opening lines could introduce a song of praise, which a part of this work includes, but the total the author describes as a lamentation to a man's god.

The work could be divided into five sections. In the first, man is enjoined to praise his god so that his lament will soothe the heart of his god.

The opening injunction to praise may be general, but man is warned that without his god he would not obtain food, without his god he would die.

The poem then mentions the fate of a particular young man who was good, 'he used not his strength for evil' (10), yet he suffered bitter sickness. The young man then continues to tell his own story and in the next twenty lines bemoans his social disgrace. He does later mention the physical suffering, 'the malignant sickness-demon bathes in my body' (73), but it is his social standing, or rather his fall from grace that is emphasised. He no longer enjoys respect, he has lost favour with the king, his workers and friends tell lies about him, and his enemies conspire against him.

The man blames his god for causing this suffering, or rather acknowledges that his god has the power to divert his suffering, he could have thwarted the one who conspired against him. He approaches his god with a lament and enjoins all the women of his family to not cease their laments on his behalf. After further bewailing his fate, which is here presented at its blackest,

'My god, the day shines bright over the land, for me the day is black...Suffering overwhelms me like one who does (nothing but) weep,' (68,71)

he appeals directly to his god,

My god, you who are my father who begot me…

How long will you neglect me…

How long will you leave me unguided? (97-100)

With a word from the wise, a proverb, he makes a general confession,

'They say,…never has a sinless child been born to its mother,

…a sinless workman has not existed from old.' (102,3)

he then also includes his personal confession,

'My god, now that you have shown me my sins…' (111)

The god hears his bitter weeping and his prayerful confession and withdraws his hand from the evil word which afflicted the young man. He sweeps away the demons of sickness and fate and turns the young man's suffering into joy. For which the young man repeats the opening injunction and praises his god, '[The man uttered] constantly the exultedness of his god.' (130)

In Sumerian thought, man was created to serve the gods, said Ringgren (1973:24). In the myth of 'Enki and Ninmah', man was fashioned from clay to be servants to provide food (later in the form of sacrifices). While today we might praise our 'guardian angel', Jacobson believed that a man's god, 'his personal tutelary deity,' was originally a personification of a man's luck, (Ringgren 1973 :18).

The task of the personal god was to act as representative and to intercede on behalf of that person in the assembly of the gods. Without luck, or a personal god, man was in a no-win situation. According to Sumerian theology, the gods in control of the cosmos planned and instituted evil, falsehood and violence as part of civilisation (ANET:589). Suffering is acknowledged as coming from the gods, for example, in the temple program for the New Year's Festival at Babylon, the prayer to the goddess Beltiya, addresses, 'she who impoverishes the rich, ' (ANET:259).

Man, created to serve the gods, had to tread warily not always knowing the cause of his troubles. Man's dilemma is stated in the poem, 'I will praise the Lord of Wisdom.'(1600 BCE) (ANET:434)

What man thinks is good, for god is evil!

What in his heart is wrong, for his god is good!

Who can learn the will of the gods in heaven?

And as late as the Neo-Babylonian period we have from the library of Ashurbanpal, (668 – 633 BCE), A 'Prayer to Every God', a prayer to all gods to claim relief from suffering – as a result of an unknown crime.

In ignorance I have eaten that forbidden of my god

In ignorance I have set foot on that prohibited by my goddess

...Mankind everyone that exists – what does he know? (ANET:391)

Because of man's low position , '...it is always man who is to blame, not the gods...there are no cases of unjust and undeserved human suffering,' (ANET:589). Therefore the poet can say, 'Never was a sinless child born to its mother.'(line 102) and Pope explains the Mesopotamian view that evil is an integral part of the cosmic order and that when evil befalls a man, 'there is no recourse but to admit one's guilt and praise one's god and plead for mercy.'(1965:LV)

The poem opens with the first lines (1 –9) exhorting man to, 'constantly exalt his god... to praise artlessly the words of his god...to let his lament soothe the heart of his god.' Pritchard identifies the poetic device used by the author as 'cumulative parallelism, that repeats and expands each new idea.

' ...to utter constantly...to praise artlessly

...let him interpret...bring forth...utter'

The ninth line reminds man that constant praise is not only due in bad times, but that 'a man without a god would not obtain food.'

The second section (line 10-20) describes a young man who did

'not use his strength for evil, (yet)...sickness and bitter suffering engulfed him,...placed an evil hand on him.'

The negative in line ten, 'not use' appears to be the only claim as to the 'undeservedness' or innocence of the man, (although many lines and words are missing)

In the third section, the main body of the work, (lines 26 –116), the young man, now in the first person, describes his suffering and petitions his god. His suffering is firstly social, a loss of standing in the community,

'a discerning man, his righteous word was turned into a lie, he was forced to serve a man of deceit.'

Next, the King, 'my righteous shepherd' [2] saw him as an enemy.

He twice accuses his god; first directly, 'you have doled out to me suffering ever anew,' and then for not fulfilling his task, ' you did not protect me against those who conspired against me.' The young man continues his lament and complaints about his suffering, and calls on the women of his family to continue lamenting on his behalf; his mother, his sister, his wife and the expert (professional) singer.

The cause of his illness is the 'malignant sickness demon.' Although the young man does later 'confess' his sins before his god, according to Ringgren, 'the Sumerian incantations contain not the slightest suggestion that illness or misfortune are the consequence of sin – they are entirely the work of demons.' Further the hymns and prayers contain, 'not a single confession of sin or prayer for forgiveness,' (1973:45).

His god has shown him where he has gone wrong and this he acknowledges, but Ringgren does not accept this as a confession of sin,

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2.In Lagash, the 'ensi' (ensign) ruled under the title of 'Shepherd of Ningissu' (2060-1950BCE) (Bright 1960:42)

' My god, the... of destruction which I have...against you (104)

...my god, now that you have shown me my sins...

...I , the young man, would confess my sins before you (112)

What the young man is confessing is that,

'Never has a sinless child been born to its mother (102)

...a sinless workman has not existed from of old.'

He confesses that he is but man, and man needs the assistance of his personal god.

As Kramer explains (1956:168), he has but one valid and effective recourse, and that is to glorify his god continually, and to keep lamenting until,

" the righteous word, the artless words uttered by him his god accepted." (120)

Once the god has accepted the praise that is his due, he performs his tasks;

'...he swept away the sickness demon, ...he dissipated another,...he turned aside the demon of fate and set by him a good spirit, a tutelary geni of friendly mien...and the man continued in praise.'

The last three lines of the text :

'...may he return for me, ...may he release, ...may he set straight for me.' are described as the antiphon of the 'lamentation to a man's god.' Having a chorus, we may therefore call this poetic essay a hymn, written to,

'let the expert singer bemoan my bitter fate.' (line 63)

Westermann, (1965:37) describes the structure of the later Babylonian Psalm, like the Hebrew Psalm, as basically following the steps: Address – praise – lament – petition – vow of praise.

And this is the sequence found in this early [3] Sumerian work:

Praise; Let a man utter constantly the exaltedness of his god

Let the young man praise artlessly the words of his god

Lament: My righteous word has turned into a lie... (27)

On the day shares were allotted to all, my ...share was suffering (45)

Petition: How long will you neglect me, leave me unprotected... (98)

Let them not.... (106)

..., make me walk before you. (107)

Praise: [The man uttered] constantly the exaltedness of his god (130)

(a repeat of line one.)

This hymn, the poet, entitles a lament. In the biblical lament we find predominantly a complaint against god, and according to Westermann its most frequent form is the question directed at God, usually introduced by 'why?' and also 'how long?' (1965:176)

We do find these questions posed in this Sumerian work:

' why am I bound to ignorant youths, ...why am I counted among the ignorant?' (42,)

'How long will you neglect me...how long will you leave me unguided?' (99,100)

But these complaints are not the focus of the lament. They are merely questions asked by every person who suffers, a general cry, 'why me?'

According to Kramer,(1956:168), 'the main thesis of the poet is that in cases of suffering and adversity,..., the victim has but one valid and effective recourse, and that is to continually glorify his god and to keep wailing and lamenting before him until he turns a favourable ear to his prayers.' Ringgren considers this to be 'general advice, based on empirical observation.' If you hurt your finger, cry! 'There is hardly once here an instance of advice being based on general divine order, and if gods are mentioned at all it is only in passing.' (1973:46)

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3. No one author consulted has volunteered a tentative date for this work, but if a product of a scribal school, '*edubba*', of Nippur, where the fragments were discovered the date would be ca.1800 – 1700 BCE.

Because this extract has been called the 'Sumerian Job' , there have been searches for similarities to the Hebrew Job. Pope, in the introduction to the Anchor Bible, (1965:Lv) suggests that the personal god may be compared to: Job's call for a daysman, an impartial judge,

'There is no daysman between us, who might lay his hand on us both' (Job 9:33).

This is however beyond the task of the personal god, who may lead his subject before the god and plead for him, but can not act as an arbitrator. As for Job, he is denying that there is any common ground between man and God:

'For He is not a man as I am... that we should come to trial together,' (Job 9:32).

Job's 'heavenly witness', comes closer to the personal god,

'Also now, behold, my witness is in heaven' (Job16:19).

The proof he wishes to expose to the heavenly witness,

'O earth cover not my blood.' (16:18)

And again, as above, Job moans,

'Oh that one might plead for a man with God, as a man pleads for his neighbour,' (Job 16:21).

Man may plead with his neighbour, the Sumerian may plead with his personal god, but there is no equal ground between God and man. What one can accept from Pope, is that both the Sumerian and the Hebrew Job,

'end on the same note of humble acquiescence before the inscrutable divine will.' (1965:LV)

The Sumarians expected no certainty in the behaviour of their gods and a funerary poem about the death of Ur-Nammu, tells of his bitter lament although he had served the gods well, they failed to stand by him in his time of need (Kramer 1963:131).

And this Kramer suggests could be the reason for this essay; an effort to forestall resentment against the gods by the suffering man tempted to challenge the fairness and justice of his position, to promote praise and to accept that no man is without guilt, 'that there are no cases of unjust and undeserving human suffering; it is always man who is to blame, not the gods.' (ANET:589)

2.2.

LUDLUL BEL NEMEQI

I WILL PRAISE THE LORD OF WISDOM.

(Translated by R.H.Pfeiffer)(ANET:434-437),(Lambert(1960:35-46))

(The Cassite period, ca.1600 – 1150 BCE)

The Cassite-period scribal scholars were officers of the temple, (there is no mention of a separate Edubba or scribal school). To preserve their heritage they were basically transcribers and editors. The 26 fragments, listed by Lambert, that were used to translate the four tablets, come from at least five different sites [4]. Original works, to continue the tradition, Lambert thinks lack the inspiration of earlier work, with a deliberate striving for stylistic effect, and some Cassite period compositions are overloaded with rare words. The authors betray their very academic background and training (1960:14).

When the Akkadian Empire spread across southern Mesopotamia, (ca 2340 – 2160), the Semitic language became official. After a period of bilingualism, Sumerian was retained only in religion and culturally, much as Latin was retained in scholarship, and by the Roman Church. The cuneiform script developed phonetically and became the writing system for Akkadian (and Eblaite, Elamite, Hurrian, Hittite and the other tongues of Asia Minor) (Bottero 1992:85). By a similar process, the pantheon of gods which served the city kingdoms of Sumeria were taken over. As the country became united as a single kingdom (Hammurabi ca. 1750 BCE) the number of ruling gods consolidated and the city god of Babylon, Marduk, became the supreme god. Bottero explains that the Mesopotamians had no religious

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4.Nine manuscripts come from the libraries of Ashurbanipal, other copies from Assur, Sultanepe, Babylon and Sippur overlap to prove the existence of more than one copy.

dogma or fixed cannon of sacred texts, (1992:220), which allowed the '*Epic of Creation*' to be written, which justified the primary position of Marduk among the gods.

Ludlul bel Nemqi, tells how a once prosperous man lost all he had: his wealth, health, friends and social standing without any reason that he could fathom. After appealing to Marduk, each of his carefully described ailments is cured and he is restored to favour. He therefore praises Marduk.

From the opening line, 'I will praise the lord of Wisdom,' it would appear that we have a work similar to the Sumarian, *Lamentation to a man's god*. The divisions also appear similar; praise, protestations of innocence, a litany of social and physical suffering, an appeal to the god and redemption by the god who is further praised. However there is a definite difference of emphasis which is conveyed by their titles, the Sumarian work is a lament, the Akkadian, a song of praise to the lord of wisdom, Marduk.
The opening twelve lines, describes the contrasting sides of Marduk's character,

'Who lays hold on the night, but lets free the day,
His anger is irresistible...but his heart is merciful...' (I:2,7,8)

In the list of Marduk's fifty names in the Epic of Creation, is the name 'savage then relenting' (Lambert 1995:33).

The speaker describes his own efforts to find the cause of his suffering. He implored the god, he prayed to his goddess, they did not answer. He approached the diviner, the dream interpreter, the necromancer and the conjurer but none could find a reason or relieve his suffering.
His persecution was like that which could be expected by one who did not show reverence to the gods, who did not bow down or offer libations.
But this was certainly not his case. He delighted in supplication, prayer and reverence for the god. He had been a man of substance and power and had

instructed his land and his people to keep the god's rites and to value the goddess's name. But, he sighs,

'who knows the will of the gods in heaven?' (II:37)

He had been a noble, but now creeps round as a slave.

Friends and relations have deserted and turned on him. In this wretched state demons have attacked every inch of his body. He has a headache, cramp and cough. He is impotent, his eyes flood, his neck, his chest, his flesh and his bowels are attacked by demons all day and all night. He slept in his own dung like an animal. The incantation priest, the diviner and the exorcist could make no diagnosis, neither his god nor his goddess came to his rescue. And yet, although mourning for him had ended while he was yet alive, he was able to speak out in hope,

'But I know the day for my whole family, when among my friends,
their Sun-god will have mercy,' Lambert(1960:46).

Pfeifer's translation is more personal, (ANET: 436),

'But I know the day on which my tears will cease, on which,
in the midst of the protecting deities, their divinity will show mercy.'

And then the man had a series of three dreams; first a certain man, gigantic in size, announced that he was sent by 'the lady', and 'Shamash is mentioned, the sun-god and judge of the world, Ringgren (1973:92).

In the second dream a man is sent with a tamarisk branch and a purification vessel. He poured water over the man and recited the incantation of life.

In the third dream the 'queen of life' declared mercy for him, a mighty man brought something to him, Subshi-mesre-Nergal the man, saying,

'Marduk has sent me.' (III:41)

The omen that appeared to him, in his dreams, also caused his people to see the benevolence Marduk showed towards him. Then Marduk caused the wind to carry away his trespasses and ended his illness. Each ailment was

driven away, each part restored. The headache, the running eyes, the blocked ears blown clean. His nose, his lips, his mouth, his teeth, his tongue all made to function. His windpipe, lungs, intestine and neck straightened and strengthened. Marduk did all this, and from out of the river Hurbur (in the underworld) he drew the man Subshi up.

Marduk shattered his enemies and Subshi returned from the grave and entered Esagila, the temple to Marduk in Babylon. As he passed through the twelve gates of the temple he received the blessings that they bestowed. He appeared before Marduk and the goddess Sarpanit and offered incense, produced gifts and made sacrifices. The people saw that he had been restored and praised Marduk.

For the above story the title, ' *The Babylonian Job*,' is used by Gordis (1965:57), a title earned because it tells of a righteous man who suffers ills and calls on his god.

The Akkadian title,'*Ludlul bel nemeqi*,' I will praise the Lord of Wisdom,[5] describes the poem as a thanksgiving hymn for deliverance from distress. (Pope 1965:LVI). Murphy, (1981:10) agrees that the genre of the poem is really thanksgiving, and calls it 'a paradigm of answered lament' to correlate it with Job.

I will start with Pritchard's basic classification of this section, 'Akkadian observations on Life and the World Order' (ANET:434). From the fourth readable line we know we have literature and not just a statement of policy for prayers in case of suffering:

'The day is sighing, the night is weeping;
The month is silence, mourning is the year. (I:20)

His whole life is suffering, throughout both day and night, month and year.

5."The Lord of Wisdom' is the title of Marduk, the City and national god of Babylon, inherited from his father Ea (the Sumerian Enki) City god of Eridu.

The metonomy and the progression of time creates a picture of unending and overwhelming suffering. And suffering is part of life and of the world order.

While the Egyptians believed that their soul might exist in an afterlife, the Mesopotanian always knew that as mere man, his days were numbered.

> 'When the gods created man they appointed death for man, but kept life for themselves.' (The Gilgamesh Epic), (Ringgren 1973:53).

Frankfort believed that the Egyptian and Mesopotamian's philosophy was influenced by the environment. In the land between the Tigris and the Euphrates, the rivers flooded, like the Nile, but this was not seen as a blessing, also, there were scorching dust storms and then torrential rains to turn firm ground into mud and rob man of his freedom of movement. Standing amidst such powers, man sees how weak he is... he is caught in an interplay of giant forces. (1946:138)

'...man is the slave of the great cosmic forces; he serves them and obeys them; and his only means of influencing them is by prayer and sacrifice, that is, by persuasion and gifts.' (1946:216). This was the approach or the moral of the Sumerian lament, the forces of nature, of the gods, are overwhelming, beyond mere man's ability to resist, therefore if you are suffering, pray to your god for relief. This is also the first step taken by our young man.

'I implored the god, but he did not turn his countenance,
I prayed to my goddess, but she did not raise her head.' (II:4,5)

But the evil demons, normally kept at bay by the gods, had already attacked. To exorcise these demons they had first to be identified and then a priest, a specialist in incantation, was called in to carry out the ceremonies required. (Ringgren 1973:90)

> 'The diviner through divination did not discern the situation,
> Through incense offering the dream interpreter did not explain my right

I turned to the necromancer but he did not enlighten me

The conjurer through magic did not dispel the wrath against me.

(II:6-9)

The Babylonians made no distinction between 'magic' and 'religion', between rational medicine and irrational magic amulets.

If one suffered illness it was caused by demons, and one could be attacked by demons if the gods, who were there to protect one , for some reason turned their back on you. An enemy could also attack you through witchcraft as practiced by wizards (Ringgren 1973:89).

Witchcraft could be the way of attack of an enemy:

'My ill-wisher heard it and his countenance shone,

They brought the good news to the woman who was my ill-wisher and her spirit was delighted.' (II:52,53)

The sufferer does not know the cause of his affliction and lists possible mistakes that he as a normal man could have made, or that which he failed to do, as many of the ten lines are negative;

'... did not offer libation to a god, and at mealtime did not invoke a goddess,

and who did not bow his face and did not know reverence, ...

who swore frivolously in the name of his honourable deity.' [6] (II:12-22)

The sufferer basically denies any wrong doing and emphasises his ritual obedience over ten more verses:

'Yet I myself was thinking only of prayer and supplication,

The day of my goddess' procession was my profit and wealth.' (II:23,26)

The Babylonians had no hesitation in demanding a practical return from their religious observances and the word 'profit' is commonly used in this connection.

6.Exodus 20:7 Do not use the name of the Lord your God in vain.

Lambert contends that it is not only the blessing of the gods, but a material reward.(1960:289).

Line 33 serves to introduce mortal man's problem with the gods:

'...Oh that I only knew that these things are well pleasing to a god,
what is good in one's sight is evil for a god...
who can understand the counsel of the gods in the midst of heaven? (II:33f)

Line 34 may be compared to Job's anguished cry;

'Hast thou eyes of flesh, do you see as man sees ? (Job10:4)

The Babylonian is not claiming righteousness, merely ignorance, he does not expect justice ;

'Where has befuddled mankind ever learned what a god's conduct is? (II:39)

Yet in one technique of incantation, which the king had to go through to ward off disasters, the cause of man was presented before the judgement seat of 'Shamash'. That is, performed before the sun at sunrise, so that ' the sun god, in his capacity as judge of the world, can secure justice for man over against demonic powers' (Ringgren 1973:92).

Whatever his fault, his god has turned aside and now he must face punishment (justice), as the demons attack:

The ...demon has descended from the mountain
The alu (disease demon) has clothed himself with my body. (II:53f)

On the reverse of tablet II there are 50 verses describing in painful detail the extent of the victim's physical affliction; from headache and fever to dysentery and paralysis. Each ailment is personalised or introduced by its own demon,

'Headache has sprung up from the surface of the underworld,

An evil cough has left it's *Apsu*, the irresistible [ghost] left *Ebur,*

[The *Lamastu*-demon came] down from the mountain (II:52-55)

But to silence the gloating of his ill-wishers, there is a strong quiet word of confidence to end this section:

'But I know the day on which my tears will cease

On which, in the midst of the protecting deities, their divinity will show mercy,'

There is no build up of optimism to this point, rather pessimism dragging him down to a low point [7],

'Before I was dead the weeping for me was ended.' (IIR:50)

Job too is in the gutter in chapter 19, he has lost all hope,

'He hath destroyed me on every side, and I am gone and my hope he has removed as a tree.' (Job 19:10)

Job says that by His inattention, God has 'uprooted his hope and left him to wither and die,' (Good News). There is nothing optimistic following to introduce the triumphant line, but when at a low point it is important to have something to cling to, a hope of salvation:

'For I know that my Redeemer lives...' (Job 19:25)

Robert Gordis, (1965:60), mentions also an Ugaritic liturgical text,

'And I know that the powerful Baal lives...' (ANET,p.142)

Gordis suggests that the affirmation 'I know' may have existed as a fixed liturgical form , common to ancient oriental culture, (1965:61). This would explain the use of the phrase in the Ugaritic text, where the speaker is not a suffering victim seeking release, but it refers to the death, possibly annual death and resurrection of Baal. Lambert sees the line as a confession of faith of the sufferer in his ultimate recovery, his physical restoration. (1960:23)

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7. This may be the point, as made by Social workers today, that the sufferer needs to reach the gutter, where there is no lower to go, before he will look up.

The third tablet opens with the lines:

'Heavy was his hand, I could not bear it

Mighty was his frightfulness…'

'He' with the heavy hand, at the root of the trouble and the cause of the poor man's suffering, was the mighty Marduk. But our pious man only hints at Marduk's responsibility, not at all like Job who stood up and raged at the Lord. According to Frankfort, in Babylon obedience was a prime virtue, the unquestioned acceptance of authority. The Mesopotamian is constantly admonished,

'pay heed to the word of thy mother as to the word of thy god.' (1946:217)

He would be reluctant to charge the god with injustice in direct and straight forward language, but mention of the unnamed 'he' would not go unnoticed. Lambert, (1960:10), considered the changes to, and developments in Old Babylonian literature (ca 1700 BCE) from Sumerian thought (ca. 2500 BCE). As long as the gods were simple personifications of parts or aspects of nature, a wonderful reality pervaded thought. But as soon as human reason tried to impose a man made purpose on the universe, intellectual problems arose. A big problem in Babylonian thought was that of justice. The gods directed the writing of the Ur Nammu Code and the earlier Babylonian laws of Esnunna (1850 BCE). If the gods ruled the universe with justice, why could a man serve his god faithfully and not secure health and prosperity?

The time of the Third Dynasty of Ur (2000 –1900 BCE) had the Akkadian name of 'Mina-arni' for this period, 'what-is-my-guilt?' Which implied:

I have suffered; I must have done wrong; what can it be?

Suffering necessarily implied guilt, Lambert (1960:10).

If one accepts the guilt, one cannot question the justice. Our man, whose name we learn is 'Subshi-mesre-nergal', (Subshi), accepts his guilt with only the slightest hesitation and one brief mention of an unnamed 'he.'

One thousand years later, Job, without the slightest hesitation denies all and any guilt and demands justice.

Terrien pointed out, (1954:984), that the poet always gave Job an opportunity to hide after every instance that he asked God to end his life, or made heretical pronouncements :

". ..Oh that I had given up the ghost, and no eye had seen me...

I should have been carried from the womb to the grave..."

But in case God should take him at his word, to give up the ghost, to be carried to the grave, Job continues:

'are not my days few? Cease then and let me alone that I may take comfort a little, before I go whence I shall not return.'(Job10:18-20)

The Babylonian poet employs a similar defence. He introduces the new section explaining the cause of his persecution, the unnamed 'he', but hastens to describe his salvation in three dreams of persons, messengers of the gods, sent to him to purify him, to recite the incantation of life, to offer mercy and, 'a conjurer carrying a [tablet] whom Lambert describes as an incantation priest,(1960:23), who announces, 'Marduk has sent me.' He, Marduk, is only mentioned as the saviour, and now that he has been appeased,

' The spirit of Marduk the merciful was quieted...

...He caused the wind to carry away my trespasses... (II:51,60)

Marduk is here forgiving, as the sufferer does not claim innocence, in incomplete lines we have:

57. ... my guilt...

58. ...my iniquity...

59. ... my transgression...

60. He made the wind bear away my offences.

The next section, the reverse of tablet three, has the detailed healing, by Marduk, and the removal of all demons:

'The countless demons he sent back to Ekur.' (IIIR:7)

Just as each body part was described with its affliction, so each part is now healed:

' The blur of my eyes,...my ears...my lips...the windpipe...the large intestine...'

To end this section we are told:

'my forehead was rubbed clean, my slavery mark was obliterated'

This would not be literal, but rather an allusion to his reduced state;

'Though a dignitary, I have become a slave' (I:78).

Lambert is not convinced that tablet IV belongs to Ludlul but accepts that it is suitable and of interest.

The narrator describes how he is saved, drawn out of the underworld river Hurbur by Marduk, who beats off his attackers. He then enters 'Esagila', the Temple of Marduk in Babylon, and passes through the eleven gates of the temple. At each gate he receives the blessing for which the gate is named:

'In the Welfare Gate, I beheld welfare, ...In the Gate of Life I met life...

In the Radiant Omens Gate my omens became radiant'(IV:24,25,27).

Through one of the gates he meets Marduk and through another Marduk's consort, Sarparit. He offers sacrifices to them, prepared a feast and poured out libations, according to temple rituals. Then the people of the city saw that Marduk had restored his life and all were enjoined to praise Marduk and Sarparit:

'Marduk is able to revive in the grave,

Sarparit knows how to deliver from destruction' (IV:56,57).

And then to balance the opening lines of poetry of tablet one that described the man's overwhelming suffering, there are three lines to describe life, and the reach of Marduk,

'Wherever the earth reaches, and the heavens are stretched out
Wherever the sun shines and the fire blazes
Wherever water flows and wind blows...' (IV:60).

The first line covers the world to include all people. In lines two and three we have the elements of nature, the forces that control life; not just the sun but;

'the sun shining, ...the wind blowing,...and the water flowing,'

and to show the living presence of man, the continuous 'the fire blazing.' [8]

The poetry is not accidental but could represent a characteristic of the style of the Cassite-period. Ringgren, (1973:119), even describes the long descriptions of illness and suffering as being in a very florid style.

The author of Ludlul could be accused more of constructing, or compiling this work, than composing it. According to Lambert much of the material, even complete couplets and the themes are traditional. The many lines devoted to the arrival and departure of the demons however, are clearly based on incantations (1960:26).

This work shows a fuller understanding, than in the Old Babylonian texts, of the problems involved in the traditional approach to the universe:

'The basic assumption of the gods ruling the universe in justice is maintained. Thus all misfortune and suffering should be as punishment for neglect....Under this system of thought an individual's fate was in his own hands. If he kept on the right side of the gods, no ill could assail him

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8.Lambert has, '...the sun god shines and the fire god blazes.'

In the personal sphere the idea of piety as the guarantee of prosperity was more vulnerable. The suffering of an apparent righteous man was an irrefutable occurrence.' (1960:15)

Lambert explains that the work 'Ludlul bel nemeqi', was referred to as the 'Babylonian Job', and was so justified as long as only tablet II , of four, was known.

In tablet II the sufferer, Subshi, bemoans his fate, describes his punishment to be just like that deserved by a sinner, by one who had not shown due reverence to the gods:

'Like one who did not offer libation to a god

...who did not bow his face and did not know reverence' (II:12,14)

In the book of Job it is rather the friends who describe the different sinners and ascribe these deeds to Job:

Eliphaz: A wicked man who oppresses others

Will be in torment as long as he lives (Job:15:20)

Bildad: The wicked man's light will still be put out (Job:18:5)

Subshi then describes how correct his own behaviour was:

'Yet I myself was thinking only of prayer and supplication,

Supplication was my concern, sacrifice my rule. (II:23,24)

And Zophar obliges for Job:

'You claim you are pure in the sight of God. (Job:11:4)

The Babylonian despairs in man's inability to understand his god, and describes man's uncertain, unstable life at the whim of the gods:

'who can understand the counsel of the gods in the midst of heaven?' (II:36)

And Job explains too:

"We cannot understand the great things he does.' (Job9:10)

On the reverse of tablet II, the poet describes the demonic attacks and the physical suffering of Subshi, his nights in dung, and his one line of hope:

'The alu (disease demon) has clothed himself with my body...
I spend the night in my dung like an ox...
But I know the day when my tears will come to an end.'
(IIR:6,41,54)

And Job has the Satan as his personal illness demon:

'So Satan went forth...and smote Job with sore boils from the soles of his foot to his crown,... and he sat down among the ashes.' [10]
(Job 2:7,8)

And Job's line of hope,

' For I know that my redeemer liveth' (Job 19:25)

The theme of suffering and justice are common in observations on life and the world order, Lambert, in considering the authority of tablet IV, says, 'similarities of style and subject matter are so common in Babylonian literature.' (1960:24)

While the Babylonian author may deliberately avoid the blasphemous implications of seeking a reason for the suffering of the righteous, that is hardly the theme of the work. It only receives prominence in our comparisons with the book of Job.

As titled, 'Ludlul bel nemeqi', is a psalm of thanksgiving, ' I will praise the lord of wisdom.' Although Pfeiffer only offers four lines of Tablet I, Lambert has lines 41 to 112 and in an addendum, the 'lost' beginning of Ludlul, 12 opening lines translated by Erle Leichting in 1959. [11]

Two repetitive couplets introduce the god:

'I will praise the god of wisdom, the [deliberative] god.
who lays hold on the night, but lets free the day' (I:1)

~~His attributes are described in~~ couplets, the first line stresses his severity,

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10. 'And I spent forty-eight years sitting on the dung heap outside of the city.' (21.1a) *The Testament of Job.*

and the second his goodness and merciful aspects [11]:

'His anger is irresistible, his rage is a hurricane,

but his heart is merciful, his mind forgiving.' (I:7,8)

As Lambert notes, this is a very appropriate introduction to the work, 'which describes in much detail Marduk's severity to his slave, followed by his mercy.' (1960:343) The Babylonian does face the same problem as Job, which, because of their different cultures, they approach differently. For Subshi, the world is ruled by Marduk, from whom justice is expected by his servant. Yet Marduk allows even the most devoted to suffer. The author of Ludlul finds no answer to solve this mystery. All he can say is, ' though it be the lord who has smitten, yet it is the lord who will heal.' (Lambert,1960:27) It is not wise to query the justice of a god, 'whose fury surrounds him like the blast of a tornado'(I:5). It is a far wiser course of action to continue with praise until heard:

'In supplication and imploration I persisted before them' (IV:34) which is the same procedure as advocated and followed in the Sumerian work:

11.'I will praise the god of wisdom, the[deliberative] god
who lays hold on the night, but lets free the day,
Marduk, the lord of wisdom, the [deliberative] god
Who lays hold on the night, but lets free the day,
Whose fury surrounds him like the blast of a tornado,
Yet whose breeze is as pleasant as a morning zepher,
His anger is irresistible, his rage is a hurricane,
But his heart is merciful, his mind forgiving,
The...of whose hand the heavens cannot hold back,
But whose gentle hands sustains the moribund
Marduk, the...of whose hands the heavens cannot hold back
But whose gentle hands sustains the moribund .(1960:343)

'Let a man utter constantly the exaltedness of his god' (I:1).

Ringgren, although not supported by others, questions whether the poem may have had a cultic purpose because of the emphasis placed on the description of the thanks offering in the temple of Marduk, (1973:120) and we could add the traditional form of the 'saviour', Marduk, at work freeing the sufferer of all of his troubles.

But even if not a ceremonial or cultic work, it does describe the proper course of action to be followed when expected reward does not follow, and that is to continue in 'supplication and observation of the divine ordinance.' It is not man's task to question the plans of the gods, he must just,

'Praise the lord of wisdom.'

2.3 The Protests of the Eloquent Peasant.

(Egyptian ca.2000 - 1800 BCE. Translated by J.A.Wilson)
(ANET:407-410), (Lichtheim 1973:169-183)

The oldest existing examples of Egyptian literature are the Pyramid Texts. These are ritual funerary inscriptions with a religious function which were found in the pyramids of Sakkara. They include a ritual of mortuary offerings, a ritual of worship, religious hymns and prayers and petitions on behalf of the dead kings (Breasted 1970:93).
These old texts, pre-2180 BCE, which Erman, (1966:5) classifies as being mostly poetry, are concerned with the destiny of dead kings. Their desire was not to join ordinary mortals in the underworld but to join the gods in the sky.

A major genre in Egyptian Literature appears to have been the Instructions in Wisdom, as a large number have been preserved. The scholars of the scribal schools of the New Kingdom copied out important and didactic texts from the middle and the old period and are the source of much that is available. The Instructions take the form of the address of a sage, or a father, or the king, to a son. As many have to do with prudence, worldly wisdom and correct behaviour they will have been intended for schools and the young learner. Also under the heading of Instruction are works intended for other readers, for example the Instructions of King Amenemhet contain warnings to be loyal to the king, which are beyond any school philosophy (Erman 1966:54).
Because the Egyptians had mastered the art of writing, they did not stop with religious writings and school books. Narratives, stories, myths and poems, Hymns and love songs and meditations and complaints followed. The latter grouping, inspired by times of catastrophes and misfortune include works

such as: ' *The Dispute with his Soul of one who is tired of life,' 'The Admonitions of a Prophet,' 'The Complaint of Khekheperre-sonba.'*
Erman, (1966:85) includes '*The Complaint of the Eloquent Peasant'* in this category as the subject is about social justice and oppression of the poor by bad officials. He does however note that the eloquent style is an exercise in rhetoric. While the 'Complaints' are generally pessimistic, I will follow Breasted who compares 'The Eloquent Peasant' and the 'Wisdom of Ptahhotep' and suggests that they present practical principles, instruction, for the conduct of officials (1970:216).
The manuscript material for '*The Eloquent Peasant'* dates from the Middle Kingdom, (20^{th} –18^{th} Century BCE), when the duty of social justice was an insistent theme. Justice in Egypt was rooted in religion. ' In the very early period the sacrosanct ruler himself made the laws and ensured that they were kept. Ma'at , which forms the core of Egyptian justice, ...is the most widely held concept of justice.' (Morenz 1973:12)
Maat is right order in nature and society, it means what is right, what is correct, law, order, justice and truth. Maat is both the task which man sets himself and also as righteousness, the promise and reward which awaits him on fulfilling it. (1973:13)
It is this justice which the peasant, Khun-Anup, seeks in his appeal to Rensi, the Chief Steward. There is no subtle plot or fine point of law involved. The story teller allows us to know the thoughts of the villain, Thut-Nakht, who happened to be a vassal of the Chief Steward. Thut-Nakht coveted the produce a poor man was taking to market on his donkeys . So he spread a cloth from the water's edge, across the public path, to the edge of his grain fields. He warned the peasant not to step on his garments and when, in a detour around it, the donkey grabbed one wisp of grain, he confiscated the donkey. When the peasant protested he beat him and took the rest of his goods.

Khun-Anup, the poor peasant, spent the next ten days trying to appeal to Thut-Nakht to no avail. So the peasant went on to the city to appeal to the Chief Steward, and lord of the district, Rensi son of Meru, whom he knew was the one who punished every robber in the land. Khun-Anup was fortunate to catch the chief steward on his way out, and although but a poor peasant, makes the correct humble approach, as Wilson suggests is the typical oriental proposal to treat the matter, through an intermediary. That is, he suggested that the chief steward was too important to have his time taken up to hear the story. An attendant relays the full story to the chief steward who presents it to the officials at his side. [12]

Breasted suggests that this story was written by one of the social thinkers of the day, to provide a story and not just a set of rules, composed to expose faults in the system and 'conceived solely to furnish a dramatic setting for a series of disquisitions on the proper character and spirit of the just official, and the resulting social and administrative justice to the poor.' (1970:216)

The author too, perhaps automatically, addresses each participant according to his social class. We are introduced to Khun-Anup, his father is not mentioned but we are told that his wife's name is Merit. He was a peasant, and throughout the story he is addressed as 'the peasant.' Thut-nakht was the vassal of the chief steward and his father's name was Isri. Throughout the story he is called by his name, Thut-nakht. The full pedigree of the chief steward is given at each mention, 'The Chief Steward, Meru's son Rensi.'

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12. The behaviour and response of the officials could be found mirrored in any State Department today. Their opinions: one; it was probably his own fault, and two; 'a little natron a little salt' to be replaced, is not seen as the produce of a season without which the peasant would be destitute.

The use of the individual forms of address does serve to remind us of everyone's social position.

After the officials had spoken the chief steward was silent and added no comment or opinion on the merits of the case.

The peasant then steps forward and addresses the chief steward directly and most eloquently. He praises the benevolence of the steward and his sense of justice, upon which he is depending:

> '...thou art the father of the orphan, the husband of the widow...
> ...a leader free from covetousness, ...one who destroys falsehood and brings justice into being.' (63,66)

The steward is about to embark on his barge, and the peasant describes his task of judgement to be, 'a sail with a fair breeze [on the lake of justice]' nothing shall disturb him, 'and even the timid fish shall come to thee.' (55f)

The chief steward is impressed by his plea, does not pass judgement, but proceeds to the king [13] to tell him of this eloquent peasant.

The king orders the chief steward not to settle the case, but to keep the peasant talking, and to write down his speeches and to share them with the king. The king is however sensitive to the physical needs of the family, and orders that the peasant be supplied with food, without letting him know where it came from. And the mayor of the peasant's home town, the Field of Salt, supplied his wife and children with 30 hekat of grain every day [14].

As the amount of grain supplied is stated, it is for the reader to notice what an official thinks is a daily requirement for a household, and that which the peasant himself left for them, 20 hekats to last perhaps week that he would be away. Of course by order of the king, one would rather give too much than too little.

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13. King Neb-kau-Re Ketty III, king at Herakleopolis.21st Century BCE.

14.Erman suggest that this may be the total amount supplied.(1966:121)

When the peasant approaches the steward a second time to appeal, his opening lines appear to be praise;

> ' Greatest of the great,... thou tiller of heaven, thou beam of the earth, thou plumb-line that carries the weight...'

These images represent the constant forces of nature, the tiller that guides the stars across the heavens, the plumb-line that is always perpendicular, and the beam of the earth.

The Egyptian sign for the earth (ts') is a straight beam with three dots there under. The earliest hieroglyph for 'maat', justice, is a straight beam. The beam of the earth will therefore also represent straightness, justice, 'maat,' (Morentz 1973:46,113).The lines continue,

> 'Tiller, tumble not; beam tilt not; plumb-line, swing not awry.'

Which Erman interprets as, 'what would become of the world if reliance could no longer be placed on these mainstays of its order.' (1966:121) They had been chosen because they could be depended on to be straight.The steward then warns him that if he insists too much he could be punished.

> 'Is what belongs to you more important to your heart than the fact that my attendant may carry you off?'

It does appear so. The peasant who lost everything wants justice and uses his eloquence to reproach the chief steward, and in his disappointment accuses the steward of being part of a crooked administration and becomes personal in his attack,

> 'The great lord helps himself to that which has no possessor...you have what you need in your own home...why do you vacillate in passing judgement...He who should lead according to the laws orders robbery...he who should drive out decay (himself) makes distortions.'

The third speech of the peasant again opens with praise and is followed by petition:

'O High Steward, my lord, thou art Re, the lord of heaven...thou art like the flood. Thou art the Nile which makes green the meadows...

'Protect the poor man,...mete out punishment to him that should be punished.'

He then again invokes the image of the balance the symbol of justice;

'Thy tongue is the plummet (of the balance), thine heart is the weight, thy two lips its arms. If you veil your face against the impious who will ward off crime?'

If the Judge ignores wrong doing, where is justice?

Again the peasant goes too far and slips in a threat;

'Prepare not tomorrow, ere it be come, none knows the evil that will come in it'

Erman suggests this means, 'someday it may even go ill with you, all powerful though you be.' (1966:24)

The chief steward then calls his attendants and has the peasant whipped. But the peasant is unrepentant and appears to be following the steward around, for the fourth petition is delivered as the steward comes out of the temple. There is one line of praise before he returns to the attack;

'Thou praised one, may Horsaphes from whose temple thou art come praise thee. ...How sorrows the poor man that is destroyed by you.'

And a repeat of, 'be not boastful because you are powerful, lest mischief befall you.'

The peasant continues with a fifth challenging petition, listing the failures of the chief steward: 'Thou wast appointed to hear pleas, to judge between suitors, to repress the robber...men put their trust in thee...thou was set for a dam unto the poor man, to prevent his being drowned; and behold, thou art his lake, thou flowing one.'

The many water images reflect how the life of the Egyptian was tied to the river, positively as a source of sustenance, from the fisherman and the flood,

'which makes green the meadows and makes habitable the waste places.'

And the negatives, the danger of the oarsman letting the ship run aground, the danger of drowning, and the threat of the crocodile.

Even as the peasant berates the steward as being, 'the upholder of the thief...thou art become a transgressor.' He still believes in justice and presents his sixth petition.

'O high steward, my lord...foster truth, foster good and destroy (evil) even as satiety comes that may end hunger, and clothing...that it may end nakedness, so could justice end injustice.

His seventh petition still begins with his florid style of introduction,

'Thou art the tiller of the entire land, the land sails according to thy command. Thou art the peer of Thoth, who judges without partiality.'

Although he compares the steward to Thoth, the patron of Just measure, the lord of wisdom and of justice,(Morentz,1973:270), he is becoming despondent with the steward's lack of comment,

'I have washed my clothes, my discourse is achieved and my misery is concluded in thy presence. What now is thy decision? Thy sluggishness will lead thee astray...'

In his eighth petition the peasant again warns, threatens, the steward,

'Men suffer a fall because of greed...'

and he berates him,

What thou needest is in thy house, thy belly is full, ...thou hast thy plot of ground in the fields, thy victuals in the storehouse. The magistrates give to thee (from their bribes?) and thou takest (yet more) art thou not a robber?

And yet the peasant still believes in justice, as expressed in what Morentz calls the, "most remarkable utterances in this remarkable tractate." (1973:224)

> Do justice for the sake of the lord of justice (Osiris). Thou reed-pen and roll, thou palette of Thoth, when thou keepest aloof from working mischief. Good is it, when thou art good. ...But justice (maat) endures unto everlasting, it descends with him that doeth it into the nether world. When he is buried his name is not wiped out upon earth, but he is remembered for goodness. That is a principal of the word of god.

The peasant further adjures the steward to follow the words of Re,

> 'Speak the truth, do the truth. For it is great, it is mighty, it is enduring The reward thereof shall find thee and it shall follow thee unto blessedness hereafter.'

This was a common sentiment in funery writings, for example, from the tomb of Neferhotep at Thebes (XIth Dynasty ca. 2040 BCE),

> 'Give bread to him who hast no field, so shall thou gain a good name, for the future forever.'

The traditional reason as given by Morentz, is that, 'the judgement of the dead,...measures a man's actions upon earth by the criterion of maat.' (1973:210). But Breasted suggests a more pragmatic answer. He suggests that the singer of the tomb song above found no hope in the contemplation of death, but suggests that it is well in any case to leave an enduring good name behind; not because it necessarily insures the good man anything in the world to come, but rather that it may stay in the minds of those who remain behind. (1970:187)

And it is necessary to be remembered by the survivors, as mentioned by the 'soul' in the 'Dispute over suicide', the survivors must remember to provide a mortuary service (ANET:405).

Although, as the peasant complained to the steward, '...you have not been sick, you have not run away or hidden yourself, yet you have not paid me for my goodly speech.' - you have not answered me, but he proceeds and makes his ninth and final approach to the steward and pleads,

'Do not rebuff him who petitions thee. So be not sluggish and publish thy speech and do (what is right) to him that hath done (it) to thee!'

As the steward made no response, the peasant delivered his final lines;

'Behold I make petition to thee and thou hast not heard it. Now I will go away and will make petition on thy behalf to Anubis.'

This is a threat to take his own life and to appeal to Anubis, the god of the dead. Then the chief steward, Rensi, sends two men to bring him back, and the peasant is shown all his petitions written out, on a new papyrus, which is then sent to the king. The peasant's claim is recognised and as compensation receives all the property of the thief, Thut-nakht.

Morentz proposes religion to form the basis of Egyptian culture and civilisation, in Literature, Art, Medicine, Government and Justice. Judicial officials bore the title, 'priests of maat.' (1973:12) The Egyptian believer would be, 'led by ethical problems to the divine lord of justice, who may grant or deny grace and understanding, and who sits in judgement upon him.' (1973:4)

The peasant first appealed to the man, Rensi son of Meru, the Chief Steward, but as he loses hope he looks to the gods. In his seventh petition he addresses the steward,

'Thou art the peer of Thoth, who judges without partiality.'

In his eighth petition he cries,

' Do justice for the sake of the lord of justice (Osiris).'

And in the ninth, his last plea,

'I shall go that I may appeal about thee to Anubis.'

The poor peasant knew the original cause of his suffering, he spent ten days trying to get his goods back from the thief, Thut- nakht. But with dramatic irony, the cause of his extended suffering was unknown to him: the desire of the king and the chief steward to hear his eloquent petitions. Although the chief steward apparently accepted the peasant's story, he was enjoined by

the king not to pass judgement, but to keep the peasant talking. From the start of his troubles to the end of his trial, the peasant looked for, and appealed to justice. From his first call on the name of the chief steward, which earned him a beating from Thut-nakt, through nine petitions to the chief steward.

In his first petition he opens with, ' If thou embarkest on the lake of justice, mayest thou sail on it with a fair breeze.' And he ends this plea with, 'when I speak mayest thou hear. Do justice thou favoured one...'

Being disappointed by the chief steward's lack of reply, from the second to the eighth plea he describes the lack of justice.

'Behold justice fares ill with thee and is thrust from its place.'

In the eighth petition he reaffirms his trust in justice, by quoting from the sacred writings, "...from the mouth of Re himself, 'speak truth, do according to truth, for that it is great and mighty and endureth.'"

Our story does present a more exciting source of the rules of social justice than , '*The Instruction of Ptah-hotep*', (Erman 1966:54) from which the peasant does quote as a threat,

'The leader, ought to have in mind the days that are yet to come.'

And the chief steward did not heed the instructions listed under, 'Behaviour towards petitioners,' (Erman 1966:59). [14]

> If thou art one to whom petition is made, be kindly when thou harkenest to the speech of a petitioner. Deal not roughly with him ....~~A petitioner liketh~~ it well if one noddeth to his addresses until he hath made an end about which he came... A favourable audience gladdeneth the heart.

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14. The author of this story did read the 'manual', as the 'threat to the leader' and ' the Behaviour toward petitioners' follow one another in the Instruction of Ptah-hotep .

The negative example presented by the chief steward in this story would have presented a powerful, subtle and more entertaining picture to the reading class of officials than a plain list of instructions.

This tale was not meant as a tale of suffering and justice in itself; Breasted suggests that the author was a pamphleteer on a crusade for social justice. 'The high ideal of justice for the poor and oppressed set forth in this tale is but a breath of that wholesome moral atmosphere which pervaded the social thinking of the Official class.' (1970:22)

It is indeed a step forward from the theme of unqualified pessimism of the feudal age, (2040 BCE), found in the tale of ' A man disputing suicide with his soul.' (ANET.:405) Wherein, because of a lack of justice in their world, they both, the man and his soul, agree to the path of suicide.

This story does show that justice was available to all citizens, from official to poor peasant, and that this justice was based on 'maat' sanctioned and ordered by the gods, as the peasant himself quoted, (above p.40)

'Thou art the peer of Thoth...

'Do justice for the sake of the lord of justice...

'I shall go that I may appeal about thee to Anubis.

2.4 A Comparison of the approach to suffering by the victims in three ancient texts.

Wisdom tradition is theoretically ancient, derived from the wisdom of experience gathered over the ages, 'We learnt our wisdom from grey haired men, men born before your father.' (Job 15:10), the wisdom of nature and life found in the secular approach.

Von Rad,(1962:418-453), as quoted by Nel, (2000:310), does distinguish a post-exilic wisdom movement with distinct efforts towards a theologising process which saw wisdom regarded as Yahweh's revelation,

'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.' (Prov.1:7)

Because in the '*sebayit*', or instruction of the Egyptian writings, parallels had been found to the Hebrew Hagiographa, Egyptian instruction was permitted to be called Wisdom Literature. Lambert stated, " 'Wisdom' is strictly a misnomer as applied to Babylonian literature," as he referred back to the religious theme in the Bible,while the Babylonian term 'wisdom' refers to 'skill in cult and magic lore ...in 'I will praise the Lord of Wisdom,' Marduk is the lord and his wisdom is skill in the rites of exorcism. (1960:1)

Terrien, (1954:879) however acknowledged the existence of 'International Folklore' and Gordon noted, 'an increased scholarly appreciation of the importance of wisdom thinking and literature among Israel's neighbours, notably in Egypt and Mesopotamia.' (1995:1)

Murphy, (1981:10) admits that the Babylonian similarities to Job and Qohelet are to be found in theme rather than in genre, I will allow the three works presented: the Egyptian, *Eloquent Peasant*, the Sumarian, *Man and his god*, and the Babylonian, *'Ludlul'*, to be labelled, 'Wisdom Literature' in their own right, not based on any comparison with Job or Qoholet.

Wisdom Literature is, the nearest thing to philosophy the Bible can show, this literature is less speculative than practical... some of it is merely prudential advice, and at best it canvasses the breadth and plumbs the depths of human existence, says Paul Sanders, (1968:3)

My qualification is based on Sanders' definition above of, 'practical...prudential advice.' And Gordis, (1965:54) notes that, 'Wisdom is the least national and the most broadly universal element in the cultural heritage of ancient Israel,' part of the International folklore. The three works have been approached under the umbrella of 'wisdom', which title should alert us to their possible didactic nature.

Egyptian wisdom is found in instruction, 'practical advice' based on experience and tradition with a central concept of '*maat*', justice.

In the example of the 'Eloquent Peasant', the instruction is presented in the form of a narrative. Within the narrative framework the peasant's eloquence is expressed in poetry.

The Egyptian Peasant is indeed eloquent. There are no plain words in his petitions but metaphor upon metaphor. In his first petition he believes in and expects justice. He is generous in his praise of the chief steward, who is presented as the epitome of justice,

'a leader free from covertness, a great man free from wrongdoing...

A friend of the oppressed and defenceless, 'thou art the father of the orphan, the husband of the widow, the brother of the divorcee, and the apron of him that is motherless.' The images of family show support and compassion. The peasant had been cheated by a man and he appeals directly to another man for justice, and for support and compassion.

In the Sumerian Wisdom text, the young man has trouble with those around him,' My companion says not a true word to me. My friend gives the lie to my righteous word.' His position in society is threatened, '(he) who respects me prospers not, my righteous word has been turned into a lie. Who

respects me not has shamed me before you.' The young man, over the next twenty lines, lists his personal woes, marked by the use of the personal pronoun;

'I am a young man...I entered the house...My herdsman...my companion...my friend...'

He does not seek justice, but his lament petition and praise is directed to his god, his personal god, to hearken to his moans and to protect him.

In the Babylonian, 'Ludul bel Nemqi' the speaker suffers many physical afflictions. Although he does mention that, 'I have become like a slave...the fury of my companions destroys me.' It is not other men who cause him to suffer, but there is a whole tablet of fifty lines (Tablet IIR) describing his physical ailments and his suffering. He looked all around for the cause of his suffering , found no answer, but Marduk, the Lord of Wisdom, brought him relief therefore he praises Marduk.

Lambert warns us that we shall, ' probably never know how far the written forms of thought were understood and acknowledged by the mass of men and women...it must be made clear that the only thought which can be recovered is that of a small group, presumably the intelligentsia of ancient society.' (1960:2)

Scribes writing for scribes, the bureaucracy, officials and royalty.

The Egyptian instruction, written as a father addressing a son, as also found in the Hebrew proverbs, 'Learn what I teach you my son.' (Prov.2:1), were most probably written for use in a scribal school for the children of the scribal aristocracy.

The tale of the Eloquent Peasant however, although instruction on the theme of social justice, could have been aimed at the official and not at his child. Presented as a story, the adult official could make his own discoveries of correct behaviour.

How does man appeal to man, especially when there is a wide gulf between them, between unlettered peasant and a chief official with the ear of the king? In his first speech the peasant got his speech right. He so impressed the chief steward that his words were repeated to the king. His formula; direct flattery and only indirect reference to his problem.

'O Chief Steward, my lord, greatest of the great, undertaker of that which is not and that which is.'

That is, doer of all things, what is and what isn't; surely made stronger by reversing the order and placing the negative first.

Because he is granted free access to the chief steward, or because he had already spent ten days arguing with the thief, Thut-nakht, or because the chief steward had made no acknowledgement of his first speech, the peasant ignores warnings to temper his speech and uses his eloquence to generalise the state of corruptness all around.

'The measurer of piles of grain cheats for himself. He who should lead according to the laws, orders robbery. Who then will punish meanness?'

There is no subtlety in this speech, and for his disrespect, the chief steward had two men 'attend to' the peasant with whips. The peasant however makes seven more approaches to the chief steward and each time asks only for justice. Although he accuses the chief steward of being blind, deaf and misguided, he still believes that he will receive justice from him.

'Do justice for the sake of the lord of justice.'

But this is not really an appeal to the gods, it is just part of the peasant's lecture to the chief steward on how justice should be carried out.

'Whether I shall come or whether another may come, thou shouldst address us with an answer. Do not address us silently. Do not attack him who cannot attack.'

These words follow the *'Instructions of Ptah-hotep'* in his 'Behaviour towards petitioners.' (Erman 1966:59 : and above p.40)

The peasant however was a victim of his own eloquence, and fortunately had won his case with his first speech. One of the teachings highlighted in the Egyptian 'Story of the Shipwrecked Sailor' is , 'the mouth of a man, it rescues him.' (Rensburg 2000:17) or else certainly he would have dug his own grave with his mouth.

The source of many of our Babylonian texts is the Edubba (Tablet House) of Nippur where the scribes and their pupils, 'had a virtual monopoly on learning,' (Lambert 1960:7) and were the only educated persons.
From the temple of Esaglia in Babylon, (the temple to Marduk), copied from an older version at Borsippa, there is a ' Prayer of Lamentation to Ishtar' (ANET.:384) Ishtar, the goddess of valour and war is addressed as the greatest of goddesses,

'O Lady, glorious is thy greatness, O possessor of all divine power…'

The supplicant describes his bitter affliction and prays for restoration of his prosperity,

> 'Pity for my sickened heart which is full of tears and suffering… let thy great mercy be upon me let those who see me in the street magnify thy name…'

The 'Lamentation to a man's god' follows the same path as the 'Lamentation to Ishtar.' They open with praise to the god:

'Let a man utter constantly the exultedness of his god.'

Then, as in both laments, the young man describes his condition and prays for mercy.

> 'Tears, lament, anguish and depression are lodged within me
> How long will you neglect me, leave me unprotected?'

The young man could not employ the eloquence of the peasant, as the god would see through mere flattery that would impress and turn a man,

> 'the righteous word, the artless words uttered by him, his god accepted…his bitter weeping was heard by his god, when the

lamentation and wailing that filled him had soothed the heart of his god.'

Kramer describes this work as, 'an edifying poetic essay composed, no doubt, for the purpose of prescribing the proper attitude and conduct for a victim of cruel (and seemingly undeserved) misfortune.' (ANET:589) My brackets; there are no stories of the wicked deserving punishment.

'The young man,' his innocence presumed because, 'he uses not his strength for evil' and undeserved... 'yet...bitter suffering...(to) him.' In spite of his innocence he suffered. Yet...in spite of his innocence, he 'confesses',

'My god, now that you have shown me my sins...I, the young man, would confess my sins before you.'

Our young man (lines 25 to 45) is lamenting his receipt of dishonour:

'I am a young man, a discerning one, yet who respects me prospers not, My righteous word has been turned into a lie.'

(again the poet uses 'yet' to show that which should be, is not.)

And of blame : 'My companion says not a true word to me,

My friend gives the lie to my righteous word,

The man of deceit has conspired against me.'

According to Kramer (ANET:589), this was not an occasion to resort to philosophical speculation and theological argumentation to seek to blame. The young man had accepted the words of the sages,

'Never has a sinless child been born to its mother.'

The gods have been upset and must be soothed,

'Let his lament soothe the heart of his god... my word is a groan... ....would bewail ... my lament will not cease. ...tears, lament, anguish and depression are lodged within me.'

There is wailing and lamentation but no gnashing of teeth. Man has suffered but accepts his lot. He does not use harsh or strong words, he laments. His

appeal to his god is purely emotional. Although he directly accuses his god of being responsible for his condition,

' You have doled out to me suffering ever anew,'

He does not blame the god,

'who respects me not, has shamed me before you...

The wicked has conspired against me and angered you...'

He laments, all his women lament, and he pleads,

'My god, you who are my father who begot me, [lift up] my face.'

He offers himself as a son. He looks for the attention a son could expect,

'How long will you neglect me, leave me unprotected ?'

And finally, 'his bitter weeping was heard by his god...

Who, 'turned the young man's suffering into joy.'

Pfeiffer in his translation of 'Ludlul', takes as his theme the first line, 'I will praise the lord of wisdom,' (ANET:434ff), while Lambert, (1960:33ff) calls his translation, 'The poem of the righteous sufferer.' The difference may be ascribed to what Lambert calls the flourishing 'pace of discovery', old finds have scarcely begun to yield their secrets before new finds turn up. (1960:v) Pfeiffer has but three lines of Tablet 1 whereas Lambert has over seventy. I will follow the above earlier Summerian work and take as the theme,

- when you suffer, praise the lord of wisdom.

The sense, or plot of the poem, Lambert divides into seven steps, and the poetry is found mostly in couplets:

i. Introduction with praise to Marduk.

'I will praise the lord of wisdom, the (deliberative) god,

Who lays hold on the night, but lets free the day.'

ii. The narrator is forsaken by his gods.

'My god has forsaken me and disappeared,

My goddess has failed me and keeps at a distance.'

iii. All men turn against him, from slave to king.

'My friend has become foe, my companion has become a wretch and a devil.'

iv. Every kind of disease afflicts him.

'Feebleness has seized my whole body,

Concussion has fallen upon my flesh.

v. His deliverance is promised in three dreams.

'A third time I saw a dream, and in my night dream which I saw…

vi. He is freed of all the diseases.

'My ears which were blocked like a deaf man's

He removed their wax and opened my hearing.'

iv He gives praise to Marduk..

'Who but Marduk restores the dead to life?

Apart from Sarpanitum which goddess grants life?

The narrator's one intention, we are told in the opening line, was to praise Marduk, which he does in the introduction and in the conclusion, but this was not all, as he explains;

'The day for reverencing the god was a joy to my heart; the day of the goddess's procession was profit and gain to me.'

And further, as a leader, 'I instructed my land to keep the god's rites, and provoked my people to value the goddess's name.'

Yet in spite of his righteous behaviour, 'When I look behind, there is persecution, trouble like one who has not made libations to his god.'

As Lambert suggests, the poem suffers from verbiage. There are ten lines describing what could have gone wrong, how he could have upset the gods, and ten lines confirming his righteous behaviour, and fifteen lines explaining, 'what is proper to oneself is an offence to one's god, and what in one's own heart seems despicable is proper to one's god.'

There is therefore no injustice, no-one is to blame, it is simply a case of misunderstanding!

'Who knows the will of the gods in heaven?'

The writer does not dare to accuse or to blame the gods directly, but, in mentioning the unnamed 'He' whose, 'hand was heavy on me...His fierce... was a tornado...,' the form is similar to the opening couplets which introduce the severity and the mercy of Marduk,

'Whose fury surrounds him like the blast of a tornado,

Yet whose breeze is as pleasant as a morning zephyr.' (I:5,6)

After he had received the prayers, 'the heart of merciful Marduk was appeased...he made the wind bear away my offences.'

And if appeased, he had been previously upset and therefore responsible for the suffering.

As with the metaphysical poets, our poet displays his scientific knowledge, and over 50 lines he lists the pains inflicted on his body from head to toe, neatly presented in couplets;

'My arms are stricken, which shackles my flesh,

My feet are limp, which fetters my person.'

Except where interrupted to include a selection, 'of the stock phrases of incantation literature.' (Lambert 1960:23) After Marduk's promises, delivered in three dreams, each part is individually healed over 50 more lines. Although Lambert uses the title, The Poem of The Righteous Sufferer, there is no investigation or suggestion as to the reason for the righteous suffering, beyond the traditional path,

'The diviner with his inspection of omens has not got to the root of the matter, nor has the dream priest, with his libation, elucidated my case.'

As the greater part of the text describes how Marduk restores his ruined servant, Lambert suggests that instead of the 'Babylonian Job', a better title for Ludlul could be 'the Babylonian Pilgrim's Progress.' (1960:27.)

These three works are all 'instruction' and their common theme is suffering. Suffering is used because it is common to all men.

In the Egyptian, 'Complaint of Khekheperre,' the poet says,

'Men rise up early every day to suffering.' (Erman 1966:109)

The title of the Egyptian work is presented as an oxymoron, an 'eloquent peasant?' How ridiculous, yet strange enough to interest a chief steward, to amuse a king and to instruct officials in the proper procedure in the execution of justice.

In Mesopotamia suffering was believed to be caused by demons and brought about by sin. Although sin, and therefore suffering was common to all,

'Never was a sinless child born to his mother.' (ANET:590)

our victims were presumed to be righteous. Unfortunately for them,

'What is good in one's sight is evil for a god.' (ANET:435)

The instruction in both cases, as given by Kramer, (ANET:589)

in cases of suffering and adversity, no matter how seemingly unjustified, the victim has but one valid and effective recourse, and that is to continually glorify his god and to keep wailing and lamenting before him until he turns a favourable ear to his prayer (or lament, or hymn.).

The three victims may all be suffering but are in different circumstances.

The Egyptian cheated by man appeals to man.

The Sumerian oppressed by men, appeals to his personal god to intercede for him.

The Babylonian suffers physically because demons have infested his body causing illness, disease and pain. Marduk chases away these demons, and he praises Marduk.

3.

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF JOB;
(Chapters 3, 29, 30, 31)

There is no simple classification of the book of Job.
I will therefore make a simple list of the obvious features of the book. Thematically it focuses on the suffering of a righteous man. This theme is contrary to the doctrine of retribution, which rewards good and punishes sin, as suggested in Deuteronomy and reinforced in Proverbs. Basically the book is included with the Wisdom literature. As literature, it tells the tragic story of the suffering of Job, but it is not a tragedy, as Ryken points to the happy ending which gives the book a classic comic U-shaped plot, from prosperity a descent to tragedy and a sudden rise to a happy conclusion. Other literary features are the dramatic element and the structured plot. The prologue and the epilogue of the book are formed in prose and the central dialogue in poetry. The pious proper person presented in the prologue and that person accepted and blessed by God in the epilogue seems very different to the defiant Job of the poetic dialogues. Many commentators have suggested that the author inserted his 'new' poem into an older prose folk story, (Terrien 1954:885). Yet there are many other examples of poetry framed within prose (cf. *The Eloquent Peasant*, ANET:405) It would be simpler to define when and where prose is generally used and to allow one author, who is already universally acclaimed for his poetry, to have composed the prose, perhaps based on an earlier tale (Ezek.14:14).

Prose is used to introduce history, to present facts, and by the author of Job, to establish a stable base. A base that could be related to, a tale set not too far away but a few hundred years earlier, perhaps in the time of the

patriarchs. (Authorship of Job ascribed by the Talmud (Babha Bathra 146) to Moses) (Tur-Sinai 1967:LXVIII).

The prose gives the facts, the poetry the emotion.

Satan poses the philosophic question, 'Does Job fear God for naught,' and from a philosophic point of view the work is a theodicy. (1974:109) The setting is somewhere, once upon a time, which suits the generalised universal theme, but the god of Job is the God of Israel addressed as אלוה, אל and שדי in the dialogues and in the prose prologue and the epilogue as יהוה or אלהים. (Janzen 1985:11).

In the prologue to the Book of Job, Job is introduced as being ' innocent of all possible crimes, explicit and implicit, personal and domestic, ethical and religious. He has the complete approval of God.' (Terrien 1954:886)

'That man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God and eschewed evil.' (1:1)

Terrible things happen to him, and the narrator, 'creates sympathy for his hero,' who makes all the correct responses. Of course we expect Job to be correct, for was not God's judgement ,

'There is none like him in all the earth, a perfect and an upright man.'(1:8)

Job, a man of great wealth, 'the greatest of all men of the east,' (1:3) was also blessed with seven sons and three daughters. He ruled his people with wisdom, justice and compassion,

> The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me: and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy.
>
> I put on righteousness and it clothed me; my judgement was as a robe and a diadem. I was eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame
>
> I was father to the poor. (29: 13-16)

And he feared God and scorned evil.

God presented Job's attributes to Satan, but Satan cynically suggested that Job feared God, not for nought but for the blessings that he enjoyed.

Satan obtains permission and destroys all of Job's possessions, his family and his health. But Job, who had received good at the hand of God, refused to be tempted by his wife, or by Satan, accepted what was bad and did not sin with his lips and curse God.

Satan did his worst but lost the wager.

After the test is over, Job is left on the ash heap – to be lifted out only in the epilogue.

Gitay suggests [15], that the Book of Job was deliberately placed next to the book of Proverbs, not only because they share the genre of wisdom, but that Job was used to stimulate debate and was needed to balance the formula of optimism for success found in Proverbs.

The righteous prosper and the wicked suffer, is the poetic wisdom of proverbs,

> 'The righteousness of the perfect shall direct his way: but the wicked shall fall by his own wickedness. ...The righteous is delivered out of trouble, and the wicked cometh in his stead.' (Prov.11:5,8)

This is what the friends 'religiously' quote, as Zopher lectured,

> 'Do you not know this from old, since man was placed on earth, that the exulting of the wicked is short.' (20:4,5)

and which Job himself believed. But Job discovered that the formula did not always work.

The book does not deny that God will punish wickedness and sin. Suffering from sin started with the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the garden, (Gen.3), but in the prose prologue we, the readers, are told that Job was not being punished for his sins, (Atkinson 1991:32).

He is not even being disciplined, as suggested by Eliphaz,

> 'Behold, happy is the man whom God reproves,' (5:17)

15.Gitay, Lecture UCT, 23.04.01.

The prologue invites us to place the problems of suffering in a wider context. How can one maintain faith in God in the face of suffering, and answer the Satan's question,

'Doth Job fear God for nought?' (1:9) (Atkinson 1991:32).

In the prologue and epilogue God's voice tells us that Job's approach was true and that of the friends wrong. I will therefore not ask , why do the innocent suffer, nor why do bad things happen to good people, but rather, 'what happens to good people when bad things happen?'[16]

Firstly the good man Job said, 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord.' (1:22)

Job receives news of four calamities in a row, one after the other. Gibson points out that Job had been seated and then arose, performed the ritual acts of mourning and then fell on the ground and worshipped, all deliberate acts. (1985:17).

He could not have understood what was happening, but God was in charge of his world, responsible for order, therefore he fell down and worshipped, saying, 'blessed be the name of the Lord' and using the name of the Lord three times to reinforce the blessing.

I think that Paul Scherer (Terrien 1954:917) only mentions the choice of meanings of :ברך , to bless, to make us reread the verses and to appreciate the poet's use of the word.[17]

In (2:15) the Satan suggests that this blessing would change, if he could touch his skin, 'he will curse/bless you to your face.' and his wife suggests

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16.Dr Robert Schuler, Larry King Live, 15.08.02

17. 'ברך' – bless. To have written 'curse God' would have been highly objectionable, therefore as a euphemism the scribal substitution of bless was made. The choice of meaning to be inferred from the sentence. (Tur-Sinai 1967:9)

just this,

'Bless/curse God and die.' (2:9)

but, in all this 'Job sinned not nor charged God foolishly.'

This did not suit the Satan, 'so Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of foot unto his crown...' and yet when tempted by his wife he says,

' What, shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips.' (2:7,10)

We, the readers, know that this is not a meeting out of justice, and this acceptance of his lot, Terrien labels, 'The Resignation and Faith of Job,' in that he refused, 'to ascribe to God any folly.' (1:22)

Terrien translates the word *'תפלה'*, given as folly, as tastelessness, but the dictionary (Langenscheidt's) also allows, impropriety – relating to behaviour,

'Job did not accuse the Deity of immoral caprice and misrule.' (1954:917)

This after loosing ten children, all of his possessions and even after loosing his physical health. '

And then Job's three friends came to consol him, and sat with him in silence. So far Job has maintained control by following traditional ritual, he tore his robe, he shaved his head, and in his faith he worshipped God. When his friends arrive they too follow the conventional gestures of grief [18],

'they rent their robes and sprinkled dust upon their heads towards heaven.' (2:12) and sat in silence for seven days, the statuary period of mourning for the dead.

When alone in his suffering, Job is silent. When surrounded by three sympathetic friends, Job feels that he can express his pain.

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[18] 'And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins and mourned his son many days.' (Gen 37:34)

'I was not in safety, neither had I rest, neither was I quiet, yet trouble came,' (3:26)

the friends answer through an impersonal theological scheme,

'Remember I pray thee, who ever perished being innocent ,'(4:7)

Gitay contends, (1999:241), that a major breach in communication has occurred. Job submits his own personal pain, the friends, wise men all, reply with formal theoretical solutions. They are not being comforters, they are being correct giving the written religious answers. They continue for three rounds of speeches, not really discussions, as there is no formal advancement or debate.

Job becomes more and more frustrated as his friends accuse him of sin and invite him to repent,

'If thou prepare thine heart, and stretch out thy hands towards Him,'(11:13). Job does react to the speeches of the friends and he cries out for sympathy, 'Have pity on me.' (19:21). But Job has not answered their questions, he has not accepted their suggestions, therefore they continue with their lectures. Job no longer attempts to answer their accusations and his questions become directed to God.

Andersen agrees that the speakers are not trying to convince one another. (1976:97). Therefore after the introduction I wish to concentrate on Job alone in his suffering.

Not tempted by friends, family or the Satan, but his soliloquies.

Not replying to others but first exposing himself in chapter 3 as he asks, 'Why me? Why was I born?

Then, trying to add it all up in chapters (29,30,31), as he reviews his past and his present state and offers an oath of purity, his negative confession.

THE FIRST LAMENT.

Job. 3: 1 – 26.

Terrien divides Chp.3 of the Book of Job into three parts:
The curse (3:1-10); the query (11-19); the cry (20-26).
These steps follow those steps, recognised by the Social Psychologist, Towle, when disaster strikes an individual: Anger, query, and denial; lamentation, guilt and blame before acceptance, (1965:174) and a warning by Towle that behaviour may be erratic, as it is largely determined by the emotions. (Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome)
Chapter Three is not only the introduction to the poetic narrative, Habel asserts that Job's curse is an event which is integral to the plot of the story, (1985:102). Job is talking to himself, not discussing his situation with others so we are introduced to his feelings, which is not the quiet resignation displayed in Chapter Two. The example quoted by R.Akiba in Midrash psalm 26 is more apt;

The king (God) has four sons, one when smitten keeps silence (and suffers) the second when smitten kicks; the third when smitten prays, and the fourth when smitten says to his father, Smite me! Abraham kept silence, Hezekiah prayed and David said smite me, but Job kicks.
(Buchler 1967:165)
And then Job exploded…
His kicks stir his friends to action, they are not just miserable words of self-pity looking for sympathy. Job's curse, expressing his dismay at the misery of his life might be compared with that of the prophet Jeremiah, and his curse of his personal circumstances. First in Jer.15:10,

'Woe is me, my mother that thou hast borne me, a man of strife.'

And more particularly, Jer.20:14-18;

> 'Cursed be the day wherein I was born; let not the day wherein my mother bare me be blessed. Cursed be the man who brought tidings to my father saying, A man child is born unto thee…'

And Job's corresponding curse,

> 'Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night which said a man child is conceived.' (3:3)

Terrien describes Job's soliloquy as, 'a literary amplification of Jeremiah's cry of distress,' (1954:889). He calls Jeremiah's tone and form as, 'spontaneous, harsh and violent,' those of Job are solemn and sophisticated. The reason for Jeremiah's curse is his life of strife (15:10), the life of strife of a prophet of the Lord who receives word of coming doom and must pass on the message. In chapter 20:15,16 he curses the messenger who brought the news of his birth, just as he was ridiculed and scorned (20:8) when he proclaims the message of the Lord.

O'Connor uses the formal and material parallels between Job 3 and Jer.20:14-18 found in the form critical elements of 'the curse' and 'the lament' to identify Jeremiah's poem as describing his personal grief, (1988:78). Not grief for the doom of Israel, but as a curse and a cry of lament, ' Why was I born?', arising out of the misery of his life as a prophet. And this could be his only escape as God had told him,

> 'I chose you before I gave you life, and before you were born I selected you to be a prophet to the nations.'

Jeremiah knew he had been selected, God had told him, but in the dramatic irony of the book, Job did not know that he had been selected by God. O'Connor acknowledges that, 'literary dependence between these two passages cannot be established, although Terrien uses a comparison with Jeremiah to date the Book of Job to the first part of the 6th Century BCE, (1954:889).

Ryken describes the follwing elements which form the basic structure of a lament:

1.the invocation or introductory cry to God

2.the complaint or description of the crisis

3.a petition or supplication

4.a statement of confidence in God

5.a vow to praise God

these are the elements that may be found in the psalms, (1974:139).

Tur-Sinai warns particularly against making assumptions on the basis of similarities, because of the stereotyped fixed patterns found in the poetry which we do use to typify and identify the units. (1967:46)

Habel divides Job's cry into two primary units; a curse (3 – 10) and a lament (11-26). This structure is tabulated below:

The Curse.

A1. Subject of the Curse: Day and Night v.3

1.Curses on that day; vs 4,5

Six incantations summoning darkness and oblivion.

2.Curses on that night; vs 6,7,8,9

Three incantations summoning darkness and oblivion

Three incantations summoning barrenness and chaos

Three incantations summoning darkness and oblivion

A2. Ground for the curse; Misery – 'עמל'

The Lament

B1. Subject of the Lament; the why of Job not dying at birth. 11.

B1.1 The why of Job being raised as a child. 12.

C.1 Portrayal of the Land of Death as repose and rest.(נוח) 13-15.

2. The why of Job seeing the light of life. 16.

C.2 Portrayal of the Land of Death as freedom from turmoil.17.

3. The why of any sufferer seeing the light of life.	20.
C.3 Portrayal of sufferers longing for death.	21-22
4. the why of a sufferer having no direction in life.	23.
B2. Grounds for the lament.	
Turmoil , no repose or rest .	24-26.

אחרי־כן פתח איוב את־פיהן ויקלל את־יומו (3:1)

This line identifies the unit as a curse, but Tur-Sinai is not convinced with the legitimacy of Job's curse. (1967:46).The word used for curse means only 'to esteem lightly.' Jeremiah's words fit the classification of a curse;

ארור היום אשר ילדתי בו (Jer.20:14)

Tur-Sinai would agree with Terrien above, that Job's words are a 'literary amplification' of Jeremiah's; a poetic curse.

' Perish the day wherein I was born, and the night which said, a man is conceived.'

The day dies when the sun goes down, but this is no sunset as v.9 does not allow the day to be born, to dawn. The day must die, darkness replace light. Tur-Sinai quotes the Talmud (Niddah 16b) which says, 'The angel in charge of conception is called 'night'.' (1967:43)

Only the night would have been present when he was conceived, and that night too must perish – leaving nothing. The seven curses which shatter seven days of silence, Ceresko contends, is Job's frustrated attempt to overturn the sham of harmony in an orderly universe, to cancel creation. (1999:78)

Job has called for, 'his origins to be negated, invoked forces of darkness, and set himself against God.' (Habel 1985:102)

Job said, 'that day let there be darkness.' Job's words reverse the narrated action of creation (Gen1:3-5), God said, 'Let there be light.' Habel shows

the connections between Job's incantations – for that is the litany of his curses- and the creation account in Gen.1.

JOB 3	GENESIS 1
4a That day	5. The first day
Let there be darkness	3. Let there be light
4b. Let Eloah above not seek it	7. And the waters above the firmament
5a.Let darkness reclaim it	2. And darkness was upon the face of the deep.
	4 And God made a separation between The light and the darkness.
6.That night …let it not be counted in the days of the year, nor appear in any of its months	14.let there be lights in the firmament of heaven to divide between day and night
	And let them be for signs and seasons and days and years.
8 Let it be damned by those who curse the day, by those ready to rouse Leviathon.	21. And God also created the great sea monsters.
9. Let it hope for light that never comes.	15.Let them be for lights in the firmament of heaven to give light

In Genesis, in the beginning God created order; there was chaos and darkness, 'תהו ובהו וחשך', and God said, 'Let there be light.' God brought light and order to where there had been darkness and chaos.

And God saw the light that it was good.

And Job saw his life and it was not good, and he called for darkness.

Of the six curses on 'that day', the first is the most important;

'Let God above not have claimed it.' (3:4)

Tur-Sinai refers to Deut.11:12,

'A land which the Lord thy God claims...claims forever by giving it light.'

If God claims the day it will be light, and Job will be exposed, be born to suffer.

'When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy. (38:7)

but Job had no sons left and did not wish to see the morning.

Job has not enjoyed creation, he has suffered destruction. Destruction of his family, of his health, his wealth, his name, that is his standing in the community and he calls for darkness to blot out the day and night of his creation.

'Let darkness and black gloom stain it.' (3:5)

Janzen suggests that the meaning is here ironically reversed, the day of Job's birth is to be redeemed by night and darkness to obscure it from memory. (1985:62)

The cloud would act as a shroud of mourning on a day which should be joyful, as Jeremiah admitted, the tidings that a man child was born to him made his father very glad. (Jer20:15)

Of the degrees of the night, Driver says that 'צלמות' is the strongest word to express the idea of darkness. (1921:32) If the translation is taken as the 'shadow of death', he gives the meaning as, 'darkness as intense as that of the abode of death, Sheol.' Tur-Sinai explains that earlier translators, (King James Version) assumed the word to be a compound of 'tsel' – shadow and 'mot'-death (1967:53) It is the shadow of death that surrounds Job. Death which so overwhelmed him, that he fell down and worshipped instead of rushing to see if any one of his children could be saved.

In ' The Testament of Job', Job's wife, Sitidos, appeals to the three friends to let their retainers dig in the ruins of their children's house so that

she may recover their bodies and bury them, this after twenty years! (Par.39) While the 'Testament' only loosely follows the book, the author of the Testament, was directed by the book. And this omission by Job, of not looking to save his children, made such an impression that an excuse is sought for Job. He stops the kings from digging by explaining that God had taken the children directly up to heaven.

Our Job at this point is not of that opinion.

The culmination of fifteen invocations to darkness, summoning oblivion, darkness, barrenness and chaos, exposes Job to thoughts of primeval darkness- When the Leviathan roamed free in chaos, before God brought in light and order.

Driver explains that 'they who curse and ban the day' were those magicians who had the power to produce eclipses. [19]

An eclipse would represent a fearful darkness overtaking the day as Leviathon devoured the sun.

And the grounds for these curses, 'because it shut not up the doors of my Mother's womb, nor hid sorrow from my eyes.' (3:10)

Doors are normally shut to keep someone out, are here to be shut to keep someone in, to prevent his birth – so that he should not see sorrow.

When someone whom God acknowledges as being 'good and upright' starts cursing, there surely must be a reason. Yet it is only Habel, out of ten commentators who identifies 'עמל', his misery, travail, sorrow, as that reason.

[19.Thales of Miletus famously predicted (powerfully produced) the eclipse of May 28, 585BCE which ended the war between the Lydians and the Medes. He had learnt in his travels in Mesopotamia and Egypt, that the cycle of eclipses was 223 lunar months. The powerful magicians would have been astronomers. It is interesting to read this in December 2002, when South Africa is experiencing its first total eclipse in 62 years.] (Grolier,1965:64)

Driver translates the word as, mischief – especially when prepared by the wicked for others, and as travail, toil or labour. (1921:35) Andersen, who notes that it is not the night that could shut the womb, but that it was only God who shuts or opens a womb; looks at 'עמל' as possibly the trouble or labour of childbirth. (1976:105) Jeremiah too, did not wish to exit the womb to see 'עמל' – misery and sorrow. (Jer.20:18) His misery was because he was rejected as a prophet, or rather that the people rejected the word of God, and his sorrow is for Israel.

Eliphaz sees Job's misery as the evil which he reaps for his sins,

'Even as I have seen, they that plough iniquity and sow wickedness reap the same.' (4:8)

And Eliphaz of course would quote proverbs,

'He that sows iniquity shall reap vanity.' (Pro.22:8)

Habel points to Job's response to Eliphaz to describe his unwarranted misery. (1985:109).

'So I was given months of vanity (frustration) and nights of suffering were allotted to me.'(7:3)

But Chapter 7 is a response, the curse of chapter 3 comes before any accusations. The King James English translation has, 'nor hid sorrow from mine eyes.' (3:10) Surely the Job family have suffered sorrow. Job's wife, whose own health was not directly affected, saw so much sorrow that she called out for Job 'to curse God and die.'

Job does not curse God, nor does he curse his Mother or his Father, but he curses the day and night of his birth and his conception. He then laments the fact of his birth, the 'why' of his life, a life of sorrow without rest. Habel sees the 'whys' not as a typical complaint to God, as in a lament, but as an alternative way of expressing his curses against his birth. (1985:110)

'Why did I not die from the womb…'

Do not pass go, go direct to Sheol.

A place of darkness, gloom and death's shadow. A cursed place, 'now painted in glowing terms as appealing and comfortable,' offering rest and peace. (Habel,1985:110).

Andersen lists the progression of thought Job uses to escape life;

'He wishes that he had not been conceived; or if conceived, that he had died in the womb; or, if not that, that he had not been born; or, if born, that he had died at once; or since he has grown to maturity, that he might die soon.' (1976:106) In any event he must escape the misery of his present state. Both Habel,(1985:110) , and Gibson (1985:32) refer to Psalm 88, ' that bleakest of all the lamentation psalms.' Job's reason could be found in the verse;

> 'For my soul is full of troubles, and my life draweth nigh unto the grave.' (Ps 88:3)

and his hope as expressed in (3:13-19), 'then were I at rest.' Is found in ,

> 'Free among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave, whom thou remember no more.' (Ps 88:5)

The writer of the book of Job might have known Psalm 89 too. In (Ps.89:1) we find the Job of the prologue:

> 'I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations.'

While Job claimed the promises of David, (Ps 89:4), Bildad, in condemning his children, 'If thy children have sinned against him…', (8:4), echos the warnings given to David,

> 'If his children forsake my law…then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes.'(Ps.89:30,32)

as Job himself feared as he prayed for them,

'…and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all.' (1:5)

As the Satan complained of its protection, 'hast thou not made a hedge about him…' (1:10) and Job complained of it's restriction, 'Why is light given to a

man whose way is hid and whom God has hedged in.' (3:23), with God's hedge removed one is exposed, even as Job was;

> 'Thou hast broken down all his hedges: thou hast brought his strongholds to ruin. All that pass by the way spoil him; he is a reproach to his neighbours.' (Ps89:40,41)

And Job's hope for justice, his appeal to God is expressed in (Ps.89:14),

> 'Justice and judgement are the habitation of thy throne; mercy and truth shall go before thy face.'

And Job's hopelessness in his cry, 'Wherefore hidest thou thy face?' (13:24) is repeated, 'How long, Lord will thou hide thyself forever... remember how short my time is.' (Ps 89:47,48) Job points to the shortness of his life as an escape clause whenever he has invited God to take his life,

> 'Are not my days few?' (10:20)

But not at this point. He is not inviting God to take his life, he is bewailing the fact that, '...light is given to him that is in misery, and life to the bitter in soul.' (3:20)

Gibson notes the irony of the passage. Job is attracted to the 'quietness and stillness of a place that other men dreaded.' (1985:33)

'then were I at rest...' (3:13ff) with kings, counsellors and princes, the wicked captives and slaves. All are equal in Sheol, liberated by death itself. (Habel 1985:111) -'Free among the dead.' (Ps 88:5)

Verses 24,25,26 describe Job's state of unrest, and why he sought peace and rest, even in the grave:

24: Even before the threat (bread) my sighs have come and my roarings were poured out like water.

Tur-Sinai does not agree with the common interpretation of, my bread – לחם, but he asserts that the word is from the Aramaic, lughma- meaning threat or terror.(1967:67) [This would also be more suitable in (15:23),

'He flees before the terror.' – instead of he flees to seek bread.]

25: For that which I greatly feared is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of is come unto me.

Job feared God.

'And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all; for Job said, it may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually.(1:5)

Thus did Job continually, and throughout the book he mentions his fear:

9:34 Let him take his rod away from me, and let not his fear terrify me

13:21 Withdraw thine hand far from me; and let not thy dread make me afraid

31:23 For destruction from God was a terror to me…

26: I was not in safety;	'Behold he taketh away who can hinder him(9:12)
Neither had I rest,	'When I say my bed shall comfort me, my couch
Neither was I quiet;	shall ease my complaint, then thou scarest me with dreams, and terrifiest me through visions.(7:13,14)
Yet trouble came.	He breaketh me with a tempest and multiplies my wounds without cause. (9:17)

Job feels deprived of justice and of peace, and therefore sought the quiet of the grave , to escape the fear of fear itself. Tur-Sinai mentions that the phrase, fear of fear, פחד פחד, is also found in combination in Deut.28.(1967:68) Driver too, points to Deut 28:65,67 to explain Job3:26, as the anxiety, restlessness and constant fear which Israel will have faced in exile. (1921:40)

You will find no peace anywhere, no place to call your own; the Lord will overwhelm you with anxiety, hopelessness and despair. Your life will

always be in danger. Day and night you will be filled with terror and you will live in constant fear of death. Your hearts will pound with fear at everything you see. Every morning you will wish for evening; every evening you will wish for morning. (Deut.28:65-67)

This reference to Deuteronomy is very apt if we accept Tur-Sinai's dating of the book as early exilic (587-539 BCE) when the horror of war and the destruction of the Temple was still in the minds of the exiles. He further points to the influence of the Jewish religion on high placed persons in the Government of Babylonia and says, 'one of the first literary works intended to explain the ways of the God of Israel, also to gentiles, is the Book of Job.' (1967:XXXVI)

Or, if with Ceresko, (1999:68),we accept a setting in the post exilic period, to help us to understand the origins of the questions and issues with which the book deals from within the life and experience of the Jewish people. A period when, 'the returning exiles were afraid of the people who were living in the land.' (Ezra:3:3)

There is no single form-critical category to cover the book of Job, but individual sections may be classified. Habel, above, divided the soliloquy into two units;

The curse 3:3-10, and the lament, 3:11-26. Murphy, endorses Westermann's label which adds the two units to form a complaint, introduced by 'why' – . למה.

Westermann defined a complaint as a statement that describes personal, or communal, distress, often addressed to God, with a plea for deliverance. The description of the distress is characterised by vivid language and by the use of the question, why? (1965:glossary)

The section however fits no ideal definition. It has the question, why, and the vivid language. Yet there is no direct plea for deliverance from his suffering, unless it is to escape to the peace and rest of the grave. God,

Eloha, is only addressed in the third person. In a soliloquy we don't expect the second person, but this is only a soliloquy because God has been silent. Gitay sees (3:23) as,

'Job's desperate call to God, as...a cry for help.' (1999:243)

This is not the lament of a feeble man, but from 'the strong man', גבר, whose way is hid; one who had enjoyed God's presence but is now blocked off from God, hedged in or shut out. In 1:10 the Satan protests that God had built a hedge around Job to protect him. For comparison, Gitay refers to Gen.7:16; Noah, his family and all the beasts went into the Ark as God had commanded him, 'and the Lord shut him in.' , they were shut in to be protected by God.

Tur-Sinai , (1967:12), with respect to Satan's hedge of 1:10 , refers to Hos.2:6, 'Behold I will hedge up thy way with thorns.' A physical hedge to prevent man, or beast from getting through, but his translation of 3:23 is, 'To him whose way is hid (from God) and God has screened himself from him.' He uses the verb – sech- to screen, which is used 'especially of the cloudy curtain which God spreads between himself and man.' (1967:66)

And this is the cause of Job's distress, his lament, that he is shut off from God. The spectre of the loss of God's attention is so terrible to contemplate, that it would be better never to have enjoyed this, never to have been born even, rather than to have had and to have lost.

THE FINAL LAMENTATION.

Chapter 29,30,31.

That which was, that which is and that which should be.

Gibson quotes from Dante's Divine Comedy (Book iv)

> Nessum maggior dolore
> Che ricordarsi del tempo felice,
> Nella miseria.

(There is no greater sorrow than to recall a time of happiness in misery.) (1985:206)

And this describes Job's reminiscences of a time past, an age away.

In Job's opening soliloquy, a lament of despair and anger, he expresses a wish that his existence be cut off from God.

'Let not God regard it from above, neither let the light shine upon it.' (3:4)

But in his closing monologue, a lament for what has been lost, his first thoughts are of the influence God has had on his life:

> Oh that I was ás in months past, as in the days when God preserved me, When his candle shined on my head, and when by his light I walked through darkness. As I was in the days of my youth, when the secret of God was on my tabernacle. When the Almighty was yet with me. (29:2-5)

These lines express Job's personal relationship with God.

> "When the secret of God was on my Tabernacle.'

Andersen describes the nuance of secret – 'סוד', 'the secret of the Lord', as the intimate circle of acquaintances, 'those who stood in the counsel of the Lord.' (Jer.23:18)" And this fellowship he enjoyed at his dwelling place, his tent, not at some general shrine. (1976:231)

The lamp and the light (vs 3) are symbols of the blessing of God,

> 'For thou wilt light my candle, the Lord my God will enlighten my darkness.' (Ps.18:28)

God would guide, protect and preserve him, not in the days of his youth, but rather, חרף – autumn, maturity, a time of fruitfulness. (Driver,1921:199) The noun 'משל' normally refers to a proverb, but here, 27:1, the expression 'take up a 'masal'' is however a distinctive idiom which refers to more than continuing a discourse. 'The idiom is used to introduce...a formal public pronouncement,' the entire speech of Chp29-31, which culminates in the oath of Chp31. (Habel,1985:379,408) These chapters may be a monologue but are not a soliloquy. The friends are an audience, the public, but Job is addressing God directly, a cry to God and a complaint:

> I cry unto thee, and thou dost not hear me, I stand up and thou regardest me not, thou art become cruel to me, with thy strong hand thou opposest thyself against me. Thou liftest me up to the wind, thou causest me to ride upon it, and dissolvest my substance. For I know that thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living. (30:20-23)

Job first recalls the blessing he enjoyed, 'when the Almighty was yet with me.' (29:5) but now he feels deserted and denied justice.

Job's 'crying out,' Habel says is not a cry for help but, 'a formal pronouncement', 'a public appeal for justice and litigation,' which God has repeatedly denied him. (1985:421)

> 9:16. If I had called and he had answered me...
>
> 13:23. How many are my iniquities and sins? Let me know my transgressions.
>
> 19:7. Behold I cry out of wrong, but I am not heard. I cry aloud but there is no judgement.

These two sections highlight the difference in the relationship between Job and God, and how he perceives the relationship between God and he.

In his autumn days, mere months ago (29:2-5), he believed God was at his side providing a light through the darkness. He was blessed with his children around him, and an abundance symbolic of God's blessings:

'when my children were about me, when I washed my steps with butter, and the rock poured me out rivers of oil.' (29:5,6)

Tur-Sinai, (1967:411) and Habel (1985:409) both refer to Deuteronomy 32.

' he made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock.' 'He is the Rock, his work is perfect:' (Deut32:13,4)

Job was prosperous and content.

'Then I said, I shall die in my nest, and I shall multiply my days as the sand. My root was spread out by the waters, and the dew lay all night upon my branch.' (29:18,19)

Job was as the blessed man of Psalm 1.

'But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth his fruit in season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.' (Ps1:2,3)

And even when calamity struck –

'In all this Job sinned not nor charged God foolishly.' (1:22)

But three verses, some time, plus seven days later, Job opened his mouth and cursed his day. (3:1)

He cursed his day but did not curse God!

It is God's blessing, protection and presence that he remembers in 29:2-6. This blessing enhanced his status in the community (29:7-11). Habel is harsh in his interpretation of Job's words as he enlarges on the concept of the formal testimony (משל –29:1) and Job's ultimate goal to pursue litigation with God in court. He sees Job's remembrance as a speech of self praise as he extols his own virtues and achievements as an ideal ruler, and accuses Job as he, 'virtually usurps the function of God.' (1985:406)

As Job himself does in the presence of God,

'I will lay mine hand upon my mouth.' (40:4)

So do the Princes in the presence of Job,

'The Princes refrained from talking and laid their hand on their mouth.'(29:9)

His boast, 'they waited for me as the rain.' (29:23) he implies that he bestowed favours equivalent to God's,

'I will give you the rain of your land in his due season.' (Deut.11:14)

and like Moses, Job implies he has been in the presence of God,

'And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses; behold the skin of his face shone.'(Ex.34:30)

and Job talks of , 'the light of my face.' (29:24)

Andersen is more generous, and sees these lines not as boasting, but as a positive sketch of admirable conduct and life at its best which, with the 'negative confession' (Chp31), indicate the loftiest moral standards,

'...Job's review of his life is one of the most important documents in scripture for the study of Israelite ethics.' (1976:230)

Habel labels 29:7-10 , 'Remembrance of Past Honour.'

Job's status may be measured at the City gate by the esteem he enjoys in the community, shown by; 'the young men stood back, the old men stood up and the nobles were quiet.' (29:8-10) Job was acknowledged; not with the obsequious honour given to the rich, which he had decried in Chp 21:23,

'They spend their days in wealth and in a moment go down to the grave.'

But his reputation, was squarely based on solid achievement as a benefactor. (Andersen 1976:232) to the poor, the orphan and the widow. (29:12,13)

'I put on righteousness, and my justice clothed me as a robe and a turban.' (29:14) This is the central line of the section and the robe and turban could have been his robe of office when he sat as judge, as even today the robe and

wig identifies a judge. But he claims justice and righteousness were second nature to him, (לבש – I clothed myself in righteousness) as in Ps.132:9;

'Let thy priests be clothed in righteousness.'

Habel says Job is here asserting his consciousness of righteousness and justice and an understanding of judicial procedure, which has led to his complaint of injustice at the hands of God. (1985:410)

Job continues as saviour of the oppressed; eyes to the blind, feet to the lame and father to the poor while he crushed the wicked. (29:15-17)

In verses 11-17, 21-25 Job plays the role of an ideal ruler by administering justice with integrity, and with the royal connotation of the language in 21-25, Janzen, (1985:204), directs us to Psalm 72, titled A Psalm for Solomon:

'Give the king thy judgements O God, and thy righteousness unto the king's son. He shall judge thy people with righteousness and the poor with judgement.' (Ps72:1,2)

The righteousness and justice that Job exercises from 29:11-16 was a gift from God, part of the blessing 29:2-5, from,

'when God shielded my tent, when Shaddai was yet with me.' (4,5)

'He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor.' (Ps72:4)

and in Job vs.17; and I break the jaws of the wicked and wrested prey from their teeth.'

'For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also and him that has no helper.' (Ps72: 12)

Which Job claimed in 29:16. "I was father to the needy and investigated the case of the stranger.

We stay with Psalms as Job's private thoughts emerge in the middle of his recollections;

'My root was spread out by the waters, and the dew lay all night upon my branch. My glory was fresh in me, and my bow was renewed.' (29:19,20)

Verse 19 has been compared above, to Psalm 1:2 and the image is repeated in Jeremiah;

'Blessed is the man that trust in the Lord and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreads out her roots by the river.' (Jer17:7,8)

and this reward depends on his relationship with the Lord, which for Job was positive, he was in the right place, 'the Almighty was yet with me.'

That was the past, but now...

Job faces the present.

'But now they that are younger than I have me in derision, whose fathers I would have disdained to set with the dogs of my flock.' (30:1)

Verse 18 has stimulated some discussion with the translation of two nouns;

קנן – nest, and חול – as sand, phoenix, or palm tree.

'Then I said I shall die in my nest, and I shall multiply my days as the sand.' (King James)

'And I thought; I shall die with my nest (turned into) a nation, and I shall multiply like the sand of the seas.' (Tur-Sinai)

I have followed Tur-Sinai's argument, that Job, in the good times, thought that he would die at home with his family, with his nest, nestlings. (1967:415)

The sands are a symbol of a multitude, as are the stars, a multitude of offspring, of descendents, but not a multitude of days for man; for Adam was sent out of the Garden of Eden, 'lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat and live forever,'(Gen4:22) , with life renewed like a phoenix.

An ironic comparison with Abraham, who was told,

'Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them and He said unto him, So shall thy seed be.' (Gen15:5)

Told to an old man with an old wife and no children, and here as Job's former hopes for his future of ' a multitude from his nest.' But now childless.

The introduction 'but now', repeated three times, in verses 1, 9 and 16, serves to emphasise the contrast between Job's present state, and as he was in months past, 'as in the days that God preserved me.' (29:2) His position in society has been reversed, from respect of the noble to contempt of those labled contemptible.

The poor wretches scavenged for food, chewing on roots, were too weak to work, and were outcasts of society. (30:2,4,5) These were not the blind, lame and poor whom Job assisted (29:15,16), these were the children of fools. While we are enjoined to care for the poor:

'For the poor shall never cease out of the land; therefore I command you saying, thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor and to the needy in thy land.' (Deut 15:11)

But there was no sympathy for those classified as fools,

'The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good.' (Ps14:1)

And in Proverbs the wise and the righteous are blessed and the fool and the wicked are condemned.[21]

These outcasts have identified Job as one no longer 'preserved' by God, no longer attached to God, 'because he had loosed my cord.' (30:11)

'And now am I their song, yea I am their byword.'(30:10)

These worthless creatures now mock Job, in contrast to his previous state;

'When the ear heard me, then it blessed me, when the eye saw me it gave witness to me.(29:11)

The assailants of verses 1-13 change in verses 14-18 . The outcast rabble who jeered, and spat and tripped him physically, are superseded by the terrors of death who attack his soul;

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[21] Prov13:20. He that walketh with wise men shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.

'They came upon me as a wide breaking in of waters, in the desolation they rolled themselves upon me. Terrors are turned upon me; they pursue my soul as the wind.' (30:14,15)

His affliction changed from irritation to pain; (30:17)

'My bones are pierced in me in the night season and my sinews take no rest.

Verse 19 introduces the next level of confrontation, as God is introduced in the third person;

'He has cast me into the mire, and I am become like dust and ashes.' (30:19)

and Job repeats a previous accusation of the unfairness or injustice of God ,

'Yet shall you plunge me in the ditch, and my own clothes shall abhor me.'(9:31)

Job announces that he looks like the lifeless clay from which he was formed and the very ashes which marked his humiliation, which Habel sees as a forceful statement of his return to nothingness and loss of identity. (1985:420)

Job's repeated heartfelt cry is spoken directly to God in verses 20-23.

'I cry unto thee, and thou dost not hear me; I stand up, and thou regard me not.'

The same cry that Job has made in Chp 23.

'Oh that I knew where I might find him that I might come even to his seat.' (23:3)

Job is seeking justice and even confrontation with the Lord, but as in Psalm 10 his question is;

'Why standest thou afar off O Lord? Why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble?' (Ps10:1) In this chapter as Job describes his tormentors, not only does God ignore Job's pleas, He too is a tormentor;

'You art become cruel to me, with your strong hand you oppose yourself against me. You lift me up to the wind, you cause me to ride upon it, and dissolve my substance.' (30:21,22)

Job had been lifted up by God and has enjoyed the fruits of His blessings, but all that has dissolved, has been cruelly taken away. And there is an air of despondent resignation in the opening 'I know' of verse 23.

'For I know that you will bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living.'

Habel labels the 'I Know' introduction to chapter 9, the futility of litigation, 'I know it is of a truth; but how should man be just with God.'

Nevertheless Job perseveres and now contrasts his own treatment of others, given in Chp.29, with God's treatment of him.

Chapter 30	Chapter 29
25. Did not I weep for him that was in trouble? Was not my soul grieved for the poor.	12.I delivered the poor that cried.
26.When I looked for good then evil came to me; and when I waited for light there came darkness.	13.The blessing of him that was ready to perish Came upon me . I caused the widow's heart to sing
28.I went mourning without the sun I stood up and I cried in the Congregation.	23.And they waited for me as for the rain, and they opened their mouth Wide as for the latter rain
29.I am a brother to jackals and a companion to ostriches.	16.I was a father to the poor
31.My harp also is turned to	25.I chose out their way and sat chief

mourning and my organ into the	and dwelt as a king in the army
voice of them that weep.	as one that comforts the mourners.

Janzen also notes the dramatic irony of the imagery Job uses to show his isolation from society, his banishment to the wilderness,

'I am a brother to jackals and companion to ostriches.' (30:29)

But when the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, in the divine speeches of Chps 38-41, the wonder and greatness of God's creation is detailed almost totally in terms of the creatures of the wild, including the ostrich. (39:13-18) In the wilderness, beyond human society, Job is in that place where God centres his revelation of man's place in the total scheme of things. (1985:210)

'I made a covenant with mine eyes, why should I think upon a virgin.'(31:1)

This first verse appears so unconnected to the following verses 2 to 8, that Tur-Sinai suggests that it should be appended to the description of mourning at the end of Chp 30. ' in my distress how should I look upon a maid.'(1967:435)

But Habel has noted that Job has commenced his oath of purity with a declaration that he chose to govern the impulses of his life as a deliberate act. (1985:431)

'Thou shalt not covet.' Ex20:17

'Thou shalt not desire.' Deut 5:21

Maimonides said that there was no penalty of flogging for this negative command since no action is involved. Desire is in the heart alone. (Jacobs,1968:128)

Job knew this.

He was not waiting for desire to lead to coveting to lead to action to be judged by man. Job knew that God could see into his heart.

'Doth not he see my ways, and count all of my steps?' (31:4)
Commentators do not agree on the number of sins which Job denies. Janzen agrees with Gordis to 14 sins; twice times seven as, 'an emphatic way of signalling a complete catalogue for his oath of purity, as the verb 'to swear' – נשבע, is developed from the (perfect) number seven –שבע' (1985:213) Habel lists 11 sins, but Andersen expands on Gitay's statement that Job's speech is a desperate rhetorical appeal. (1993:141) Andersen explains that the list is neither systematic nor complete,

It was not drawn up by an articled clerk. It is a poem, recited by a miserable outcast on the city rubbish dump. It is Job's last passionate outburst and the author has given it an earnestness and torrential quality by composing it with a measure of incoherence. This effectively conveys Job's persistent indignation. (1976:239)

Andersen calls this final speech, an 'Oath of Clearance', in the form of a negative confession. Although these chapters, 29-31, are a monologue addressed to God, the audience of the three friends is still present. The confession is usually made in the interest of public honour, addressed to God in an appeal against human judgement. Job is however also appealing against God's summary judgement against him. The confession is set out with a conditional sentence, the protasis, containing the 'if' (אם) clause, and the apodosis containing the consequence or penalty. The penalty is not a community imposed fine but a God imposed form of poetic justice or 'lex talionis'. (1976:239)

In the RSV I counted 16 'if' clauses plus 4 'and if', plus 6 'or' clauses. These clauses do not follow the formal traditional pattern of the casuistic law, 'If I have done X then may Y happen to me.' They have been composed by a passionate poet in pain sitting on an ash heap. Habel identifies 'personal comments' by Job interspersed throughout that express his feelings on the sin or circumstances. I will not attempt to isolate or

identify each sin but will work within Habel's division of the chapter given below. (1985:430)

Chapter 31

1.Covenant Oath and opening challenge. 1-6

'I cut a covenant with my eyes...(1)

'Let him weigh me on the scales of righteousness.' (6).

2. Oaths on Impurity and Adultery 7-12

'If...a stain clung to my hands.' (7)

'...and I lurked at my neighbour's door.' (9)

3. Denial of Inhumanity to the unfortunate. 13-23

'Have I denied the poor their needs.' (16)

4. Denial of Avarice and Idolatry. 24-28

'Did I place my confidence in gold.' (24)

'Have I looked at the sun in its brilliance.' (26)

5. Denial of Vindictiveness and Hypocracy. 29-34

'Did I rejoice at my enemy's ruin.' (29)

'Did I conceal my sins like Adam.' (33)

6. Closing Challenge and Oath. 35-40.

'...behold my desire is that Shaddai would answer me.' (35)

'May thorns grow instead of wheat.' (40)

The first two sections, verses 1-12, I will take together and call the steps to adultery, which, being negative, have not been taken.

The steps are desire, coveting and action. The first step is not a negative confession, but a positive statement not to take that step, a covenant to deny desire. The consequence, of taking that step is given in v.3,

'Is not destruction to the wicked and strange punishment to the workers of iniquity.' The second step, that to coveting is given in verse 5,

'If I have walked with vanity, or if my foot has hastened to deceit,'

But the apodosis, the consequence here, is not a punishment but a personal comment,

'Then let me be weighed in an even balance that God may know mine integrity.'

It is what Job has been asking for, for God to weigh his righteousness on just scales. Finally the act of Adultery, which would depend on the first two steps having been taken. The punishment, to be imposed by the judges, is found in Leviticus,

'And the man that commits adultery with another man's wife, even he that commits adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.' (Lev 20:10)

For this deliberate act, which could have been avoided at any one of three steps, it is not sufficient for Job to offer up his wife to be taken by another. As Job explains, ' This is a heinous crime; yea it is an iniquity to be punished by the judges. For it is a fire that consumeth to destruction, and would root out all mine increase.' (30:11,12)

Habel refers to the prohibition of Deut 13:17 against anything forbidden, 'cleaving to the hand,' as used in Job 31:7 above, (1985:433), but the Poet may have found more inspiration in Deut 13.

This is not a suggestion that the poet copied from Deuteronomy but merely that the same language is used.

The theme of Deut 13 is the abomination of going after other gods (Deut 13:2).

We are charged,

'You shall walk after the Lord your God and fear him.'(Deut 13:4) but someone could cause you, 'to make you leave the way which the Lord your God commanded you to walk.'(Deut 13:5)

And Job states, 'If I have walked with vanity, or if my foot hath hasted to deceit; if my step hath turned out of the way and mine heart walked after

mine eyes.' (31:5,7) Any member of the family may be tempted to apostacy,

'Your brother or your son, or your daughter or the wife of your bosom.' Deut 13:6 and they would have to be put to death.

So Job offers up his family,

'...Yea let my offspring be rooted out,..., then let my wife grind unto another and let others bow down upon her.' (31:8,10)

It has ever been the complaint of the adulterous husband that his wife is to blame, she did not understand him. But if another committed adultery with his wife, she too would be liable for death! Habel notes that the punishment does not truly fit the crime, but it is not judicial, nor even poetic justice relevant to the crime, but the focus is, 'on the destructive evil inherent in the act.' (1985:434)

Therefore the 'sinner', Job, would be consumed by fire, 'a fire that consumes unto Abaddon,' even as the city given over to apostacy, 'you shall...burn the city and all of its spoil with fire.'

Although I gave count to about 16 'if' clauses above, there are only 4 'then' consequences – vs 8,10,22,40 – and 3 'others':

31:6. Let me be weighed in an even balance,' which is not a consequence but a test to prove his innocence.

31:11. 'For this is a heinous crime; yea it is an iniquity to be punished by the judges.' Which Tur-Sinai translates as for a 'crime of violation of a covenant.'

31:28 'This also were an iniquity to be punished by the judge; for I should have denied the God that is above.'

Two of the 'then' consequences and two 'other' consequences are found in the 'lust and adultery' section of the first twelve verses. The third 'other' consequence, v28, which, as v11, invites punishment from the judges, is that for the sin of adultery;

'If I beheld the sun when it shined, or the moon walking in brightness; and my heart had bee secretly enticed, or my mouth hath kissed my hand.' 31:26 Habel notes that the language describing idolatry has been used to describe adultery; 'If mine heart had walked after my eyes,..., if my heart had been deceived.' (31:7,9) and for idolatry in Deut 13; 'If your friend who is as your own soul, entices you secretly, saying let us go and serve other gods.'Deut13:6 Both adultery and idolatry are treated as moral ills on the same level to be brought before the judge.

The Denial of Inhumanity to the Unfortunate, is affirmed in Chp29 from,

29:12. 'I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him.' Up until 29:25. 'I chose out their way, and sat chief, and dwelt as a king in the army, as one that comforts the mourners.'
Our interest is focused on verses 13-15.

> If I did despise the cause of my manservant or of my maidservant when they contend with me; what shall I do when God riseth up? And when he visits what shall I answer him? Did not He that made me in the womb make him, and did not One fashion us in the womb? 31:13-15.

Job was prepared to entertain legal suits against himself, even from his slaves. Andersen also notes the equality afforded male and female, 'manservant and maidservant.' (1976:242)

Job who is anxious to meet God in court, seeking justice, needs to show justice to his servants, which Habel calls ironic as Job was introduced by God as, 'my servant (עבד) Job.' (1985:434)

In an age when slaves were considered mere chattels, Job expresses the Hebrew ethic in v.15, 'Did not He that made me in the womb make him, and did not One fashion us in the womb.' The word 'one' (אחד) does not only

serve to identify a common maker, but echoes the Hebrew epithet for God as one (Janzen,1985:214)

'Hear O Israel; the Lord our God is one.' (Deut6:4)

One should not be surprised at this point of view because the people of Israel were constantly being reminded,

'And remember that you were a servant in the land of Egypt.' (Deut5:15)

Avarice and Idolatry 31:24-28

In his discussions with the friends, Job seldom answered any accusation directly; Eliphaz urged Job to put aside his gold, and to make God his treasure,

'Yea Shaddai shall be thy defence and thou shall have plenty of treasure.' (22:25)

But Job denies any attachment to his possessions, which he has largely lost, and has acknowledged God as the source of his blessings 29:2-5.

Idolatry, verses26-28, is discussed above (p105).

The Denial of Vindictiveness and Hypocracy. (29-34)

In Proverbs we are enjoined,

'Rejoice not when thine enemy falls, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbles.' (Prov.24:17)

This is what Job professed to follow, but as Habel points out (1985:437) Jeremiah was unable to follow,

'But O Lord of Hosts that judges righteously, let me see thy vengance on them.' (Jer11:20)

and neither was David in his Psalms,

'Pour out thine indignation upon them, and let thy wrathful anger take hold of them.' (Ps.69:24)

Job was the perfect host. Like Abraham (Gen18) and Lot (Gen19), but the men of his tabernacle were not as the men of Sodom, who raped strangers in the street, as suggested by Pope and Tur-Sinai. (1967:445)

'Did men of my household ever say, may we never be sated with his flesh. No stranger ever spent the night in the street, my doors were open to the traveller.' (31:31,32)

Bread and flesh (meat) would be part of the hospitality offered.

Adam was not the most successful at covering his transgressions or at hiding iniquity in his bosom. In Gen3:8-12, Adam hid among the trees, but God called and he answered, God asked and he told.

Job's rhetorical question,

'Did I fear a great multitude or did the contempt of families terrify me, that I kept silence and went not out of the door. (31:34)

Job has already answered ;

'For destruction from God was a terror to me, and by reason of his highness I could not endure. (31:23)

Closing Challenge and Final Oath. (35-40)

'Oh if only I had one to hear me, here is my signature, let Shaddai answer me, Oh that I had the indictment written by my adversary.' (31:35)

The plea, 'If only' I could speak to God, has been expressed many times,

'Surely I would speak to the Almighty, and I desire to reason with God.' (13:3)

But he no longer wishes to reason, he wants a charge written down.

'Oh that my words were now written. O that they were printed in a book.'19:23.

Job is so sure of his blamelessness and righteousness that he would wear,'the book written by his adversary,' on his shoulder or as a crown, even as he had worn, 'the robe and turban of justice.' (29:14)

Job finalises the words he begun in Chapters13 and 14 where he accused God of watching over him, 'For now thou numberest my steps, dost thou not watch over my sin?' (14:16) and now he would be ready, 'I would declare unto him the number of my steps.' (31:37a) Steps, some of which are

numbered in Chapter 29 and 31, which God has been watching and would not have found sin. As Job declared, 'He also shall be my salvation, for a hypocrite shall not come before him.' (13:16), but now he could say, 'as a prince would I go near unto him.' (31:37b). Terrien acknowledges that many earlier commentators, including Driver wished the 'challenge' to end with v.37, and transposed vs38-40 to fit anywhere from after v.8 to between 34 and 35, but he points out that the author favoured the afterthought. (1921:1127). Janzen suggests that the 'primal imagery', of the Garden of Genesis 2-3, makes a fitting end to the words of Job. The paragraph deals with the responsible use of land, a responsibility to the owners and to the workers. (1985:215)

'If my land cry against me, or that the furrows likewise complain.' (31:38)

The land is personified as witness to the crimes committed on it. (Andersen 1976:245)

As Job cried out, 'O earth cover not thou my blood, and let my cry have no place.' (16:18) Which echoes the words of God,

'And He said, what have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground.' (Gen4:10)

Finally, Job resumes the theme of v.33 where he asserted that where Adam failed, he, Job had been faithful.

Now he calls the final judgement on himself, as in the primordial curse of Adam when expelled from the garden,

'Let thistles grow instead of wheat, and cockle instead of barley.' (31:40)

The words of Job are ended.

4.

A COMPARISON OF THE LAMENTATIONS OF JOB, THE MESOPOTAMIAN SUFFERERS, and THE EGYPTIAN PEASANT.

Egypt:	The Egyptian Peasant.	1991-1786 BCE
Sumerian:	Lamentation to a Man's god.	2500-1800 BCE
Babylonian:	Ludlul Bel Nemeqi	1600-1150 BCE
Hebrew:	Job, Chp. 3,29,30,31.	750-550 BCE

The Book of Job has been known for about 2500 years as the tale of righteous (צדיק) man who suffers. When, in the last hundred years, shards of clay and rolls of papyrus were discovered with stories of the sufferings of righteous men, [22] they were immediately given the titles that have been used above; the Sumerian Job, the Babylonian Job, and an Egyptian Job.

Because suffering is universal, there are indeed similarities in these works, but the differentiation, found over the spread of the 2000 years of their composition, is found in the aims of their authors, and especially their beliefs and relationship with their gods .

Frankfort said that as a civilization grows old, its basic values are in danger of losing their hold upon the individuals who participate in it. Scepticism, doubt, and indifference begin to undermine the spiritual structure which comprises the civilization. (1946:231)

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22. Samuel Kramer, *in History Begins at Sumer* (1952), introduces 'The First Job.'

He dates this scepticism towards all values, which negated the possibility of a 'good life', to the first millennium BCE in the Mesopotamian civilization. Postgate agrees that, 'the literature of early Mesopotamia reflects the population's keen awareness of the effects of a breakdown in social order.' (1992:295)

The general social climate, or *Sitz im Leben*, could also be a factor promoting and uniting these works. Breasted places 'The Eloquent Peasant' at a time of general depression and pessimism. (1970:43) The insistent theme of social justice, in the Middle Kingdom of Egypt, Wilson said, followed a time when, 'the established order of life had broken down and men were groping for new values.' (ANET:405)

The dating of Job could be pre-exilic or exilic, from 587 BCE, when the social situation, according to Deuteronomy;

'You will find no peace anywhere, no place to call your own; the Lord will overwhelm you with anxiety, hopelessness and despair.' (Deut.28:65)

Or if post-exilic, after 539 BCE, a period when, 'the returning exiles were afraid of the people who were living in the land.' (Ezra 3:3) and , 'the newcomers faced years of hardship, privation and insecurity.' (Bright 1982:365)

So arising out of periods of insecurity and suffering, come four works dealing with suffering. Suffering which could afflict any man and every man regardless of his behaviour before his god. And this was noted by those who dared to think, and to doubt.

These works are all monologues, which is why chapters 3,29,30,31 of Job were chosen. There is also the issue of justice, which Nel puts as , 'the connection between righteousness and an assumed cosmic order,' (2000:309) and although the protagonists do muse to themselves, the main thrust of their speeches is addressed to their gods. These conditions are stretched for the Egyptian peasant who is engaged in a dialogue with the

chief steward, but as he does not deign to answer, the peasant may as well be presenting a monologue, and the king, whom the chief steward represents, is the god-king.

2. **Job and the Sumerian.**

'After this opened Job his mouth and cursed his day…'

Chapter three, opening the poetic discussions, as found in (3:1 – 31:40), is labelled the 'Lament of Job ' by Terrien (1954:925).

The author of the Sumerian work describes his essay as a 'Lamentation to a man's god.' 'Lamentation' – an audible expression of grief. (Collins Contemporary Dictionary). Both men had experienced grief and were suffering.

Job's verse starts with a curse, the audible expression of his grief, the Sumerian starts with praise to his god, and this difference of approach is carried through.

The difference arises out of their different relationships with their gods. 'Job is no Stoic striving to be pure mind with no feeling. The Bible knows nothing of such dehumanising philosophy.' (Anderson 1976:100) Job had a relationship with his god, and this he took advantage of. Not addressing God directly, nor his friends, but crying out that both may hear. The Sumerian however had no assurance of how, or whether his god would react. His other problem was that he had three levels of powers to deal with; demons, personal god and senior god.

'The malignant sickness-demon bathes my body.'

It was the task of the personal god, to whom he now prays, to ward off these demons. The personal god also interceded on behalf of man, with the 'senior' gods such as Enlil, king of heaven and earth, who gave earthly kings their authority, and was represented by them.(Ringgrin 1973:55.)

'My herdsman has sought out evil forces against me who am not his enemy.'(line34)

(Herdsman = King, (Kramer,ANET:590)) The Sumerian is attacked by demons, ignored by his personal god, and accused by the king. He cannot afford to say wrong words, he does not curse his fate but rather weeps and groans a lament.

The Sumerian bemoans his present state, Job's curses are to prevent his present state from ever arising, to cut off his life at birth.

Someone who suffers a serious misfortune today might cry out, 'I wish I had never been born,' as Job does. But the poet allows Job nineteen verses to confirm it, from the night of conception to the rest of the dead.

Job calls out,

'Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, there is a man child conceived.'

Day and light identifies the presence of God, darkness and night the absence of God.

'He sends light to places as dark as death.' (12:22)

It is this darkness, the absence of God that he calls for.

'Let that day be darkness, let not God regard it from above, neither let the light shine upon it.' (3:4)

He does not want the presence of God, which would then allow him to die at birth, in peace, and not have to suffer a later absence of God from his life.

While Job curses to ban the presence of God, the Sumerian sings to,

'Let his lament soothe the heart of his god.' (line8)

But of his birth, he expands on the Sumerian proverb which complained,

'I was born on an ill fated day.' (ANET:173) and he says,

'On the day shares were allotted to all, my allotted share was suffering.'

And later he complains,

'My god, the day shines bright over the land, for me the day is black. The bright day the good day has [disappeared] (line68)

He mourns the loss of the sun and the light, and instead the presence of the blackness of suffering,

'Tears, lament, anguish and depression are lodged within me.'(line50)

The Sumerian suffers the darkness of being alone, the darkness of the outcast, while others enjoy the sun, 'for me the day is black.'

He first accuses and blames his god of being responsible for his state,

'You have doled out to me suffering ever anew…'

and then again as having failed in his task of protection,

'The man of deceit has conspired against me, and you my god do not thwart him,you carry off my understanding.' (line 30,37-39)

But once he has described all of his social woes, he directs his lament to his god. The next five stanzas all start with the same address, 'My god…'

'My god, [I would stand] before you…'

and the confession,

'My god, the - of destruction which I have…

"My god, now that you have shown me my sins…'

By repeating this opening he emphasises his submission to his god. And the plaintive cry, 'How long will you neglect me…' follows what is a common claim,

'My god, you who are my father who begot me…'(line96,99)

Job meanwhile seeks to escape from attention, to find peace with the dead in the earth.

"There the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary be at rest.' (3:17)

3.

Job and the Babylonian, Subsi-Mesre-Sakkan, of Ludlul Bel Nemeqi.

The theme of the trials of the righteous sufferer is presented with striking similarities in the Akkadian poem and the Hebrew Job, as listed by Pope; In both a prominent person, distinguished for piety and rectitude, is suddenly laid low by disease. Both victims, in varying degrees, question divine justice. Both give long gruesome descriptions of their ailments. Both are finally restored to health.(1965:LIX)

But there are also differences listed by Pope, ' The attitudes of the sufferers differ markedly. The Mesopotamian stresses his ritual piety, Job his ethical probity. The Mesopotamian is reluctant to charge his great god with injustice in direct and straightforward language, as Job does.;(1965:LIX)

All the shouting is over when Job makes his final statement, his peroration. In his final speech Job is alone. (Chapters 29,30,31)

The three friends may be physically present, but they have given him no help and he does not address them as he recalls his former glory, his present agony and his last protestation of innocence and integrity.

Terrien divides his remembrance of happier times into four sections:

i. The bounties of God's presence. (29:1-6)

e.g. 'my autumn days, when the secret of God was on my tabernacle.'29:4

ii. Satisfactions of social esteem. (29:7-11)

Eg. 'the young men saw me and hid themselves, and the aged arose and stood up.' 29:8

iii. Claims of righteousness. (29:12-17)

Eg. 'I put on righteousness and it clothed me, my judgement was as a robe and a turban.' 29:14

iv. The prestige of integrity. (29:18-25)

Eg. 'and they waited for me as for the rain.' 29:23.

But we can find similar examples in Ludlul;

Bounties: 'the benevolent angel who walked beside me. I:45

Social Esteem: I strode along as a noble. I:77

Claim of righteousness: To me prayer was discretion, sacrifice my rule.II:24

Prestige of integrity: The day of the goddess's procession was profit and gain to me. II:26

These sections refer to Job's reminiscences in Chp 29, but our similar divisions above cover the whole of Ludlul. We must therefore not label Ludlul a lament, but rather ' a psalm of thanksgiving.'

' O that I were as in months past as in the days when God preserved me, when his candle shined upon my head, and when by his light I walked through darkness.' (Job29:2,3,4)

. Job talks of 'when', the past, not with bitterness, nor even with longing but as a reminiscence of what has been lost: the remembrance of happy times shows no anticipation of more to follow:

'When the Almighty was yet with me...,' but he is not with me now.

'When my children were about me...,' but they are gone now.

'When I washed my steps with butter...,' but my material wealth is gone.

'When I went out to the gate through the city,

When I prepared my seat in the street...,' but now I sit in the ash outside the city.

In 'Ludlul', Subsi too is alone:

' My god has forsaken me and disappeared, my goddess has failed me and keeps at a distance... my protecting spirit has taken to flight, and is seeking someone else.' (I:43,44,46)

When God was with Job, 'when the secret of God was on my tabernacle.', he was accepted in society, young men stood back and the aged stood up,

'Unto me men gave ear, and waited, and kept silent at my counsel.' (Job29:21)

Princes and nobles acknowledged him. The poor, but eloquent, Egyptian peasant would have fared well with Job as his champion,

'I clothed myself with righteousness, and it clothed itself with me, my justice was as a robe and a turban...and the cause of him whom I knew not I investigated, and I broke the great teeth of the unrighteous, and from his teeth made him drop the prey.' (Job29:14,16,17)

Subsi, ' strode along as a noble...with lofty head,' when his 'benevolent angel walked beside him.' (I:45) He was a dignitary, a member of society, with a family and many relations, with friends, companions, comrades, associates, an intimate friend and other acquaintances. But now,

'my friend has become my foe, my companion has become a wretch and a devil...The heart of the king is enraged, the courtiers plot hostile action against me, and even my slave has publicly cursed me...my dignity has flown away.' (I:84ff)

And Job fares no better, the days of 'when' are past, and he must endure the 'now' of his present lowliness.

'But now they that are younger than I have me in derision...
they were children of fools and now I am their song.' (Job30:1,8,9)

The lowest levels of society, slaves and outcasts, recognise both Subsi and Job as men who have been deserted by their gods. God had deserted them, as Job explained,

'He has cast me into the mire, and I am become like dust and ashes,
I cry out to thee and thou dost not hear me.' (Job30:19,20)

And Subsi complained,

'I called to my god, but he did not show his face.' (II:4)

Although in Job 30:24 it is not clear to whom a hand is stretched out to for

help, 'he will not stretch out his hand to the grave…',
most do agree that a hand is stretched out (*yshelagh yad).* [23]
in Ludlul it is part of the rejection:

'My god has not come to the rescue in taking me by the hand.'

Not only is a helping hand not stretched out, the hand of god is raised against them.

Job directly accuses God;

'Thou art become cruel to me,
With thy strong hand thou opposest thyself against me.' (Job30:21)

And as Subsi quietly mentions,

'His hand was heavy upon me, I could not bear it, my dread of him was alarming.' (III:1,2)

For his final words, Job agrees with the three friends as to the formula applicable to the world:

'Is not destruction to the wicked and a strange punishment to the workers of iniquity?' But, Job asks,

'Doth not he see my ways and count my steps?'

Was God not watching, I have not been wicked.
Job procedes with a self examination, listing sin and retribution due.
If I had done this, then let that be my punishment.

'If I had lifted up my hand against the fatherless when I saw my help at the gate:Then let mine arm fall from my shoulder blade, and let my arm be broken from the bone.' (30:21,22)

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23. King James: he will not stretch out his hand to the grave, though thy cry in his destruction.

Tur-Sinai: Only let him not stretch out his hand against the ruin, when he cried out over them in his calamity.

Habel: I did not strike the poor, when they cried out to me in their disaster.R.S.V.: Yet does not one in a heap of ruins stretch out his hand, and in his disaster cry for help?

According to Terrien, Job covers all sins, explicit and implicit, personal and domestic, ethical and religious.' (1954:886) While Job insists on his ethical righteousness, the Babylonian sufferer mentions only his ritual deeds, (1954:881) Job's recital is conditional: 'If I had sinned, then…'
Subsi lists the negatives of those things which could have earned him disfavour, and the positives which he rather did.

'Like one who has not made libations to his god, …(who) does not engage in prostration… who has done nothing on holy days.'
And positively,

'For myself, I gave attention to supplication and prayer…the day for reverencing the god was a joy to my heart.'
Although he thought he did right,

'I wish I knew that these things were pleasing to one's god,' he sighs, 'Who knows the will of the gods in heaven?' (II:30ff)
While Subsi throws up his hands in defeat, Job, after his recital of what Gordis calls his , 'Code of a Man of Honour.' (1965:284) , has confirmed to himself the certainty of his innocence. His god is not the fickle Babylonian god, but the Almighty Creator and Judge of all. Terrien agrees that Job is not looking for mercy, he wants a charge sheet written out which he would display to the media,

'Surely I would take it upon my shoulder and bind it as a crown to me.' (Job31:36)
Job is not looking for a settlement out of court, but, as indicated by his friends,

'they ceased to answer Job because he was righteous in his own eyes.' (Job32:1)
But he was no longer talking to them but talking to God directly.
He, 'would declare unto him the number of my steps; as a prince would I go near unto him.' (Job31:37)

'The words of Job are ended.' (Job31:40) with this which Terrien calls his'Ultimate Challenge.' (1954:1124)

Yes, the subject is similar in both works. Ludlul has been called the Poem of the Righteous Sufferer, or the Babylonian Job. (Lambert 1960:21)

Yes the heroes were formerly rich and powerful men who fell from grace or were rather cast down. If they had not been heroic figures there would be no interest in their fall. If,

'they were children of fools, yea children of base men, viler than the earth.' (Job30:8)

They would have had nothing to loose and no lower to go.

Yes, of course they were both righteous men, we expect, and so did they accept that the wicked should suffer.

But their complaint is that they are not wicked.

They had done all that was required, for society and for their gods.

4. Job and the Eloquent Peasant

The text of the *'Eloquent Peasant'* consists of a narrative frame and nine poetic speeches. It is a serious disquisition on the need for justice, and a parable on the utility of fine speech. The dramatic irony that combines the two themes is given in the narrative. The poor peasant, having been robbed, presented his complaint to the magistrate who was so impressed by his eloquent plea that he reported it to the king who enjoined the magistrate, not to settle the case, but to keep the poor peasant talking. According to Lichtheim the tension between the studied silence of the magistrate and the increasingly despairing speeches of the peasant, is the operative principle that moves the action forward. The mixture of seriousness and irony, the intertwining of a plea for justice with the demonstration of the value of rhetoric, is the very essence of the work. (1973:169)

It is especially the framework of this tale that is similar to the book of Job. The prose narrative prologue and epilogue, with the central discourse in poetry; and the irony of neither man knowing the reason for his extended suffering, but both seeking justice.

Job, in his former position as magistrate, would have been would have been all that the peasant asked for in his opening praise of the high steward,

'For you are father to the orphan, husband to the widow, brother to the rejected woman, apron to the motherless.' (62-64)

Are met by Job's claims,

' I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me; and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy.' (29:12,13)

And the peasant's call, is Job's continuous plea,

Peasant: 'When I speak, may you hear. Do Justice, O praised one.' (69)

Job: ' Hear diligently my speech and my declaration with your ears. Behold now I have ordered my cause, I know that I shall be justified. (13:17,18)

Both Job and the peasant were righteous sufferers for they had done nothing to deserve their punishment, but became victims of an ironic plot because they were good. In Job's case it is piety that leads to suffering, 'indeed that exceptional piety leads to exceptional suffering.' (Clines 1990:68) For the peasant, his speech is so good as to have the king ask for more examples. But the most important feature for both men is, that in spite of their hardship and suffering, they still believe in Justice.

'Speak justice, do justice/ For it is mighty, it is great, it endures/

It leads one to reveredness.' (8th Petition 320)

And Job's cry for justice;

'Let me be weighed in an even balance, that God may know my integrity.' (31:6)

The balance is the Egyptian symbol of justice that the peasant calls on again and again;

'Does the hand balance deflect? Does the stand balance tilt? (149)

It is unthinkable that the scales of justice are untrue, and after he has likened the high steward to the balance, his word is justice;

'Your tongue is the plummet, your heart is the weight, your two lips are its arms.' (166)

Both God and the High Steward have infinitely more power than Job and the peasant.

How do you appease the creator of the universe, a god, or an official who has the power of life and death. [24].

To appease the gods, the Mesopotamians praised endlessly,

Sumerian: let a man utter constantly the exaltedness of his god.

Babylonian: I will praise the lord of wisdom.

The Egyptian and Job were in 'no win' situations beyond their control and depended on justice. The peasant approached the steward in the first place, knowing his reputation and confident of receiving justice. Even the disinterested magistrates were prepared to order the thief to replace the peasant's goods. The whole essay revolves on justice, and in each speech from the first, wishing the Steward well,

'when you go down to the sea of justice and sail on it with a fair wind.' (55) to the eighth petition where he quotes, (305,315),

'Do justice for the Lord of Justice, the justice of whose justice is real...this good speech which comes from the mouth of Re himself.'

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24. A Gendame at a road block in the Cameroons was told that the law he was citing, did not in fact exist. He replied, 'Do you have a gun? No? I have a gun, so I know the laws.' (The Economist, Trucking in the Cameroons, Dec.21 2002) (He was appeased with a bribe.)

Although the power of the Pharaoh/god/king was in theory absolute, he did not rule without regard for accepted standards, and it was his duty as king/god to uphold justice (ma'at) (Bright 1960:39) Nel explains that ma'at was an 'embodiment of that which should be the ideal and just dimensions of the prevailing order for all spheres of life,' (2000:315) for Government, religious practice, education, social and individual conduct. And the High Steward as representative of the king is called upon to exercise ma'at.

Job justified his position on the basis of the traditional perception of justice and righteousness, 'as the set ideal for society and personal conduct.' (Nel 2000:323)

'I put on righteousness as my clothing; justice was my robe and my turban.' (29:14)

The righteousness as found in Proverbs;

'The hope of the righteous shall be gladness: but the expectation of the wicked shall perish.' (Pro.10:28) Job was righteous, he expected justice. While Job has discounted or disregarded the accusations of the friends, that his suffering is a sign of sin, his campaign is not against the suffering of the righteous, Job's complaint is that he is being ignored by God.

'I cry unto thee and thou dost not hear me; I stand up and thou regardest me not.' (30:20) The reader knows that his suffering was not brought on by any lack of righteousness, but rather to answer the Satan's question,

'Does job fear God for nought?' (1:9)

David Clines suggests, perhaps facetiously, that Job's suffering is an exercise in causality, not according to the principle of retribution, 'nor in any dogma, but deep in God and his need to know the truth about humankind.' (1990:74)

But God did value righteousness, in Ezekiel the righteousness of Job is recognised

'Though these three men, Noah, Dan'l and Job were in it they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness said the Lord God.' (Ez.14:4)

The lack of righteousness on the earth caused the Lord to say,

'And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth and it grieved him at his heart.' (Gen 6:6) but because he was righteous, God saved Noah,

'The Lord said to Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteousness before me in this generation.' (Gen 7:1)

God saw Job, and he was a good and upright man. (1:1)

The similarity between Job and the eloquent peasant lies not in their suffering, but rather in their anticipation of justice from God, or his representative, the High Steward.

SUFFERING IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN LITERATURE. A REVIEW.

Unmerited arbitrary suffering, the concept of justice and communication with one's god are the common themes facing the Sumerian, the Babylonian, the Egyptian and the man from Uz.

The starting point for any comparison or understanding of beliefs and ideas from these four different times and places must be based on what we know of their religion and of their gods.

For Job and the Hebrew there was only one God who created Heaven and Earth, the sun and the moon, man and everything on earth and in sky.(Gen.1)

According to a list of gods found in the library of Assurbanipal, the Mesopotamians had more than 2500 gods. Senior among them, among

others were, Anu the god of Heaven, Shamash the sun-god and god of Justice, and Marduk, the city god of Babylon. (Ringgren 1973:53)

These great gods communed with the king but were remote from the ordinary man who could not deal with them directly. The young man appealed to his personal god who would intervene on his behalf.

The Egyptian found his gods in the sun, the Nile and in nature. Those mentioned by the peasant include, the sun-god Re, Osiris born of the Nile, and Anubis, who with the divine scribe Thoth preside over the judgement and weighing of the sins of the dead. (Breasted 1970:304) There were also minor personal gods, as the thief Thut-nakht said,

'would that I had some effective idol, (so that) I might steal away the goods of this peasant with it.'

To consider the concept of Justice, we can start in Egypt as the literary motif of the Eloquent Peasant is given as an example of a judicial complaint.

From the record of the 'Installation of the Vizier' we are told,

'Justice has been the traditional law of the Vizier's office since the time when the Sun-god, Re, ruled in Egypt.' (Breasted 1970: 245)

The first Intermediate Period, before the age of the Middle Kingdom, gave rise to the so called 'pessimistic literature'. This described the lack of Justice at that time as described in the 'Complaint of Khekheperre – Sonbu,'

'Righteousness is cast out, iniquity is in the midst of the council hall
The poor man has no strength to save himself from him stronger than he.'

In search of justice, one could complain to the gods, an inscription from 2700 BCE records of its patron,

'I never oppressed one in possession of his property so that he complained of it to the god of my city.'

If the god was not available, the king was the son of the god.

In the execution of justice, an inscription from the tomb of an ordinary citizen claims,

'Never was I beaten in the presence of any official.' (Breasted 1970:169) A claim the peasant could not make as the steward had him beaten for 'contempt of court.' The peasant was awarded the case 'with costs', as the property of the thief was confiscated and given to him.

For the Sumerian, created to serve the gods, man's first duty was to provide sacrifices in the temple. The gods in turn would provide services to the benefit of man. The laws of the state were meant to correspond to the divine ordering of the world.

The king, appointed by the gods, was responsible for law and justice and promoted honesty in dealing, the rights of the weak and truth and justice. The primary concern of justice was for social virtues. (Ringgrin 1973:43)

For the Akkadian, life was a gift of the gods, which the gods could take away as health and sickness was in their hands. Service to the gods was in ritual sacrifice and prayer and cultic festivals, this was the duty of the king, but all owed honour to the gods. Service, as described below, which if not delivered could have brought on the suffering described in 'Ludlul',

'to not offer libation to a god, ...to not invoke a goddess at meal time, did not bow his face, did not know reverence, who ceased prayer and supplication...'

In addition there were duties to his fellows and to the community,

'not to alienate one from another, not to use false scales, not to approach his neighbour's wife, not to shed his neighbour's blood.'

Although they had the early Laws of Urnammu, (2050 BCE), blessed by the moon-god, Nanna, and latter the Code of Hammurabi (ca 1700 BCE), (Ringgren 1973:40), pardons are sought not for specific sins or omissions , but are general,

'The sin that I have committed I know not.... my transgressions are innumerable.'

Sin which incurs the wrath of the gods brings punishment and suffering in sickness and misfortune as described in 'Ludlul',

'My friend has become foe...Debilitating disease is let loose upon me,
The *Alu*- demon has clothed himself in my body as with a garment.'

If one suffers, one has sinned and must appeal to the gods for forgiveness.

For Job, the community was involved in social justice, and he himself delivered justice,

'I put on righteousness and it clothed me: my judgement was as a robe and a diadem...And I broke the jaws of the wicked, and plucked the spoil out of his teeth!' (29:14,17)

Sins against man the community would punish, sins against God are what Eliphaz lays at Job's door, as a possible reason for his suffering,

'One who shakes his fist at God, is proud and rebellious,' (15:25)

In chapter 31 Job denies further sins against God, coveting, worshipping false gods, and cursing enemies. (31:9,24,26,29)

For punishment it is suggested,

> This is how Almighty God punishes wicked violent men, they may have many sons, but all will die by the sword. Their children will never have enough to eat. Those who survive will die from disease and even their widows will not mourn their death.

As a way to appease God, Job offered burnt offerings continuously, and God ordered Eliphaz and his two friends to sacrifice seven bulls and seven rams, and to get Job to pray for them.

God , Justice and suffering.

Some people enjoy blessings, some people suffer.

If I trip in the desert and break my arm, that is unfortunate.

If I trip on the steps of the temple after paying homage to my god, that is an injustice.

The acceptance of suffering as presented in these four works is determined by the relationship between man and his god.

Each one saw his suffering as an injustice.

The Sumerian had no direct line to the gods. He was not aware of his sins until the gods showed him. He knew he was vulnerable as he had said,

'Never has a sinless child been born to its mother.'

In accepting this doctrine, his cry is not of injustice. He has no expectations, just wailing and lamentations. His lament is a plea to his personal god to intercede on his behalf. His tears and lament continue until the god is appeased, and then he turns to praise.

The Sumerian work is a Hymn of Praise to follow a Lament of Suffering.

The Akkadian is confused. He does not know what is pleasing to his god, ('What is proper to oneself is an offence to one's god.') He obeyed the ceremonial rituals and gave attention to supplication and prayer, yet he who was a noble, became a slave to his people and to disease. He does not know the cause of his suffering. Neither the priest, diviner nor exorcist could diagnose the cause of his suffering. He does not believe that he has done anything wrong to incur punishment, but he does not speak of injustice. He believes his god will show mercy, and when Marduk does remove his suffering, he praises Marduk, the lord of wisdom.

Pope describes 'Ludlul Bel Nemeqi' as, a thanksgiving hymn for deliverance from distress and suffering.' (1965:LVI)

The Egyptian is robbed and he seeks justice.

He takes his claim to the High Steward and receives no answer. He cries out, injustice! The Egyptian is not praying to a distant god, he is face to face with a man, (a representative of the god-king). Although he is ostensibly ignored and rejected, it is a feature of the Egyptian justice system that a peasant may approach the High Steward, and that he continues to believe that he can expect justice.

The Egyptian tract is instruction, *sboyet,* for magistrates in the execution of justice through the eloquent words of a wronged peasant.

The story of Job is closest to that of the Egyptian peasant.

Job is robbed of his children, his wealth and his health, and he seeks justice. He takes his claim to God and receives no answer. He cries out, injustice! But he continues to believe that God will provide justice.

According to Andersen, suffering and human misery, '...is a problem only for a person who believes in one God who is all powerful and all loving!' He calls the book of Job an epic history of the relationship of man to God. (1976:64)

I have identified each work as arising in a period of social upheaval. Van der Toorn suggests that, as all the works also bear a Wisdom label, the social turmoil may be real or fictional, or from a recent past. The authors are grappling with questions for which the wisdom of the past has no answers. (1991:68)

In the category of wisdom writing we have professional scholars writing for a scribal elite. Although the existence of a scribal school in Israel has not been proved, Jehoshaphat, the recorder for David is mentioned in 2 Sam.8:17, and van der Toorn mentions Lennaires, who argues that the Book of Job was used in the schools as an initiation in rhetoric and wisdom. (1991:74) Such texts, as 'school books' would only have reached a relatively small audience and can't be taken to represent a broad opinion.

The Mesopotamian works are 'Lamentations of Suffering' and 'Songs of praise.'

The Egyptian is instruction, a 'case study' of suffering prolonged through deliberate procrastination.

The story of Job is no copy of any previous work. The Book enjoys similarities with all the tales of suffering ever written, and as mentioned above, we only consider the righteous sufferer. For the book of Job there are

more similarities found in the Bible, in Psalms, Proverbs and Deuteronomy than are suggested for all the outside sources.

Other authors and scholars have said; that the poem of Job is indeed a Jewish book, Tur-Sinai asserted,

'It's whole intention is to prove, by God's reply to Job, and also to the Gentiles among whom Israel is exiled, that ' יהוה ' is God.' (1967:LX)

Terrien states that for the most part, the book is a collection of poems dealing with the meaning of life and religion. "The book is an appeal to yield by faith to the grace of God.' (1954:902)

Habel believes that the creative literary work of Job, does not conform to any single traditional genre structure, (1985:45) and Pope identifies the various literary genres represented in Job as, narrative, dialogue, hymn, lament, proverb, and proverbial wisdom,' (1965:LXVI) and Tur-Sinai includes various kinds of smaller literary units, 'such as eulogies and prayers, benedictions and imprecations, a lamentation an indictment and a confession.' (1967:LVIII)

But finally he sees Job as a problem poem which attempts to solve religious philosophic question by debate. (1967:LVII)

However the central idea of the debate, the dogma of divine retribution, Van der Toorn states, was never abandoned by the civilizations represented, and are carried on to our modern works, (1991:75).

The good expect reward and the wicked are to be punished.

5. INTERTESTAMENTAL LITERATURE.

PSEUDEPIGRAPHA.

THE TESTAMENT OF JOB.

The Bible was canonized in three stages; the Torah around 450 BCE by the returned exiles under Ezra; Nebiim, the Prophets, at the time of the Maccabees around 160 BCE; and after the Roman destruction of the Temple, the Writings were accepted, closed at the Council of Jamnia 90 CE. At each stage there were 'religious books and writings which were not considered acceptable, would not be transcribed, would loose favour and eventually would be lost. The Septuagint, produced by the Hellenistic Jews in Alexandria, included a number of books, non-canonised, which have been preserved for us, by Augustine, as the Apocrypha or Deutero-canonical books. Some others were preserved in the canons of outlying communities, the Ethiopian, Coptic and Slavonic.

> But the last seventy books that you wrote are to be held back and to be given only to the wise men among your people, because these books contain a flood of understanding, a fountain of wisdom, and a river of knowledge. (2 Esdras 14:46,47)

Torrey, in *The Apocryphal Literature*, (1945:140) includes *the Testament of Job* among the 'hidden 70', but there is little in the book to warrant the above description.

The Testament of Job (T.Job), may be classified as Pseudepigrapha, books written with a false name, which refers to a collection of writings in the Hebrew and Hebrew-Christian tradition written during the period 200 BCE – 200 CE which- (a.) are usually written in the name of some ancient biblical worthy and are associated with a biblical book. (b.) Which are not included in the Hebrew Bible or New Testament, the Apocrypha or the Rabbinic

literature. (c.) Convey a message relevant to the time when the books were written. (Russel 1987:xii)

There were many books written in the form of a Testament following the style of the last words and blessing of Jacob (Gen.48) According to Nickelsberg, (1981:232) most Testaments follow the same basic outline:

A. Introduction
B. Narrative from the patriarch's life
C. Ethical exhortation
D. Prediction of the future.
E. Second Exhortation
F. The patriarch's death
G. His burial.

T.Job follows this outline but the narrative (B) fills most of the tale. Following the outline, the story begins with the ancient Job (248 years) gathering his ten children, by his second wife, around his sick bed. He recites his genealogy, as being of the sons of Esau (Gen.36) to give authority to the book, and then offers to tell, 'What the Lord did with me.'

He continues as Jobab, the pagan king, debating with himself wether the venerated idol, which was close to his house, could be the god,

'who made heaven and earth and the sea and our very selves.' (2:3)

Following his insight, the voice of the angel of the Lord comes to him at night and explains that the idol is the Satan, the deceiver. Job asks for authority to purge the temple and is warned that if he proceeds, Satan would rise against him, inflict him with misfortune, take away all his possessions and carry of his servants (he is not told that he will loose his children). But he is told that Satan will not be able to bring death to him and that the Lord would restore to him double his possession, his name will be renowned and he will be raised in the resurrection.

He proceeds, just like Gideon (Judges 6:27), Job took his servants and did the deed at night. Although prepared to face Satan, he did no wish to face the people of the town.

The next chapters list Job's possessions, and also define pious and correct behaviour through Job's deeds of charity: looking after the poor, feeding the hungry, not withholding wages and caring for widows and orphans.
As in the book, T.Job offers up prayers for his children who may have sinned, as it is easy for the sons of a rich man to be proud. The Testament offers two extra points, firstly, the children join in his ministry by serving at the tables of the widows, and secondly, offerings in excess of the required amount he gave to the poor and asked them too, to pray for his children.
After seven years Satan returned, destroyed his cattle and killed his children and incited the people to rise up and take that which was left. Job has no strength to stop them, but remembers what had been fortold by the angel, of the battle and of the reward. He explains how he was willing to loose his possessions to gain the promise. [25]
Then a Messenger comes and tells of the death of his children. He tears his garments and cries,

> 'The Lord has given and the Lord has taken away...
> Blessed be the name of the Lord. (19:2,3,4)

When in tears Job blesses the name of the Lord, Satan realises he has lost this round. Satan then approaches the Lord to obtain permission to attack the body of Job. Once Job had renounced Satan by destroying his idol and accepting God, he is under the protection of God and Satan cannot act without permission, 'but He did not give him authority over my soul.'
Satan wastes no time and Job is toppled from his throne, inflicted with a dreaded disease, and ends up covered with worm infested sores sitting on a dung heap, where he spends the next 48 years. Job does not only suffer the pain of his diseases but was stunned by the sight of his wife humbled in the

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25. cf. 'The kingdom of heaven is like this, a man looking for fine pearls, and when he finds one that is unusually fine he sells all he has to buy that pearl.' (Mat 13:45)

role of a maidservant to one he considered crude. But after saying rude things about those who used his wife as a slave, he resumed, 'his rational composure' sitting on a dung heap putting worms back in their place in his body, 'until you receive instruction from the one who commanded you.' This continues for eleven years, so Satan has not yet won. Next Satan attempts to get at Job through Sitidos, his wife. She is reduced to sharing her meagre food with him and begging for bread in the market place. As Nickelsberg points out, the roles are reversed from the first scene when Job had fifty bakers supplying bread to the poor, now his wife begs for one loaf.(1981:243) Satan, to whom Job gave a burnt loaf, makes her pay for three loaves by shearing her hair in public. Satan also taunts her with the same arguments used by the friends in the Bible,

'If you were not deserving of the evils, you would not have received them' (23:6) And the watching public chant the Lament of Sitidos,

'...she who used to have everything...now sells her hair for bread.'(25:1-7)

Satan follows her to the dung heap, and 'leads her heart astray' as she urges Job to, '...say some word against the Lord and die.' (25:9)

Job mollifies his wife and warns her against speaking against the Lord lest they loose out and become alienated from their promised treasure. He urges her to show patience. He then unmasks the devil standing behind her and challenges him to a fight. Satan cannot fight in the open and surrenders in tears as Job had shown perseverance in their fight, a pancration as Haas explains, a man-to-man combat with no holds barred, and no arbitrator, God has not intervened. Job had the stamina to endure, and Satan retires for three more years. (1989:125)

Job interrupts his story to exhort his children,

'to be patient in everything...for patience is superior to everything.'(27:10)

After twenty years on the ash heap his fellow kings come to visit him. They find it hard to recognise him in his situation and condition of poverty.

Then Elious (Elihu) wails the lament 'Where is the splendor of his throne?' Job replies, 'My throne is in the supra-terrestial realm, and its splendor and majesty are from the right hand of the father in the heavens. My throne is eternal.' (33:3,4)

Eliphaz is not impressed and threatens to leave, Baldas suggests that Job may be mentally deranged, and thinks so after he has worked out Job's answers, which present the argument found in the book of Job, but which have not really been worked out in the Testament.

The writer has tried to be too clever with his answers, although the answers given by Job are proper. He places his hope in the God who lives and ascribes his life, and all that happens to him to God, including his present situation.

Sitidos then comes to implore the kings to dig up their house to find the bones of her children, so that after twenty years they may be buried. Job restrains them, and after a prayer of thanks, shows them the vision of, his children crowned in heaven.

Sitidos thus satisfied, worships the Lord, goes home and dies. She is mourned by the animals and buried by the poor, and seemingly ignored by Job and the kings. After twenty seven days the kings are tired of arguing with Job, and Satan's three years of retirement are up. He prompts Elious to, 'utter arrogant words' against Job. But God then intervenes. The Lord speaks through a tempest and suggests that Job offer a sacrifice for the sins of the other three kings. Job appears to be miraculously healed and they all depart to his house for a feast.

Job who had been generous of himself had also been a great fundraiser. When he calls on his friends, after twenty years outside the walls of the city, they ask, 'what are you asking from us now?' Asking again after twenty years? And all he asks for is a lamb to clothe the poor who are naked.

And then the Lord blessed all his possessions and doubled them.

Job's final exhortation to his children is,

'...do not forget the Lord, do good to the poor, do not overlook the helpless, do not take wives for yourself from foreigners.' (45:2-4)

In the Bible, Eliphaz explains the last request to remain pure,

'Their land was free from strangers,(foreigners), there was no one to lead them astray.' (Job 15:19)

Job now divides his earthly possessions among his seven sons. To his three daughters he gives his heavenly possessions, protective amulets from the Lord, shining bands from heaven which had cured him and now allowed them to communicate with the angels.

Job dies, and his brother Nereos chants his eulogy.

'Woe to us today...who then will not weep for the man of God.' (53:1-4)

In T.Job we meet a Job who describes himself to his children as

'their father who exhibits complete endurance.' (1:3)

According to Haas, (1989:117), perseverance in suffering is Job's most characteristic quality, which is described as perseverance, endurance and patience. (ὑπομένω, καρτερία, μακρόθυμος)

Nothing is hidden from him, the dramatic irony found in the bible, of Job's ignorance of Satan's role, is missing. As Alter explains, with the Midrash approach the writer concentrates on underscoring a moral point and they spell things out, making things more explicit than the biblical writer intended. (1992:174)

In the Bible Job has faith that God's justice will prevail, that he will be found innocent and vindicated. But T.Job knows why he suffers and what he stands to gain, his task is to endure,

'like an athlete who spars and endures hard labours.' (5:8)

He does not cry to the Lord for justice or to be heard. He has been told by an angel of the Lord that the Lord will be just. That is sufficient.

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'like an athlete who spars and endures hard labours.' (5:8)

He does not cry to the Lord for justice or to be heard. He has been told by an angel of the Lord that the Lord will be just. That is sufficient.

He has also seen visions, not initially shared with his wife, of part of his reward, and which corrects and oversight in the book of Job, the fate of his children. 'And when they looked up they saw my children crowned alongside the splendor of the heavenly one.' (40:5)

T.Job's suffering is not a punishment for sin against God. He is not being tested by Satan.

Job asked for heavenly authority to destroy the idol of Satan, as ruler of the region he already had the earthly authority. He is warned that if he destroys the place of Satan, Satan will retaliate and destroy his place. His fight is directly with Satan, and victory through endurance will win him the crown. T.Job's reply to the warning and promise is,

'Till death I will endure and I will not retreat.'

Regardless of the promise and being sealed for protection by the angel, Job's declaration is that of a martyr prepared to die for his faith. Haas suggests that the angels call, and T.Job's declaration, resembles that found in the Christian martyria. (1989:122). He has denied Satan and accepted God, through the angel saying,

'My Lord who came for the salvation of my soul.' (3:5)

The patience of T.Job in persevering is an important factor as he claimed that he spent forty-eight years on the dung heap. Satan had patience and his attack came seven years after his idol had been destroyed. As T.Job shows the stubbornness and toughness recommended by the angel, he endures the next eleven years until Satan humiliates his wife and leads her to suggest that he says a word against the Lord and die. In his rejection of her suggestion, he says he has been seventeen years with disease and he urges her to be patient until, 'the Lord in compassion shows us mercy.' (26:6) Haas describes T.Job's patience not as passive resignation, but says it implies waiting for God's saving intervention, 'found on his hope in God.'

Sitidos queried this hope in her despair,

> 'Job, how long will you sit on the dung heap outside the city thinking, only a little longer and awaiting the hope of your salvation. (24:1)

T.Job has this hope because he has been given the promise of a reward, he could not stand up to the Satan's question, 'Does Job fear God for naught?' T.Job knows what he has done to incur the wrath of the power of Satan. He has been marked by the angel and has the promise that his suffering will not lead to death. He knows his future, that he will have his possessions restored twofold, and that he will be raised in the resurrection.

All this knowledge does not reduce the suffering that he has to face and the endurance he must show, but it does give him something to cling to and to hope for, hope in God…?

> 'Would you have it that by our speaking something against the Lord we become alienated from the great treasure?' (26:3,4)

When T.Job explained how his perseverance overcame Satan, his exhortation to his children is for patience,

> 'Now then my children, you also must be patient in everything that happens to you, for patience is superior to everything.' (27:10)

This would be good advice in the period 200 BCE to 200 CE, when Israel was occupied by foreign powers. A period of suffering to prompt a story of suffering.

6. THE CLASSICAL GREEK
PROMETHEUS BOUND

AESCHYLUS (525 – 456 BCE)

Aeschylus was considered to be the father of Greek tragedy as he introduced actors to the stage. He was possibly responsible for over eighty plays of which only seven have survived. The Greek plays presented at the Dionysiac Festival competitions were presented in threes. '*Prometheus Bound'* is the only play extant of the Promethian trilogy. Thomson, (1932:32) believes that '*Prometheus Bound'* was the first play, '*Prometheus Unbound'* the second, and *'Prometheus the Firebearer'* the third play of the trilogy which may have been the last written by Aeschylus between 458-456 BCE.

In '*Prometheus Bound*, the theme is justice, or injustice, in heaven between the gods. Humans are mentioned but not present, the nature of Zeus is questioned as fiercly as it ever was in any ancient pagan work, and a split between the divine powers is apparent. (Scully 1975:7)

A current theme of Aeschylus' work was guilt and punishment, and the first part of this trilogy ends with a violent storm which crashes Prometheus through the rocks,

'down into lightless Hades and the dead dark hollows of Tartaros.'

A most dramatic ending, with two instalments yet to follow.

According to Nicoll, (1949:39) the relation of god to man was ever paramount in the thought of Aeschylus. Man in relation to the universe, the universe ruled by Zeus.

Directed by Zeus, Prometheus had assisted in populating the earth with birds, beasts, fish and man. Man was given no intelligence and lacked the skills and beauty of the animals. To make up the deficiency, although Zeus had tired of them, Prometheus brought them arts and fire.

The sacred fire of the gods.

As punishment, Zeus had Prometheus chained to mount Caucasus for 30000 years. (To punish man, Zeus created woman.)

In the opening speech, Might, guard over Prometheus, declares that he must learn by suffering to respect the rule (tyranny) of Zeus. In Prometheus' first speech, his agony, apart from the physical pain, is,

'for my shame and dishonour...,' someone approaching he classifies as, 'spectator of my agony – with what purpose else?' (97,120)

He echos what Girad felt was a cause of Job's suffering, the fact that he was ostracized by the people around him,

'My brothers stand aloof from me.'(Job 19:13),'

'And now I am a laughing stock.'(Job 30:1)

and the feeling of a social outcast is echoed by the Sumerian and Babylonian

'When my acquaintance sees me, he passes on the other side.' (Ludlul 1:91)

One of the advantages that Prometheus enjoyed over Job, and shared with T.Job, was that he knew why he was condemned,

'The crime for which I pay ...for pitying man in preference to myself...Zeus resolved to destroy all humankind...I bestowed fire upon him.' (250-258)

His other advantage, a gift from his mother, Earth, is shown in his name, Prometheus which means the foresighted one,

'All things I foreknow that are to be, no unforeseen distress shall visit me.'

But what Prometheus shared with Job was a band of accusers,

Chorus: Dost thou not see that thou hast sinned. (276)

To which Prometheus, as good as Job, sarcastically replies,

'Easy for him who keeps his foot outside the mirey clay to give advice to one in trouble.' (280)

And Oceanus could easily stand alongside Eliphaz as a criticizing friend,

'Prepare to know thyself and change thy ways.' (325)

'Ay, thou wast born to teach thy neighbours wisdom, but not thyself.' (352).

The character of Zeus, directing his punishment, is commented on by all. Hephaestus says that the heart of Zeus is harsh, as is to be expected in someone new to power. And the chorus explain,

'For in his spirit is no pity. Inflexibly fixed on vengeance...till his heart have its fill of revenge. (175-7)

And revenge is why Prometheus continues to suffer. It is not a sentence of justice but a personal revenge. Satan hounded T.Job because of a personal vendetta.

At this early stage the feelings of Prometheus are not clearly stated because he says too much.

Chorus: Nay thou art bold...and too unbridled is thy tongue.' (194,5)

His most important complaint and hurt is of the faithlessness of friends, and he refers to Zeus. Ten lines later he admits his own faithlessness to Zeus, he acknowledges that he voluntarily defied Zeus,

'I dared to do it...I willed to sin...and I must bear the will of fate.' (250,280,105) but his objection, his outrage is at the extent of his indeterminate sentence,

'I know he is harsh and a law unto himself.' (204)

By definition the tyrant does not follow rules but makes his own laws. Prometheus has done wrong but there is no justice in his sentence. Prometheus must therefore show endurance.

For Job, taking his own life was not a moral option, although with sheer bravado he invited God to take his but, was quick to cancel the invitation by reminding God,

'Isn't my life almost over, leave me alone.' (Job 10:20)

Prometheus too invites death, to escape suffering and humiliation,

'O would the boundless abyss of the earth, bottomless Tartartus, where Hades doth welcome the souls of the dead, in invincible bondage my body were crushed.' (163-5)

But when the persecuted Io suggests ending her life, he explains the curse of his immortality as a god, 'who am by Fate appointed not to die.' His task is therefore to develop the gift of T.Job, that of patience and endurance. When Job was at his lowest point, he was able to say,

'I know that my Redeemer lives.' (Job 19:25)

and the Babylonian sufferer was able to say,

'I know the day on which my tears will cease.' (II:119)

Prometheus too expresses the hope of the sufferer,

'My day will come... (248)

'He'll soften, he'll calm down/ His blind stubborn rage.

He'll come to me as a friend,/ I'll love my friend again.' (280-4)

While Job had but one supporter, his wife whose own heart was weakened because of her own suffering, Prometheus has many, starting with his jailer, Hephaestus who did not have the heart to bind him, a kinsman, whom he identified through his mother. The Oceanids who arrive in chorus also offer sympathy,

'tears are springing to my eyes, thus to behold thy beauty by day and night blasted in these adamant shackles of shame and torment.'(150-2)

Oceanus too comes, drawn by kinship as Grandfather (though such relationships mean little to the gods) and as a friend. As a friend his speech is akin to Job's friends, but he does vow to approach Zeus and ask as a favour to have him released. Prometheus warns him off, he has seen first hand what Zeus can do, and has done to his brother Atlas, and to Typho now imprisoned under a volcano. His counsel is therefore,

'Save thyself as thou knowest how, and I will bear my sufferings until the heart of Zeus with spleen is surfeited.' (391,2,3)

His other supporters, the mortals who dwell on earth are far away, as Might gloatingly reminded him. After Oceanus departs, Prometheus is quiet for five brief strophes while the chorus weeps for him.

Prometheus explains that his silence is not caused by pride or obstinacy, both traits of his, but by,

'bitterness of heart to see myself so savagely outraged.' (456)

by those he helped to power. He is outraged by the injustice of the situation, but does not claim moral righteousness for himself. He delights to tell how he brought all the arts to man, but although he helped man he could not help himself. When the chorus suggest that he might be released and returned to power he nearly unveils his solemn secret, his hope, his key to escape, his foreknowledge of what Fate has ordained for Zeus, which he hopes to exchange for freedom. The chorus of youthful Oceanids, shocked by Prometheus' refusal to bow to Zeus, see him as an example not to be followed, 'thus indeed am I taught by the sight of thy hapless fate.'(570) and they promise never to be slow to offer burnt offerings and prayer to the gods. And their prayer is,

'Ne'er may I sin with my lips.' (551)

which we know is the mark of the righteous Job. And their hope for a long life springs from 'a clear conscience,' (556) (which Job hoped would allow him to approach God.)

Prometheus' next guest is the wandering maiden, Io. She was seduced in her dreams by Zeus, given cow's horns by his jealous wife, Hera, was herded by Argus, and chased around the world by a gad-fly. Io's plaintive cry is known to us from the Mesopotamian sufferers,

"How have I given offence that I am maltreated so?'

Prometheus reveals to her the course of her future wanderings, and suggests that his sufferings could only end when Zeus falls from tyranny.

This will happen when Zeus makes a marriage, which he could rue, to Thetis, whose son will be greater than his father. Prometheus' own deliverance will be by the hand of a descendant of Io, thirteen, or one hundred and three, generations to come.

Job swears, 'As God lives.' (27:2), and he knows that God is omnipotent. (42:2). In the Greek play, the Oceanids and Prometheus know that Zeus has 'overweening power' (421) but when they swear it is by Fate,

'O Fate all things fulfilling.' (920)

Prometheus waits on the invincible strength of Necessity, and he explains that the helmsman of Necessity is Fate (105). And Zeus himself could not alter that which is ordained by fate. Only Prometheus can save him from the fate of the curse of his father, Cronus. (974) Prometheus appears so spiteful as he spits out the fate of Zeus, that the chorus accuse him of making up this threat. (961) Prometheus explains that it is but fate, and then confident of the future, he expresses his feelings about Zeus,

'To me Zeus is a thing of no account...he shall not rule for long.' (973) This is the first time in over nine hundred lines that Prometheus has expressed his feelings about Zeus. He has called him a 'faithless friend' and has a bitter heart at the outrage of his sentence, but the sufferings of fair Io are enough for him to stop mourning his own misfortunes and to explain to the chorus, that Zeus, the tyrant of the gods is violent in all his ways,(763) (although Hera is responsible for Io's present woes) Prometheus, like Zeus has had his head turned by a pretty face. Apart from this he has not raged or spoken out until now, the Oceanid chorus are horrified at his boldness,

chorus: Hast thou no fear to hurl such menaces?

Prometheus: What should I fear predestined not to die. (966)

Some of the strength of T.Job was based on his foreknowledge that he was not predestined to die, and he consequently shared some of Prometheus' recklessness.

The Oceanids are ruled by their fear of Almighty Zeus, a fear of punishment, as they have seen meted out to Prometheus, and also seen by them the Titan Atlas, chained 'in fetters of adamant held.' (445) Job too fears the Lord, (1:1) but Job, and we, understand that fear to be respect and love.

The Oceanids fear that Zeus will devise greater punishment for him, which is signalled by the arrival of Hermes. As Job's comforters stir him up, so is Prometheus stirred up by the arrival of Hermes, who is only a messenger, but a messenger 'of the new tyrant of the gods.'(975) Hermes has come to ask the secret that Prometheus holds of the marriage that could upset Zeus. Prometheus is completely unrepentant, not that Hermes has come to offer any respite, only a demand that he instantly reveal the marriage.

Zeus as a god of power does not understand the art of negotiation. It was the cunning wiles of Prometheus that helped him win his throne.

Prometheus dismisses Hermes, counting him as an enemy. He does not blame him directly for his plight but says that he hates all the gods whom he served who now maltreat him.

As Baldas considered T.Job had become, 'mentally deranged,' (35:6) so Hermes thinks, 'Tis plain, most sorely is thy mind diseased.' (1009)

Prometheus does attempt to open negotiations,

'I would repay him if I owed him ought.' (1017)

but Hermes has no negotiating power. So Prometheus defiantly states that no torture could Zeus devise to move him other than release from his bonds. Which is what Prometheus promised in his first speech to the Oceanids. (190) Hermes then attempts to counsel Prometheus in the style of one of Job's friends, 'Take thought, consider, art thou helped by this.' (1030)

Prometheus refuses to bow to his now 'hated adversary' Zeus, and listens to Hermes describe how he is to be buried alive, just as he had invited death in bottomless Tartarus, and then brought out to have the eagle feast upon his blackened liver. (1056)

Although the description upsets the Oceanids who plead with him, to walk the path of wisdom,' Prometheus is unbowed as it is all, '(fore)known to him,' and his assurance that as a god death could not strike him. Uncharacteristically the Oceanids, who have always been discrete rather than valiant, defy Hermes request to stand back to avoid the thunderbolt from heaven, as they refuse to desert a friend, which Prometheus suffered from the other gods.

Prometheus' last cry, before thunder and lightening fill the stage, is to

'O heavenly Sky...thou seest the wrong that I suffer.' (1125)

So much like Job's cry to have a witness in heaven and to have his words recorded.

Thomson, in the introduction to his translation, (1932:6), recounts his dismay at finding the view of the Editors of his first copy (Sikes and Willson *Prometheus Vinctus*, 1912) was, that despite appearances to the contrary, Prometheus was in the wrong and Zeus was in the right. In a footnote Thomson quotes Schmid (Geschichte der Griech. Litterateur) who called Prometheus an 'impertinent reformer' who thoroughly deserved the name 'sophisthez' (sophist- given to specious arguments).

Scully (1975:11) confirms that authoritarians have emphasized with approval the punishment levelled at the rebel against the Supreme Authority. Thomson and Scully however agree on the facts. Zeus was a tyrant. Might attests to the 'tyranny of Zeus' in his opening speech. Prometheus denounces it, the Oceanids deplore it, and Oceanus is resigned to it. He fufills the stock definition of the Greek tyrant, who rules without law, and who planned the indiscriminate elimination of the human race.

Many religions condemn this temporal world – man is evil, but they swamp its badness in the alleged infinite goodness of some other – god is good; only very few arraign the ruler of the world for his tyranny! (Murray 1968:56)

Why did Sikes and Willson, above, consider Prometheus to be in the wrong, because…he admits,

> 'I willed to sin, I willed it I confess, my help to man brought suffering to myself.' (280

And this is what Elihu said of Job,

> 'This is what I heard you say, 'I am not guilty, I have done nothing wrong, I am innocent and free from sin. But God finds excuse for attacking me…' (33:8-11)

Job's cry in part is that his 'help to man' did not protect him from suffering. Prometheus' cry is against the injustice of his indeterminate sentence, because of his help to man.

7. THE BOOK OF JOB, THE TESTAMENT OF JOB, and PROMETHEUS. A REVIEW.

To compare these later works with the book of Job we have looked at three different stories of suffering and of protest, but there is no general conclusion to be drawn, rather three separate appraisals.
Job fought with God, T.Job fought with Satan, and Prometheus fought with everyone, not only Zeus. They all sought understanding and Justice (but on their own terms).

Job the righteous man of God lost everything tangible, possessions, family, friends and was left only with his faith, which was sorely tested because he feared that God was ignoring him. His speeches are a personal plea to God,

'Oh that I were as in months past as in the days when God preserved me.' (29:2) Even when he curses his birth day in despair, he is crying to God,

'Let that day be darkness, let not God regard it from above.'(3:4)

His character starts in despair and ends in despair. His negative belligerence, protesting his innocence, demanding justice, is largely a reaction to the lack of understanding from his friends. They purport to represent God, to know the procedure, mainly to know that sin begets punishment. Therefore when they don't offer him justice, Job cries to God, whom he has accused directly for his present condition. First humbly, with bowed head,

'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away,' (1:21)

and finally more cynically,

'You have become cruel to me: with your strong hand you oppose yourself against me.' (30:21)

The Testament of Job was not written as an attempt to explain why the righteous suffer. Russel suggests that its purpose was to give encouragement to its readers in a time of persecution. To tell the story of Job's amazing patience and endurance. (1987:60) He never falters for one moment, has the wisdom to discern the presence of Satan, and keeps his attention fixed on the final prize, his reward in heaven.

The Testament also attempts to correct, and fill in some of the oversights in the book of Job. It explains that Job's second lot of ten children are born to his second wife, Dinah, after the death of Sitidos his first wife.

There was no need to bury his first children, as they had been taken up to heaven, and in handing out inheritance, he first apportions all his earthly goods to his sons, as was the custom, and only then bestows heavenly gifts on his daughters.

T.Job has no direct relationship with God. He stands up boldly to Satan, he worships the name of God, he reaches for heaven, but does not speak to God. In answer to the concern of Baldas as to his mental stability, there is no accusation in T.Job's statement as to who destroyed his possession and inflicted him with maladies. He acknowledges that God was responsible, the same living God on whom he placed his hope.

It is difficult to relate the sufferings of Prometheus to that of Job or of T.Job, for Prometheus himself is a god. Although some critics may see him as disobeying his Lord, it is not difficult to be biased in favour of the 'champion' of mankind. The other important consideration is the difference between the pantheon of Greek gods and the one God of Israel . Job's Hebrew God is the Omniscient creator (26:5-14). The Greek gods had all too human failings, and the chorus of Oceanids explain that Prometheus' sentence and suffering was not justice, but personal revenge (175:7). Zeus is a tyrant and Job accuses God of nothing less than tyranny. But there is a

difference, Prometheus has little respect for Zeus, the others have only physical fear. Job's fear of God is respect.

Prometheus feels that he is unjustly sentenced, with foreknowledge that he will be rescued, and with immortality he cannot die. He has a secret to trade for his release, but both Zeus and he are too proud to bargain at this stage. A further problem of the play is that it only represents one third of the story so Zeus remains a tyrant, and Prometheus remains bound and unbowed.

8. MODERN WORKS

While scholars and critics have searched for similarities between Job and earlier works, there is no such problem with later works which have been inspired by, and are deliberately based on the book of Job; perhaps starting with the pseudepigrapha, '*Testament of Job*, ca.200 BCE, the 13th Century, '*Des Arme Heinrich*' by Hartmann von Aue, to Samuel Beckett's, '*Waiting for Godot*,' (1949) and Niel Simon's , '*God's Favourite*,' (1975.) The works to be considered here are Archibald Macleish's, '*J.B.* ', Peter Krummeck's '*Trials*, and *The Masque of Reason*, by Robert Frost. Radcliff Squires, (1969:80), describes the Book of Job as a 'terrifying drama,' which for all its 'happy ending' remains the most tragic of dramas because the happy ending is itself an illustration of the impotence of man to manage his own destiny or even to understand the forces which control it. Those who have used the story of Job have aimed to find 'happy endings' for their own tragedies, and their position in a tragic world.

MacLeish says there is always someone playing Job, and the character, Nickles, describes some of the thousands who qualified to play Job,

> Millions and millions of mankind / Burned, crushed, broken, mutilated, slaughtered and for what? For thinking / For walking around the world in the wrong / skin...

Krummeck, conscious of the human rights flouted by the laws of Apartheid in South Africa, in the 1970's, had first thought of having someone in the 'wrong skin' playing the role of Job. (This idea was set aside as being logistically unfeasible at the time.) (interview,20.06.03)

The wrong/ Skin, the wrong shaped noses, eye-lids: / Sleeping the wrong night, wrong city- /London, Dresden, Hiroshima. / There never could have been so many / Suffered more for lest.

Louise Brogan, in the *New Yorker* (April 1945), criticised Frost's work, saying that after six years of Worldwide slaughter and atrocity, he brings up the problems of Pain and Evil, but adds nothing to our insight on the subject. (Meyers 1996:280)

MacLeish faced a similar criticism for his list above, which refers to some of the atrocities and sufferings of World War II, but does not mention one concentration camp, or the Holocaust.

What the critics have perhaps missed is, though public offerings, these plays describe individual personal journeys. As indeed the individual Job, is no everyman, but a special, perfect Sacrifice.

9. ROBERT FROST 1874 – 1963.

Robert Frost was born in San Francisco in 1874. His father died when he was 11and his mother moved the family to Salem, New Hampshire. After High School, where he was class poet, he attended Dartmouth College for a few months and then tried his hand as a newspaper reporter and a cotton mill worker. He married at 21, and for the next two years helped his mother manage a small private school as a teacher. In 1887 he enrolled at Harvard but left after two years without a degree. (Harvard awarded him an honorary Doctorate in 1937.)

For the next ten years he was a farmer. He raised poultry, wrote poetry and occasionally taught. Then in 1912 he sold his farm and moved with his family to England to concentrate on his poetry. His first two volumes of Poetry, A Boy's Will (1913) and North of Boston (1914) were published in England. He returned to the States in 1914 and again bought a farm in New Hampshire. This, and because of the rustic pastoral themes in many of his poems, has him labelled as the farmer poet, the communer with nature, the observer of wild things. (Jennings 1964:8). Frost however, in spite of a suggested dislike of academic affairs was one of the first poet-in-residence at various Universities. (1917-20 Amherst College, 1921-23 University of Michigan, 1936 Harvard, 1939-42 Harvard, 1943-49 Dartmouth.)

Frost was damned or ignored by many critics, because of the opening lines of all of his Biographies, 'the most popular and beloved of 20th Century American poets,' and as recorded in a U.S. Senate Resolution in 1950,

> Whereas, Robert Frost in his books of poetry has given the American People a long series of stories and lyrics which are enjoyed, respected and thought about by people of all ages and callings and whereas, these poems have helped to guide America's thoughts with humour and wisdom setting forth to our minds a reliable representation of ourselves and of all men…

The tribute mirrors the public perception of Frost as a 'genial, witty and patriotic sage.' (Sloan 2003:2) His official recognition earned him four Pulitzer Prizes and over forty honorary degrees, a Congressional Medal and acceptance as the unofficial poet laureate. However, as he was never a member of any poetic or literary movement, his work was accepted, respected but ignored and the least criticised, according to Jennings. (1964:1). He has accepted labels, as rustic, traditional and homespun, but Jennings reminds us that Frost is far from being an unlearned man. If he chooses to appear as the simple country man who knows little of books, a farmer-poet, although he spent twenty years working in academia,

'it is because he likes at times to hide his real self behind this mask.' (1964:68)

If we accept the intelligence, perception and visual imagination shown in his other work, we need to acknowledge the obvious, but look for more. In his *Masque of Reason*, the critics have listed the obvious in referring to the very many allusions that appear in every second line in the opening scene. Meyers says that the literary references are heavy handed and add very little to the meaning. (1996:279) Of the bantering between Job and God, Squires accuses Frost of cheap fooling, God teases and Job kids. (1969:81)

In an interview with *The Paris Review*, Frost declared that every thought was a feat of association. (Jennings 1964:2) Therefore when in the opening lines of *A Masque of Reason*, Job mentions that the incense tree is on fire, Frost associates that fire with the Burning Bush from where God first spoke to Moses (Ex.3:4), from incense tree to Christmas tree, from incense to rosin burning, to the censors in which it was burnt, to those fashioned for the Byzantine Emperor Alexius as ornaments, to the pomegranates which ornamented Solomon's Temple, or the flaming scarlet flower of the tree, to the fire of paradise, and the birds of paradise and bird song, to the gold enamelled nightingales of the Emperor of China, and from birds in a bush back to the burning bush, from which God emerges. While we must agree with Meyers, (1996: 279) that this onslaught is more pedantic than

subtle and suggestive, taken as a whole this allusion could present the broad scope and timeless vision over earth as seen from Heaven. Parine quotes the initial reviews which appreciated the leaping thoughts, Mark Sharer in the *Atlantic Monthly* hailed it as ' a kind of ballet in verse.' *Time Magazine* praised the 'ruminative philosophic wit whose pentameters are salted with gentle satire and unobtrusive learning.' (2001:356)

A MASQUE OF REASON. 1945.

This work is labelled, 'A Play', but it differs little from Frost's narrative poetic dialogues. The aim of the play is to justify God's way to men, and to bring the biblical story of Job up to date with what Frost calls the 43rd chapter of Job.

The scene is set in Heaven, a 'fair oasis in the purest desert,' where Job and his wife, Thyatira, rest against a palm tree. God appears and pitches his plywood cut-out throne alongside of the Burning Bush. God apologises to Job for the trials he made Job endure to achieve His own ends. God thanks Job for the part he played in defeating the doctrine of retribution,

'My thanks are to you for releasing me/ from moral bondage to the human race.' While men had the free will to do good or bad, God had to follow them with reward or punishment.

Job then asks directly for the reason,

'Why did you hurt me so?' God's answer,

' as set forth in chapters One and Two,'

is that he was just showing off to the devil. An answer that fails to satisfy Job, an answer which he classifies as an excuse. Frost himself was not looking for a reason, he had accepted the irrationality of the universe. The satire in the masque was directed at the rationalism that 'characterised

modern thinking,' (Parini 2001:357) and found a reason for every happening.

When Job wonders about the third player in his life, the Devil, God summons him. But the devil is no longer a force to be reckoned with, and only says one line before attempting to drift away. He is dragged back by Job's wife for a final snap shot of the three players.

AN ANALYSIS.

The rolling associations made with the burning bush, out of which God is to make his entrance, sets a tone which is light hearted, but need not be condemned as trifling, or as Jennings suggests, frivolous. (1964:91) Geoffrey Moore warns us that Frost's poetry is deeper, and tougher than it seems. (1964:0)

Frost's heaven is not a Garden of Eden Paradise, it is an oasis in a desert. He saw Heaven as a lonely place, he asks in the poem ,

Lost in Heaven (1936),

'...where in Heaven am I?...let my heavenly lostness overwhelm me.'

The loneliness he describes in *Desert Places* (1936) is a snow covered bleakness but it does not scare him as he says,

'I have it in me so much nearer home

To scare myself with my own desert places.'

There is no God in this desert, or for him lost in heaven.

As Frost himself said, (quoted by Thompson),

'The background is hugeness and confusion shading away from where we stand into black and utter chaos.' (Jennings 1964:92)

With these thoughts of תהו and ובהו, the chaos without God, Frost introduces a very human god. Frost called himself an Old Testament Christian, and said

that the God he feared was the 'God of Israel,' a jealous god. So as not to arouse Him, Frost presents a non-fearful God. Job's wife says,

' I'd know him by Blake's picture anywhere.'

This is not just a throw away allusion, but in all of Blake's drawings, used to illustrate the story of Job, his wife is present with him, silent, but present. (Z.Gitay,1995:522, fig2,3,4)

God remembers Job without the benefit of a formal introduction, remembers him as, 'Job, my Patient,' not 'the' patient but mine. An admission that God used Job, as He spells out,

'I trust you're quiet recovered, And feel no ill effects from what I gave you.'

Job admits to a twinge of rheumatism and asks God if all Heaven can offer is an escape from the great pains of earth. God pushes the question aside to deliver His own important speech. As Frost noted earlier in his poem, *On Looking up by Chance at the Constellations* (1928),

'You'll wait a long ,long time for anything much/

To happen in heaven beyond the floats of cloud.'

God has delayed his thanks to Job for 1000 years because he didn't have the right words. He now has some of the rhetorically correct words as He includes Job as a partner and not as a victim, as He gives thanks, 'for the way you helped me,' and the inclusive we in ' 'twas a great demonstration we put on.' 'They' established the principle that man could not reason out any connection between what he deserves and what he gets. The doctrine of retribution which man fashioned from the covenant found in the book of Deuteronomy, a blessing for those who followed the law, and punishment for those who did not, was no longer fixed. God's complaint was that man had had the free will to do good or bad, and God had to run after him blessing or punishing or else suffer a loss of worship, but no more. And God has the right words to end his speech, a word of praise and a reward and promotion,

'You set me free to reign / You are the Emancipater of your God./
And as such I promote you to a Saint.

After this long (over thirty lines) serious speech by God, Frost can not maintain the mood. Job is less than exited as he accepts the accolade, and introduces his wife, Thyatira, to God. With Thyatira, Frost has an early campaigner for woman's rights. Perhaps this is apt as her last three daughters are mentioned by name, as few others are, and are included in a share of their father's inheritance. (42:14,15)

Frost lived in Salem from the age of eleven for over twelve years, the site of the infamous witch trials and executions of 1692. Rights for witches is not an altogether strange subject for him to include. In his poem, *The Witch of Coos* (1923), he gives the opinion that folks think a witch should be burned at a stake , or something. Job's wife's words are just a light hearted diversion, but Job reinforces the idea of women's secondary role, by suggesting that she go back to sleep and not bother God. God does answer her to make a few points. He maintains the right words of partnership, as He speaks of , your husband and I, who discovered that the discipline a man needed most was submission to unreason, just as Job had accepted his suffering. But Yvor Winter jumps on this line to accuse Frost of championing unreason. (Jennings 1964:115) If he cared to read a few more lines of words published in 1945, the middle of World War II for USA, he would perhaps understand Frost's reason for unreason; to make it easier for the soldier to accept orders without question.

Job was not a soldier, and he does not accept God's reasons for using him and asks straight out, 'Why did you hurt me so?'
Job does not want an afterthought, which is what he has received, but at least one 'beforehand' reason, not excuses trumped up for the theologists. He breaks his own reasons down to a doubt about the wisdom of having children –'after having had them!'

Ten of Job's children died.

Three out of four of Frost's children died.

The ancient stories of suffering dealt with above, we associated with times of suffering. Frost too had a time of suffering. Raymond Holden wrote that the emotionally battered Frost, 'identified with the biblical Job. In the ten years before publishing A Masque of Reason, first his daughter and then his wife of forty years died of tuberculosis and then his son committed suicide.(Meyers 1996:279)

Frost knew suffering and was looking for an explanation, but the God in his play admits that he was just showing off to the devil, 'as set out in chapters one and two of the Book.'

Job condescends and says that he does not mind, or rather that he 'must not mind.' Frost wrote the masque to underscore the conflict between justice and mercy that was central to his thinking (Parini 2001:357). In Job's acceptance he says to God, 'It was human of you,' and God then tries to explain in a human way,

'you must understand my provocation, the tempter comes to me and I am tempted.' Although Job is not in the mood for excuses, God does make the point that both the Devil's followers and God's followers, served for pay.

The Devil could not count on anyone, but God could count on Job. [25].

Frost, in not being able to work out a more comfortable solution, allows Job's wife to treat the affair as a jolly get-together, and has Job pose with God and the Devil in a snap-shot for the family album.

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[25] This necessary disinterestedness was not picked up by the writer of the *Testament of Job*, who allowed Job to be promised a reward in Heaven, which he held on to through all his trials.

ARCHIBALD MACLEISH. 1892 – 1982

MacLeish graduated from Yale in 1915 with an English major and then entered Harvard Law School to graduate at the head of his class in 1919. His studies were interrupted when America entered World War I during which he served first as an Ambulance driver and then as an Artillery Officer in France at the second Battle of the Marne, where the U.S forces suffered over 100 000 casualties. He was recalled to the States to act as an artillery instructor before he had a chance to bury his dead. In addition to his poem, *Memorial Rain* (1926), dedicated to his brother who died in the war, there were many poems,[26], which echoed the lines, which reveal uncompleted mourning,

'Many of us have died and are not remembered.' (*Men* (1930)).

After the war, and after graduation from Law School, he practiced as a lawyer for three years before quitting law to head for Paris to create poetry. His first volume of poetry, *Tower of Ivory*, had already been published in 1917. In Paris he joined the expatriate literary community which included James Joyce, E.E.Cummings, John Dos Passos, the Fitzgeralds and Ernest Hemingway.

MacLeish was an organised worker and he established a program of reading to develop poetic style and technique.

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[26] Men (1930); Immortal Autumn (1930); Lands End (1930);
Speech to those who say Comrade (1936); and even in his Pulitzer Prize winning poem, *Conquistador (1932),* there is a familiarity with death:

'Unknown names / hands vanished / faces
many gone from the day / unspeakable numbers
Lives forgotten / deeds honoured in strangers
That which I have myself seen and the fighting...'

He hoped to become an accomplished poet, and became rather an accomplished craftsman, as David Barber, in Modern American Poetry (1999:1) infers that he perhaps studied too well, for several of his long poems from his Paris period sound much like T.S. Elliot, Ezra Pound and other modernists. Johnnson, (1980:363) is more direct in his criticism in referring to the distracting influence of Elliot and Pound, as he writes on the same subjects and from exactly their point of view.

After his return to America in 1928, he worked as a journalist and editor on Fortune magazine from 1929 – 1938, while continuing to produce poetry. Although an early modernist, he rejected the modernist's separation from society and believed that poetry should address society, and he produced a collection entitled *Public Speech(1936)* which included the works*; Speech to those who say Comrade, Speech to the Detractors, and Speech to a Crowd.* He earned the scorn of the modernists for producing 'public poetry' that commented directly on social and political issues.

His stage and radio plays of the thirties, *Panic* (1935), *The fall of the City* (1937), and *Air Raid* (1938) aimed at a wide audience and were patriotically American and anti-fascist. (The Academy of American Poets, 2001:2) MacLeish argued that only poetry could provide a unifying cultural vision, but none of his formulations caught the public imagination. (Barber 1999:2)

He was however noticed by President Roosevelt who nominated him as Librarian of Congress (1939-1944). Other political posts followed; Director of information/propaganda in the Office of Facts and Figures (1941), Assistant Director of the Office of War Information (1942-1943), Assistant Secretary of State for Cultural and Public Affairs (1944) and finally as U.S delegate to UNESCO (1945-1946).

MacLeish then left politics and returned to private life and produced the volume of poetry, *Actfive and other Poems* (1948). According

to Barber, 'the hortatory activist stance of the thirties was gone,' replaced by disillusionment with the political world (1999:2).

MacLeish describes this change in the poem, *Geography of this Time* (1948)

'What is required of us is the recognition of the frontiers between the centuries. And to take heart: to cross over…

There are many such in the sand here —who thought tomorrow was the same nation as today !

The War had changed the world, and in *Actfive*, MacLeish was asking questions that could have been asked in the Book of Job,

'And I said / Who will give meaning to these broken stones these /

Broken bodies violated brains / Corrupted spirits shrivelled hearts?

And then, perhaps trying on the Satan mask of Nickles, who was to appear in J.B., he blames God:

The indifference of the skies…

Now man is murdered …

His monument the smoke of hate that stands

By day a cloud by night the burning of the lands.'

It is a very cynical voice that parodies the presence of God as a monument to man's smoking hate,

'During all their wanderings they could see the cloud of the Lord's presence over the tent during the day and a fire burning above it during the night.' Exodus 40: 38

Or perhaps he blames God's creation, man:

Who will give right to wrongs that death has done us-

That we ourselves have done us worse than death?

In the second stanza of *Actfive*, which has as its heading'

'A masque of mummers on the bloody stage,'

the heroes of the state, science, industry and the Crowd all fail But ,

'The heart persists. The love survives.'

This is to be the final message of J.B., not the supremacy and love of God, nor the faith of man, but the love of man;

> J.B: You have our love to light it with!
>
> Blow on the coal of the heart.

The poem *Actfive,* as shown above, contained the seeds of the play, J.B.

In an interview with the New York Times, as reported in Time magazine, (Dec 1958:34), MacLeish explained that he needed an 'ancient structure' on which to build a contemporary play, and the Book of Job seemed to fit the modern situation, 'the despair and hope of this generation.' The drama of Job is his search for meaning behind his agony, and today man is still searching for meaning behind his own agony. While Job's comforters undertook to persuade him that he was guilty, today we are told that guilt is impossible, everything is determined by economic necessity, or we were damned before we started. We attempt to justify the inexplicable misery of the world, the psychiatrists say, by taking the guilt upon ourselves- even as Job tried when he said; 'Show me my guilt, O God.' (13:23)

Our comforters are less comfortable than Job's, if we cannot even be guilty then there are no reasons. (Dec 1958:34)

In a Time magazine interview, MacLeish gave his explanation of why God delivered an innocent Job into Satan's hands.

> God staked his supremacy as God upon man's fortitude and love. 'man depends on God for all things, God depends on man for one. Without man's love, God does not exist as God, only as creator. Not even God can command love. It is a free gift or nothing. And it is most itself, most free, when it is offered in spite of suffering, of injustice and of death. (April 1959:45)

The reasons MacLeish tendered in the playbill for the Yale production are:

'It is in man's love that God exists and triumphs: in man's love that life is beautiful: in man's love that the world's injustice is resolved.' (Dearlove 1976:486)

Tom Driver, the drama critic for the Christian Century, objected to this man made solution, saying that MacLeish raised the difficult religious question of justifying the ways of God to man, but then slid down from that high religious plane to a purely humanistic one. (Jan 7,1959:21)

MacLeish became the Boylston Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory at Harvard in 1949, and while poet in residence in 1953, wrote J.B. as a one-act radio drama for a B.B.C production in the form of an epic. Later a group of Yale University students adapted the dialogue for their theatre group. (Faith Kimweli, 2001:1)

After three drafts it became a three act play that premiered at Yale University on May 1,1958 and was performed at the World Fair in Brussels later in the year. Macleish then rewrote the play and served as consultant for the Broadway production, directed by Elia Kazan, which earned him the Pulitzer Prize for Drama for 1959. [27]

According to Time magazine, theatre critics praised the production, New York Time's Brooks Atkinson said, 'One of the memorable works of the century as verse, as drama and as spiritual inquiry…' Richard Watts of the Post wrote, 'Not only beautiful stage poetry but also a fine drama that is as emotionally moving as it is sensitively thoughtful.'(1958:39)

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27. The requirements to be met by the Pulitzer Prize winning drama are that it be an original US play demonstrating the educational value of the stage. (The American People's Encyclopaedia, 1965:355)

The religious critics, according to Dearlove, were more reserved in their praise; Samuel Terrien thought that J.B. presented 'modern man's reaction to the problem of evil without the category of faith in a loving God,' and Tom Driver found the play afflicted with a sort of theological schizophrenia, 'divided between its religious and humanistic dimensions.' (1959:485)

J. B. A play in verse.
Archibald Macleish, 1956, Riverside Press, Massachusetts.

It is suggested above (p.113) that the tales of suffering in the ancient Near East were written in times when those audiences could identify with the suffering protagonists. In 1958,when J.B. premiered, five years after Korea, twelve years after WWII, an American audience could identify with the afflictions visited on J.B.; a son not returning from the war; road deaths, drug driven murder and the 'bomb' that scorched his skin.

THE STORY.

Places of floodlit entertainment always look drab without the flood lights and the entertainment, and such a bare stage is the scene that MacLeish sets. The interior of an enormous circus tent from which the performers have left. To one side a table with chairs, to the other a ladder leading up to a platform. A trapeze platform, no, as Mr Zuss explains, it represents Heaven and the table, earth. Mr Zuss and Nickles are two broken down actors reduced to selling popcorn and balloons in the circus. They could be clowns with their sharp wit and rapid short lines. They provide the classical Greek chorus to the play when they don their masks to play the parts of God, (Zeus), Mr Zuss and Satan,(Old Nick), Nickles.

Dunkel warns of the difference between the individual study of the written work and the group experience of witnessing a performance in the theatre. (1959:65) The stage directions, in the written play setting the scene, mentions clothes left lying around that have the look of vestments of many churches. For the reader this acknowledges a 'religious' source in the book of Job, for the viewer the vestments provide but a splash of colour on the side of the set, their faded tatty description, for the reader, perhaps foreshadows the final speech which suggests that, 'the candles in churches

are out,' the existential 'God is dead' philosophy of Nietzsche, the general rejection by society of the 'living God' in favour of the concept of a moral god (Grolier,A.P.E.,Vol.13,1965:480). Dearlove refers to an earlier manuscript version (1976:484) [28], which has clown costumes scattered about the stage, while the backdrop of the circus tent is bedecked with colourful signs of the zodiac. For the Broadway version, the costumes were dispensed with and on the canvas there were just 'blurred designs which might once have been signs of the zodiac. While the clown suits would be acceptable in a circus tent, it would be more difficult to justify signs of the zodiac in a play with a 'religious' source.

The prologue which introduces Mr Zuss and Nickles is more than just a convention. Their characters are developed, or exposed, Mr Zuss, conservative, moral and narrow minded; Nickles, worldly and cynical, but as actors they know their lines, they know the plot, the drama of Job.[29]
MacLeish also introduces a supernatural dimension, to what is to be a play within a play, the masks have a persona and voice of their own, and sometimes speak for themselves and take over as God and Satan.
The chorus introduces J.B., 'Hast thou considered my servant Job.' J.B., wife and 5 beautiful children enjoy the bounty, which others call luck but which J.B. knows is Gods blessing.

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[28] I am using the first version of the published play (Houghton Muffin,1958), there is a later version (Secker and Warburg,1959), dedicated to Elia Kazan, which is a copy of the Broadway version. Where appropriate I will refer to the later version.

[29] The Broadway version could have had an extra dimension of a 'generation gap', with Nickles described as a 'gaunt sallow sardonic kid in tight trousers,' Mr Zuss as old, dignified by his carriage and his voice (a description which would have fitted Raymond Massey in the role (62years), but Christopher Plumer was hardly a gaunt kid.)

In the prologue Nickles blames God for the suffering J.B. is to face. In a facile, circular argument, Nickles leads Zuss to say that J.B. must suffer to praise and to see God, then as an aside, Nickles mentions that J.B. already praises God. He thereby implies that God is alone responsible for the suffering, ignoring the provocation of Satan; and Satan suggests:

put forth thine hand now and touch/ all that he hath
And he will/ curse thee to thy face.

The next scene is at least five years later, time being of no consequence in Heaven, the eldest son now being old enough to go to war. There follows a litany of disasters, instigated by Satan, and enumerated and spat out by Nickles:

One daughter raped and murdered by an idiot,
Another crushed by stones, a son
Destroyed by some fool officer's stupidity,
Two children smeared across a road
At midnight by a drunken child.

To add to these tragedies and atrocities, Macleish, with just a touch of the macabre, adds to the suffering, which makes J.B. greet each messenger with an outburst of anger:

a letter written by their son David after the end of hostilities;

J.B. It isn't/ true you little drunken liar/ it cant be true! It isn't possible!/ we had a letter from him...

The reporter who comes to tell of two dead in a car smash has a photographer along:

'How do I get the look a mother's face has maybe/ once in a lifetime: just before/ her mouth knows, when her eyes are knowing?'

The flashbulb going off incites J.B. to cry out:

You bastards/ I'll beat your god damned brains out.

J.B.'s wife, Sarah, is present at each announcement,

Sarah: We believe in our luck in this house/ We've earned the right to! We believe in it…All but the bad.

As the investigating Police ask more questions than give answers, J.B. explodes,

J.B (violently) Ask him! Has he found the parasol?

Sarah is even more involved when buildings collapse and their last remaining child, Ruth, is crushed,

J.B: Where was she (Sarah)

First messenger: Underneath a wall/ he heard her underneath

A wall/ calling…

Second messenger: Ruth!…Ruth!

For J.B. his anger is gone, replaced by desperate resignation,

J.B.: Sarah/ Even desperate we can't despair.

But Sarah has suffered enough without receiving any sympathetic acknowledgement from J.B., and she leaves him.

As J.B. does not despair or curse God, Satan calls for, 'skin for skin,' and God obliges, 'Behold he is in thy hand…'

Nickles opens the next scene with slick repartee which could be part of a 'sick' comedy revue,

Nickles: Never fails:/ Count on you to make a mess of it!/ …

Think of that Flood of yours – a massacre!/ Now you've fumbled it again:/ Tumbled a whole city down to blister one man's skin.

J.B. is left with his skin blistered

The comforters come but provide no answers. So J.B. calls out to God,

'God, my God, my God answer me.' And out of the wind He does. His body is healed, and in the last scene Sarah returns to him.

Lewis,(1970:120), suggests that Kazan got MacLeish to strengthen J.B. for the last scene. In the Broadway version, Mr Zuss comes down to counter Nickles who is urging J.B. to commit suicide, in the early version

J.B. just ignores Nickles and goes to his wife, but on Broadway, J.B. makes a discovery, he asks;

'Is that my wickedness - That I am weak?'

With this new understanding he gains a strength not displayed before, but it is a self-generated strength. He turns violently on Mr Zuss, to explain that he wanted Justice and declares that he will no longer accept God's explanations,

J.B: I will not duck my head again to / thunder – that bullwhip crackling at my ears/ Although He kill me with it.

His harsh strength is also shown in his dealings with his returned wife as he asks:

'Why have you come back again?' Inferring that she should not have returned.

In the 1958 version he asks:

'Why did you leave me alone?' Inferring that she should not have left.

To both Sarah's answer is the same, 'I loved you.'

In the 1958 version the play ends with Sarah, 'blowing on the coal of the heart' to light their way together. In the harsh Broadway version, J.B. appears to reject God to continue in his own strength,

J.B.: He answered me like the/ stillness of a star/ that silences us asking/ No Sarah no!/ we are and that is all our answer./ We are and what we are can suffer but/ what suffers, loves.

And that is the Broadway story, that man's love can overcome suffering, in spite of God.

Before 'J.B.' reached the stage in dramatic form, MacLeish delivered a sermon, in 1955, on Job. Then he stated that our task, like that of Job, was to learn through suffering to love, to love even that which lets us suffer.

(cf Luke 6:27) He was considering more than erotic love as he declared that it is in man's love that God exists and triumphs, in man's love that life is beautiful, in man's love that the world's injustice is resolved.(1969:286) Not all of these ideals made it to Broadway.

Allan Lewis classified J.B. as an 'excellent example of present day religious drama.' (1970:120)

It may be, but it offers little insight into the book of Job.

Ryken defines the book of Job as technically, having a comic U-shaped plot, 'events begin in prosperity, (1:1-5)descend into tragedy, (1:13 –42)and rise suddenly to a happy conclusion,(42:10-16)' (1974:109) although tragedy does fill the greater portion.

Time magazine summarizes the play as, the story of J.B., a rich , admired, modern American industrialist with a devoted wife and five fine children. Then disaster looms and mounts; J.B.'s children are senselessly killed or brutally murdered, his possessions are lost, his house is destroyed, his wife leaves him and his body sickens. All this happens against a crossfire commentary, biblical and profane, between two out of work actors, Mr Zuss and Nickles, who wear the masks of God and Satan. J.B. wrestles with his soul, with his comforters and with his God until his health is restored and his wife returns. (December,1958:39)

THE PLAY.

MacLeish does not take himself too seriously in the first scene:

> Nick: Those stars that stare their stares at me / Are those the staring stars I see / Or only lights… Not meant for me?
>
> Zuss: What's that got to do with anything?
>
> Nick: Very little. Shall we start.

Unfortunately this positive acknowledgement of nothing meaning much and much meaning nothing gets forgotten later.

Zuss and Nickels know the play, but the irony of the plot is that the actors don't know that they are in a play. The prologue in the first two chapters of the book of Job provides the basis for most of the action but Macleish does manage to introduce some other features and characters from the book of Job.

In the *Christian Century*, Terrien, in his review of J.B., acknowledges that MacLeish has created a brilliant dramatisation of the folk tale of the 'pious' Job of chapters one and two of the Book of Job. However he warns that one does need to recognise that the 'impious' Job of chapters 3 to 42:6 has been ignored and the character of J.B. is completely foreign to that of the hero who speaks in the biblical poem. (1959:9)

Dearlove, (1976:2), noted that the three reviewers of the play in the *Christian Century* (January,1959), Samuel Terrien, Tom Driver, and Henry van Dusen, disagreed and offered a critical diversity. He felt that the play proposed no logically convincing arguments and the audience were forced to remain in doubt or make their own 'leap of faith.' However he states, that many who did 'make the leap' also tried to impose their beliefs upon the play, 'and then criticised J.B. for not sustaining their interpretation.' [30]

In as much as Job accepted God's answer in faith, MacLeish asks us to make the leap and accept that J.B.'s love comes from his suffering with no reference to God.

In the first scene we are introduced to the prosperous and blessed family of J.B.

The time is Thanksgiving, the American national religious holiday.

Sarah, Mrs B., here plays the correct, 'orthodox' role that one would expect

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[30]While Dearlove may point a finger at Terrien above, who criticizes J.B. for not being Job, I recuse myself as in this section I do make a comparative study with Job.

from Job's traditional friends, as she demands that the children acknowledge the ritual of Thanksgiving and ends with a direct reference to the doctrine which says that we need to work hard at being good to earn goods,

> Sarah: God doesn't give all this for nothing / A good home , good food, Father, Mother, brothers, sisters. / We too have our part to play / If we do our part He does His.

In response to J.B.'s apparent blasé` acceptance of God's bounty, Sarah warns, 'God can reward and God can punish…'

but J.B. is not being blasé` as he explains;

> '…I don't deserve (happiness), It's not a question of deserving…nobody deserves it Sarah, / not the world that God has given us.'

J.B. here displays an understanding that only comes to Job in the final chapter,

> 'I have heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eyes see you.' (Job 42:5)

Sarah then divulges a secret about J.B. that Job had vehemently denied ever being guilty of,

'If I beheld the sun when it shined, or the moon walking in brightness…' (Job 31:26)

> Sarah: …he lies there watching, / long before I see the light – Can't bear to miss a minute of it: Sun at morning, moon at night.'

Of course J.B. does not kiss his hand at the sun, MacLeish has used an unfortunate image to illustrate J.B's love of life. [31]

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[31]An image he has used before in, *The Hamlet of A.MacLeish* (1928)

> Ophela: O have pity on us/ we that watch the lights of the other worlds,/ …we that have felt the light of the moon on our faces.

J.B. does understand God,

> J.B.: God understands that language, doesn't He? He should, He made the colts.

These echo the lines that God thunders to Job in the prologue:

> 'Who has sent out the wild ass free?' (Job 39:5)

MacLeish uses a repeated refrain to end Scene one, a refrain which becomes a lullaby, marking the end of the good times, allowing them to fade away as the song fades;

> Sarah: I love Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday / Where have Monday, Tuesday gone? / Under the grass tree / Under the green tree / One by one.

Scene two is the chorus of Mr Zuss and Nickles. Nickles cynically expands on the Satan's question, 'Does Job fear God for naught?' (Job 1:9),
and on the reason for suffering, as quoted by Eliphaz,

> 'Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth; therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty.' (Job 5:17)

In the words of Nickles, 'Suffering teaches! Suffering's good for us!'
Scene three brings the first of the messengers, 'I only am escaped alone...,' to announce the death of the eldest son, a casualty of war. A scene the audience could perhaps identify with. J.B. denies his death, but Sarah is direct:

> Sarah: Job! He's dead! God has taken him!

There is no discourse on the evils of war, or of cursing the enemy.
Sarah is direct, 'He's dead! God has taken him!
Scene four, the second of the messengers.
Perhaps today we could more clearly identify the enquiring journalist and his ruthless 'paparazzi' camera exposing grieving parents?
Sarah again directly accuses God!

> Sarah: Why did he do it to them? What had they done to Him...

And we… What had we done?

Sarah is looking for Justice, J.B. at this stage has not recognised the injustice. He has no strength to answer her. The stage directions say,

J.B. (awkwardly), J.B.: Shall we take the good and not the evil?

At this point in the Book, Job comes across far more strongly, maybe as he has just reprimanded his wife for her foolish suggestion,

'Dost thou still retain thy integrity? Bless/curse God and die. (2:9)

Job's wife has been cursed by early Christian critics on the strength of her, just one line, which follows Satan's predictions that Job would: 'Curse God.' Augustine, Chrysostom and Calvin saw her as 'the Satan's ally, Andersen (1976:92). Sarah is certainly prompted and supported by Nickles from the sidelines but appears strong enough not to be influenced. J.B. plays into Satan's hands all on his own.

Gibson suggests that there is something, 'not altogether healthy' about Job's obsession with his own integrity and the speed with which he takes offence. (1985:24) Job may be self-righteous but is firm in his belief. J.B. appears weak, as intimated by the stage directions;

J.B.: (then in a desperate candor) It doesn't mean there is no good!

He is almost apologising for God.

Scene Six. Two messengers to announce the physical collapse of J.B.'s bank and the death of the last child.

J.B. intones, ' The Lord giveth, the Lord the Lord taketh away.

Blessed be the name of the Lord.'

Sarah too starts to repeat mechanically, 'The Lord giveth…' but she is not satisfied with the justice, or injustice, of that refrain and wont use 'taketh' but substitutes and repeats, 'kills, kills!'

In the chorus, Mr Zuss in J.B.'s defence, is as weak and unsure as J.B., and Nickles is as vehement and as strong as Sarah.

Zuss: (stiffly) I think he understands it perfectly. I think that great Yea-saying to the world was wonderful- That wounded and deliberate Amen – That affirmation!

Nickles: (..in a sudden fury) …And he blesses God!

It isn't decent! It isn't moral even! It's disgusting.

Dunkel reminds us that Nickles, with the Satanmask, is a 'prejudiced witness,' (1959:67) Nickles who sang,

'If God is God, He is not good,/If God is good He is not God.'

MacLeish lets Nickles also take the role of the censuring friends, As Zophar complains of Job, 'I hear censure which insults me,'(20:2) Whereas Mr Zuss was almost pompous in identifying J.B.'s affirmation, he is back on top with a single line after Nickles' tirade,

Mr Zuss: You don't lose gracefully, do you?

To end the scene, the Satanmask demands,

'Skin for skin, yea all that a man has he will give for his life.'

Scene eight. After the bomb blast that has seered J.B.'s skin, he is visited on the ash heap by the women of the ash heap. They are not the outcasts who taunted Job, but a comic chorus of crones to comment on the situation. J.B. is unable to comfort his suffering wife, but does not cry to God. He stutters out his questions: If I knew… If I knew why!

And the stage directions offer him no support;

J.B.: (from his heart's pain) God will not punish without cause.

And in denial of the strength of Job, J.B. capitulates;

J.B.: He knows the guilt is mine

I have no choice but to be guilty.

And quoting the dogma of the friends,

'We have no choice but to be guilty, God is unthinkable if we are innocent.'

Sarah remains strong as she walks out on Job.

'I will not let you sacrifice their deaths

To make injustice justice and God good!

The accusation, 'to make injustice justice,' could not be levelled at Job,

'I put on righteousness, and it clothed me; my justice was as a robe and a diadem.' (29:4)

MacLeish is a poet, and Sarah enjoys the strength of his words. J.B. is accused of, 'sacrificing their deaths,' God has taken their lives, but J.B.'s refusal to mourn, to accept their death, his refusal to cry out in pain and anger as Job does,

'Behold I cry out of wrong, but I am not heard, I cry aloud, but there is no judgement.' (19:7)

Once Sarah has accused J.B of betraying her children, by accepting their deaths, she invites him to 'curse God and die,' and then she turns and walks out on him. After she has gone, J.B. calls out to her,

J.B: Sarah, why do you not speak to me? Sarah!

As Job called out to God, 'Wherefore hidest thou thy face.' (Job13:24)

J.B looks for Sarah's love as Job looked to God.

Scene nine opens with J.B. alone, quoting from Job's soliloquy...

J.B.: If I had perished from the womb, not having been...

The chorus of women announce the arrival of the 'comforters,' Eliphaz, the 'dead beat' doctor, Zophar, the 'spoiled' priest and Bildad, the soap box socialist.

In the 1958 version, while the comforters wait, not for seven days but long enough to have a smoke, J.B. lifts himself up to whisper,

'God! My God! My God! What have I done?

With this he is accusing himself and not questioning God. In the Broadway version, J.B. does more than ask feebly, 'If I knew why!' With Mr Zuss and Nickles above him, the Ladies of the ash heap around him and the three comforters on their way, J.B. calls out,

'Show me my guilt, O God!'

He then whispers to the audience, 'The hand of God has touched me.' Then, according to the stage directions, his voice rises to a cry –
A drowning man's cry to other men:

Answer me! Answer me!

Nickles mockingly, contemptuously notes the silence that answers his call. J.B. then welcomes the comforters, and asks them,

'I suffer what you guess I suffer/ Tell me the wickedness that justifies it. What have I done?'

While J.B. searches for answers with earnest statements,

'...God is just...Guilt matters...'

the three play with words harping on guilt;

Bildad: ...Guilt is a sociological accident

Eliphaz: ...Guilt is a Psychophenomenal situation

Zophar: ...Guilt is reality...all men are guilty always.

Although Sarah spelt it out in the first scene;

Sarah: God can reward and God can punish
Us He has rewarded...,

The doctrine of retribution is not explained by the comforters, who are clever with words. Their emphasis is on guilt, which Eliphaz brings to a climax with allusion to the hideous guilt of Oedipus,

Eliphaz: ...We kill the king in ignorance; the voice reveals; we blind ourselves.

As this scene moves to its climax, MacLeish, in the stage directions, suggests a strengthening of J.B.

J.B.'s voice breaks through the squabbling with something of its old authority.

J.B.: No doubt ye are the people and wisdom shall die with you.

(from Job 12:2) Although the stage directions allow J.B. to persist in his own defence;

J.B. (violently), J.B. (Urgently), J.B. (an agony of earnestness); the three friends are no comfort and are really mocking him. As J.B. turns away from the three and turns to God, MacLeish uses the words of Job directly from the Book;

'I cry out of wrong but I am not heard, I cry aloud but there is no judgement.' And that which MacLeish calls 'the ancient human cry,

'Oh that I knew where I might find him.' (23:1,3)

and Job's desperate search,

'I go forward but he is not there, backward and I cannot perceive Him.' (23:8)

Because it is an arresting statement, MacLeish has included the line,

'Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.' (13:15)

but this has no place in J.B.'s speech! MacLeish uses the words of Job, not in defiant claims of righteousness, but in seeking apologetically. Then out of a whirlwind, God replies;

'Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge.'

And after God has thundered, Job, or rather J.B. can say,

'I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear,
but now mine eye seeth thee.

Terrien accuses Macleish at this point of paying lip service to the words of the Bible, the effect is theologically misleading and psychologically incoherent. J.B. has not stood up as a rebel against God, there is no reason for repentance, and the voice from the whirlwind is but a 'manisfestation of impersonal and senseless power' (1959:10)

In the chorus opening to scene 10, Nickles has not been impressed by J.B.'s stand before God, but acknowledges that Mr Zuss had been right in that, God always wins. He condemns the performance of the 'actor', J.B.

Nickles: Plays the way a sheep would play it - pious, contemptible, goddamn sheep...without the spunk to spit on Christmas.

A description which could fit a Christian approach to the sacrificial lamb, although J.B. always speaks directly of God.

Mr Zuss is not satisfied either.

Mr Zuss has worked himself up into a dramatic fury equalling Nickles, '...you heard him! Then he calmed me!

... Forgave me!...for the world! For everything!

In spite of everything he'd suffered!

In spite of all he'd lost and loved

He understood and he forgave it!

Although J.B. may not have appeared to be strong, this statement by Mr Zuss explains his strength. 'He understood and he forgave.'

Nickles does not see any dilemma,

Nickles:...that's your triumph! That he swallowed it.

(swallowed the swill of the world)

Neither one is content as Mr Zuss reminds us that there is one more scene, that God restores J.B. at the end.

Scowling, Nickles starts out with a childish retort,

Nickles: We never asked Him to be born...

We never choose the lives we die of...

They beat our rumps to make us breathe...

the opening hanging lines are clever, the joining of life and death which relates to us all, but especially to J.B.'s 'sacrifice of the deaths of his children' , and the picture of our reluctant entrance to this life which confirms the first line (to be compared with Job's curse, 'Let the day perish wherein I was born' [3:3]) But as Nickles continues, his virulent rejection of the suggestion of J.B. getting his wife back, goes over the top, far beyond the emotion displayed by J.B. and Sarah in their parting. Then, as the popcorn vender, Nickles enters the scene to persuade J.B. not to accept

God's offer of a second life. J.B. ignores Nickles but does react to a knocking at the door.

In the romantic comedy ending, Sarah enters bearing a twig found growing in the ashes. When J.B. complains that it is too dark to see, Sarah takes control again as she invites him to, ' Blow on the coal of the heart,' to rekindle light and life. Lewis tells that when Elia Kazan directed the play on Broadway, he persuaded MacLeish to give these lines to J.B., to make him the active protagonist, (1970:120). Sarah does command the action in the final scene. The character of J.B. as a good and upright man is not developed but as uncomplaining and accepting, not standing up to God in seeking for justice, but apologetic;

> J.B.: I'd rather suffer every unspeakable suffering God sends knowing it was I that suffered, I that earned the need to suffer...

Sarah, Mrs J.B., has had the strength to question God;

> 'Why did He do it to them? What had they done to Him – those children. What had they done to Him?'

Although it was the cry of a mother in pain, it was a cry!

J.B. just whimpers: Don't Sarah. Don't! It doesn't help to think like that.

Terrien in his criticism of the Broadway production, calls the J.B. of the modern play, 'a Job emasculated.' J.B. appears as the type of pious convention, 'his character remains as dormant as the water of a pond, with green scum on its surface, J.B. is merely the diseased victim of fate, who hardly, if ever at all, rises above the level of intellectual stupor and spiritual impassibility.' (1959:10)

With Mr Zuss, there is a secular approach to the figure of God.

God is distant. A man behind a mask. In the play there is no triumph, no tragedy. Lewis contends, 'with J.B. there is no return to faith, but a resignation to go on, with love as the Redeemer. The mystery of life lies in man's own re-creation of life.' (1970:123)

Dunkel in 'Theology Today' suggests that the intense meaning of the play, 'a poetic work of art designed for the theatre,' became diluted in the production as if to avoid adverse comment on its religious implications but the religious thinker may question its validity. (1965:65)

Although Macleish may have stimulated religious drama with J.B., he did not stimulate 'religious thought' as alluded to by Robert Frost in his ' A Masque of Reason' (1948);

'I've had you on my mind a thousand years
To thank you someday for the way you helped me
Establish the principle, once for all
There's no connection man can reason out
Between his just deserts and what he gets.
Virtue may fail and wickedness succeed...
...I have no doubt
You realize by now the part you played
To stultify the Deuteronomist
And change the tenor of religious thought.

11. TRIALS, OF A GOOD AND BLAMELESS MAN

Peter Krummeck, 1982.

INTRODUCTION.

Trials is a drama, workshoped by the Roundabout Releases in Liverpool, England, and brought to South Africa by Judy Corder. It was reworked, in 1982, into a South African setting by Peter Krummeck and Corder for the African Community Theatre Service (ACTS) Drama Ministry of the St John's Parish ,Wynberg, Cape Town.

Christian Drama enjoyed a revival in England in the 1970's with the groups, Breadrock, Round-about-Releases and the 'Riding Lights' who travelled with evangelist David Watson. In the extreme we could trace religious drama back to the dithyramb of the Greek Choric hymn to Dionysus, of the 7th century BCE, but more appropriately in this case to the Mystery and Miracle plays of the 9th to the 16th century that told the stories of man's creation, fall and redemption, and other plays based on Bible stories, especially those to celebrate special festivals, in particular the Easter Passion and the Christmas Nativity.[32] The Mystery plays appeared as additions to the services of the liturgical year. A great deal of the scripture read was dramatised. The term Miracle play is applied to medieval dramas based on the lives of the saints and other bible stories. A story of Job would fall into this category. (Preminger 1975:536)

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[32] Peter Krummeck's adaptation of The Passion, presented every Easter, by ACTS, at the Baxter Theatre for ten seasons from 1983, was prescribed viewing for UCT Drama Students, and the Christmas fantasy, Lodestar, also presented annually, formed part of a thesis on South African youth drama.

The Christian Drama group, ACTS, was inspired by the Rev. John Freeth, rector of St Johns, Wynberg. At York University in the '70s he was involved in theatrical street productions and drama productions in York Minster aimed at introducing the feeling of worship. Freeth identified four thrusts of Christian drama; in the liturgy, in drama as illustration of scripture, for social outreach and for education. After he was ordained he worked for seven years in a depressed area in South-east London,
'It was there that I really worked on drama because with a fairly low literacy rate among my congregation, I needed to bring home a message which they would understand.' (The Cape Times, 1April 1983)

Judy Corder started with extra-mural drama lessons when at school in the Eastern Cape. She studied as a teacher at the Grahamstown Training College and did a Speech and Drama diploma course at the University of Cape Town (U.C.T.)in 1971. While teaching in Cape Town she was involved in the experimental [33] Space Theatre (1972-74) where she gave 'movement' classes with Yvonne Bryceland.
Through a Scripture Union contact she obtained work as a teacher in England and met up and worked with Murray Watts and Paul Burbridge [34] of the Breadrock Christian Amateur Theatre group. They performed around the countryside in outreach missions in Working Men's clubs, Church Halls and on street corners.

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[33] Experimental in staging early Athol Fugard 'Protest' plays, presenting John Kani and other black actors who required a permit to act before white audiences.

[34] Watts and Burbridge published the scripts of their sketches for use in churches, youth work and mission:

Time to Act,1979, Hodder and Stoughton, London

Red Letter Days, 1986, Hodder and Stoughton, London.

Corder then joined up with 'Roundabout Releases', another Christian Drama group, based at the Liverpool Church of Alan Godson. There David and Jan Rycroft wrote a musical play, '*The Test*,' based on the Book of Job. Corder returned to South Africa and arrived in St Johns Parrish in 1981 and was originally involved in street theatre, student outreach and mission. To broaden the scope of outreach the script of 'The Test' was given to Peter Krummeck and from it he produced the South African, *'Trials of a Good and Faithful Man.'*

Actor, director, play-write and producer Peter Krummeck, chosen as the first recipient of 'The Baxter 200 Tribute for Artistic Achievement,' wrote and co-directed the South African, *Trials of a Good and Blameless Man*. Krummeck studied Graphic Design in the Eastern Province and Drama at U.C.T. He lectured at the U.C.T Drama School in the 70's before joining CAPAB as Actor and designer. In 1979 he was commissioned by the Department of Education to create a dramatised History of Education in South Africa. South Africa has a mixed population and Krummeck wrote his play '*Indaba*' featuring all groups. The Department withdrew funding. Fortunately the original sponsor obtained funding from America, and the play with it's 'mixed' cast of children from across the Cape Peninsular performed to rave reviews at the Grahamstown School's Festival and returned to play at the U.C.T Baxter Theatre as an example of formative work in Youth Theatre.

The play, *Trials*, played to over 1000 people all over the Peninsular, from St Georges Cathedral to Elsies River on the Cape Flats. In 1982, in South Africa, 'all over the Peninsular', made a certain social statement when many churches were racially segregated and playing venues were in different Group Areas.

Krummeck describes his work as 'conscience' drama, not Protest theatre, which was popular at the time.

The aim of his work was not to prove anybody wrong, but rather to prove that the audience is right. Not shouting in protest at them but acknowledging that the audience does know what is right and does know what should be done. Therefore when basing Job Goodman in South Africa, he created archetypical characters who would be immediately recognisable, like the bureaucratic Public Servant, Mr Wasserval, who just does his job. (Interview 29.06.03)

THE STORY.

Job Goodman is a successful farmer who has a young wife, Anna, who is expecting their first child. Job G. (Goodman) is perfect and upright and fears God. When he exclaims, 'O Good Heavens,' he means that heaven is good. He attributes all good to God, while Mrs Anna Goodman is more pragmatic.

Job has a younger brother Jeff, who too believes in the blessings of God.

The first scene introduces the earthly protagonists, Job G. and Jeff and their wives, Anna and Cathy, and the instrument of fate, the dam.

Scene two in Heaven. God is presented as straight and amiable, Lucifer as a melodramatic villain.

The heavenly plot here follows the Bible story directly. (Job 1:6-12) In scene 3, Lucifer visits the Goodmans in the assumed role of an assistant to a Government Official, from the Department of Re-allocation, with the first of Job's 'trials', the loss of his property. They have come to inform Job G. that his farm is to be appropriated to allow two halves of a newly independent homeland state to be joined.

Job is upset but accepts that God gives and God takes away.

Anna does realise who is in charge of their world and does not curse the Government, but blames God.

But, 'In all this Job sinned not nor charged God foolishly.' (Job1:22) Job Goodman believes that there will be a just solution.

In scene 4, Lucifer has not been impressed by Job G's acceptance and obtains permission to touch the person of Job.

Scene 5. Lightening strikes the silos and the dam wall breaks.

Scene 6 finds Job G. not on an ash heap but in a hospital bed, with his brother and sister-in-law to act as comforters in his third trial after his physical affliction.

In what the nurse calls delirious ravings, Job G mumbles lines which resemble those found in the opening curse of chapter three of the Book of Job. Using the technique of the writer of Job, Krummeck reverses the expected word order in Job G's speech,

This also serves to identify his confused state of mind.

There are three levels of conversation or speech in this scene; the nurse, the comforters and Job G. The nurse, with comic efficiency, addresses the unconscious Job using the Royal 'we'.

The 'comic' nurse and the 'straight' friends, serve to balance the delirious ravings of Job G. The nurse has admitted that Job G's words had embarrassed her, the straight talk and the comedy could save the audience from the embarrassment of hearing Job G's words undiluted.

Although not threateningly 'religious,' Krummeck has maintained a poetic style for the words of Job G which he has adapted from the Book of Job, chapters 3, 10 and 21.

Krummeck is here guilty of the same crime as MacLeish, in what Terrien calls 'paying lip service to the words of the Bible,' (cf.p.119)in that we have not shared in Job G's travails as yet. Only after this point does the nurse list his physical injuries.

Jeff now voices his opinion, in the next trial, the doctrine of retribution.This is not a new or sudden thought of Jeff's because as soon as Job G wakes up he presses him to confess, just as Zophar advised Job,

'Put your heart right, Job. Reach out to God. Put away evil and wrong from your home.' (Job 11:13,14)

This could not have been as harsh to Job, as the accusation against Job Goodman from his own brother.

Job G has the last word in the scene, affirming his faith.

Scene seven in heaven. In the book of Job, once Satan had demanded, 'Skin for skin,' and the Lord had handed over Job, Satan does not reappear. But as Job Goodman has not yet capitulated, Krummeck allows God to gloat and to ask Satan if things were not going according to plan, but Lucifer petulantly, has not given up.

This scene shows a similarity to that between Mr Zuss and Nickles in scene seven of J.B.

Mr Zuss: You don't lose gracefully do you?

Nickles: I don't lose.

Mr Zuss: You have.

Nickles: That's not the end of it.

Lucifer has not given up, and in the guise of Timothy Harben-Smith accompanies Mr Wasserval of the Department of Re-Allocation, on a visit to Job Goodman in Hospital. Job G is sitting up and reading his Bible when they arrive to inform him that the Department believes that he sabotaged 'their' property and they will therefore not pay him out. Job G. is indignant and explains that it was an accident, an act of God! It is rather ironic that Lucifer, the orchestrator of all of all of Job's trials, should deny the validity of Acts of God, for which Insurance companies wont pay.

In the Book of Job, Job longs to face up to God in court, he cries for the opportunity to state his case,

'Hear diligently my speech, and my declaration with your ears. Behold now I have ordered my cause, I know I shall be justified.' (Job 13:17,18)

But here Lucifer denies Job Goodman the opportunity to go to court, Mr Wasserval's department wanted to take Job G to court – but Lucifer managed to talk them out of that.

In the Bible Job maintains his integrity to the end, against the onslaught of the accusations of the friends, and affirms his innocence in his negative confession of chapter 31,

'Let me be weighed in an even balance that God may know mine integrity.' (Job 31:6)

Mr Wasserval requests Job G's signature on an admission of guilt for the department's records, which Timothy describes as a mere technicality as he describes Job of having lost everything, 'from his credit to his credibility.' Job G. does not submit, denies guilt and asserts that he still maintains his dignity and his faith in God.

This episode could be titled the patience or perseverance of Lucifer as he appears again to Job G. this time in the guise of a sympathetic doctor. Krummeck slips in an allusion to the start of man's suffering as Lucifer takes from the fruit at Job's bedside, but although his poison does not work on Job G. it has unfortunately worked on Anna who arrives to tell him that she has lost their unborn child in the effort of pulling him out of the river, and that she has accepted the suggestion, made by Jeff, that the accident was deliberately caused. She feels defrauded as she had always believed in Job G's integrity, but she does not blame him, she blames God, for setting an impossibly high standard.

The 'agreement,' the doctrine of retribution, has two parts; the good shall be rewarded, and the wicked shall be punished.

Both Jeff and Anna, and the three 'friends', draw the conclusion from logical deduction, that if the wicked are punished, then those who suffer punishment must be wicked.

Job believes this too,

'What does Almighty God do to us. How does he repay human deeds. He sends disaster and ruin to those who do wrong.' (31:2,3)

But Job knows that the wicked do not always suffer,

'Why does God let evil men live, let them grow old and prosper?' (21:7)

Job also knows that he is innocent, he is not wicked, he should not suffer. He is being treated unjustly and he asks, and pleads, and demands a reason for his suffering. Job G knows he is innocent and prays for his brother who has accused him.

Anna Goodman does not offer Job G. a way out and she walks out on him as his final trial. He collapses on his hospital bed and is assaulted by the voices of those who have accused him. When he can stand it no longer he jumps up and shouts out, that he is innocent.

The voices stop, and God and Lucifer appear. Lucifer believes he is about to crack and Job G. appears as weak as J.B, but God intervenes.

Lucifer hopes that he's about to call God to account for His actions, but Job G denies that he could ever question the ways of the Lord.

Although this is what Job too has said,

'Then Job answered and said, I know it is so of a truth, but how should a man be just with God.' (9:1,2)

Nevertheless Job does question God,

'I will say unto God, Do not condemn me, show me wherefore thou contendest with me.' (10:1,2)

But Krummeck has just brought Job's final speech forward,

'I know that you can do everything and that no thought can be withheld from you.' (42:2)

He has God accept Job Goodman's acquiescence, before he has delivered his whirlwind speech to him. After Job G. had suffered the storm wind, the earthquake and the fire on earth, there came the soft whisper of God. (1 Kings 19:12)

God: Wisely spoken Job. No man was present when I threw the mountains up in the sky, or when I scooped out the oceans with the palm of my hand.'

As Job G. has not asked any questions, this is not God's answer to him, nor is it a question from God. It is part of a statement of the unfathomable power of God.

As God had chosen Job G, he now redresses the balance;

Mr Wasserval restores the farmhouse, Job G. is appointed as Agricultural Advisor to the new Homeland and Anna returns to him.

Curtain.

The shortness of the final reconciliation – repatriation scene matches the briefness of Job 42. And here too the happy ending is not the point. The message is in the body of the play, in the previous 40 chapters.

THE MESSAGE OF THE PLAY.

In the first scene we are introduced to the god-fearing Job Goodman. His name, Job, is a direct allusion to the book of Job, and the surname, Goodman, describes his character as a good man. Job G and his brother Jeff freely acknowledge and ascribe their blessings to God.

Job's unnamed wife only speaks one line addressed to him,

'Do you still persist in your integrity? Curse/bless God and die. (2:9)

Based on this line commentators have attempted to build up a character. Zefira Gitay suggests that she is anonymous to emphasize the fact that her role is subordinate to that of her husband, (1995:518), but with this one line

her existence and her feelings are acknowledged. Gelber suggests that she is being compassionate in suggesting euthanasia even without referring to the amplification offered by the LXX which describes her suffering in the line,

> I am a wanderer and a servant from place to place and house to house, waiting for the setting of the sun, that I may rest from my labours and my pangs that now beset me. (2:9)

We are told much more about Mrs Anna Goodman. We are told, or rather we build up a picture of her enthusiasm for God being less than that of her husband,

Sc. 1. Anna: Don't start with your 'Goodness of God' nonsense now, dear.

Sc. 3. (Job G completes his morning prayers.)

Anna: I don't know how you can bring yourself to bartering your way into heaven, first thing in the morning.

Sc. 5. Anna: Job? Job, don't tell me you're praying again?

Although Anna is not always praising God, she does know the rules of the 'agreement', do good and be rewarded,

> Sc. 3.Anna:...and I bet you've remembered to post your cheque to the Orphan's Relief fund already –
>
> Job: Anna, If I can help some poor kids...
>
> Anna: And buy yourself a seat in Paradise...

Anna explains that she is embarrassed by Job G's continued reference to God. A line deliberately included for the audience to agree or to disagree.

The first scene is one of quiet domesticated contentment with Job G's blessings enumerated, the successful harvest of his crop and the announcement of his wife's pregnancy.

In scene two in heaven we are welcomed by a warm and dignified figure of God, while Lucifer is a bit over the top as a melodramatic villain. He interrupts God's welcome with snide asides. The plot follows that of Job 1,

as Lucifer obtains permission to remove Job G's material blessings to see if he will curse or bless God.

The scene of domesticity is still apparent as we return to the farm with the remains of the dinner party still in evidence, and Job G and Anna in their dressing gowns. We are reminded of Job G's righteousness as the scene opens to find him on his knees at his morning prayers. Anna also refers to his regular donation to the Orphans Relief Fund. The domestic scene is disturbed by the arrival of Mr Wasserval, of the Department of Re allocation, and his assistant (Lucifer). The Goodmans are at a physical disadvantage, with Anna in a dressing gown, for Lucifer to leer at, and Job G returning half dressed. They are caught off beat as Mr Wasserval explains that their farm is to be expropriated. Mr Wasserval's speech is precise and bureaucratically correct according to the letter of the law. Timothy Harben-Smith (Lucifer) is again over the top, in an indeterminate role, introduced as an assistant, but giving orders. His character is that between a politician and a car salesman, as he shakes hands and smiles all around, using first names and leaving Mr Wasserval to announce the bad news. The Goodmans can do little more than splutter their objections as Mr Wasserval rolls out the legal jargon with a paragraph of recited explanation for each word of complaint.

As part of South African political history, the Homelands Appropriation Bill would not have affected a Cape Town audience, but a large proportion of the members of St John's Parish, the first audience, had been affected by the earlier Group Areas Act [35] and understood the shocked disbelief and suffering caused by enforced removal.

Anna and Job G are left in stunned silence as the two leave.

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[35] The Group Areas Act (Act 1950) separated people according to their race, into separate geographical areas. To achieve this, a system of forced removals was implemented to resettle people in their racial group area.

With the visitors gone, Anna surcomes to Lucifer's design and attacks Job G and blames God. But Job G does not sin with his lips. He does not praise God but acknowledges that the Lord gives and the Lord takes away.

Scene four in Heaven. Lucifer is not pleased with Job G's quiet submission and gets permission to attack his body. God is in command as Lucifer behaves like a thwarted bully, and as God condescends to allow the person of Job G to be touched with a plague of boils, Lucifer, now as a spoilt child, asks for more, and broken legs, and more, and third degree burns. Back at the farm the forces of nature combine for the second trial. Lightening sets fire to the barns and rain washes away the dam. Anna is left standing alone as Job G goes out into the storm.
Ironically her prayer as Job G disappears in the dark is, 'God help him.'

Job on the ash heap was defenceless against the taunts of the outcasts. Job G, after a week in a coma on his hospital bed, is as defenceless. His brother and sister-in-law have the role as tormentors as they spell out their understanding of the doctrine of retribution,

> ...he was such a good man, you would not think that such a thing would happen to him,...he must have done something terrible...why else is he being punished.

Even in a modern setting this conversation does not sound artificial, as we still ask, 'Why do bad things happen to good people?' But although we may still quote, 'Crime does not pay,' newspaper crime statistics tell us otherwise. We don't expect the wicked to be punished. As Job said,

> 'The tents of robbers are at peace.' (12:6)

Jeff takes the role of Job's comforters in looking for the sin after having found the punishment. As Job G is known to always tell the truth, they find it difficult to accept his answers which don't match their expectations.

Lucifer is not happy with Job G's answers either and plans another attack. With Mr Wasserval he visits Job G in hospital. Job G is less than

excited to see them. In the first page of dialogue in this scene Job G has two lines while Timothy (Lucifer) monopolises the conversation. In the next two pages Job G splutters out a few one word or one line interjections, as Timothy and Mr Wasserval roll on to inform him that he is suspected of having stated the fire and sabotaging the dam, and he will therefore not be paid out for the property. Timothy further informs him that he has also been denied the opportunity of going to court but needs to sign an admission of guilt. This arouses Job G, as indeed Job was aroused,

'God forbid that I should justify you; till I die I will not put away my integrity from me,' (27:4)

and he asserts his integrity.

In scene ten we can perhaps see a parallel to how MacLeish allowed J.B. to find his strength in love. Job G has been waiting for a visit from his wife, he has not heard that which others have been hinting at. He is now two steps behind Anna when she explains that she is leaving him, as she believes, from Lucifer via Jeff, that sin brought about his punishment.

This is a final straw for Job G as he collapses under assault from the voices of his accusers. Lucifer steps forward to claim victory but God sends him packing and hails Job G as the winner when he refuses to question the ways of the Lord. His love of God, in spite of adversity, means that Lucifer has lost. As MacLeish explained in a sermon on Job (1955, before staging J.B.) in the struggle between good and evil, 'God stakes his supremacy as God upon man's fortitude and love.'(1996:284) Job G did fear God for nought, his love was not dependent on reward. Nevertheless, in the prologue Job, and here Job G, is rewarded and his losses are made full.

At no stage does Job G raise his voice to God to protest. Although the play uses the name and the basic plot of the story of Job, the character of Job Goodman is not that of Job, it is that of the suffering servant of Isaiah, of whom it is said,

'He will not shout or raise his voice.' (Is.42:2) and,

'He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, he endured suffering and pain.' (Is.53:3)

The suffering servant is the New Testament picture of Christ.

Job Goodman is a blameless and upright victim of Lucifer. Lucifer has his way up until the 'sacrifice' of Job G, but Job G is raised by God to victory in the end. The unblemished perfection of Job presented in the prologue, on which the character of Job G. was based, Krummeck realised was that of a perfect man. The character developed for Job G. formed the basis for the man, Jesus, in his Passion Play produced in 1983. (Interview,20.6.02)

12. CONCLUSIONS WITH RESPECT TO THE GENRE OF SUFFERING.

John Bowker states that it often said that suffering is an important 'cause' of religion, since the promises held out by religion, 'represent a way in which men can feel reassured in the face of catastrophe or death,' (1970:1). Bowker may have been influenced by the Christian belief of a reward in Heaven, but Job saw no reward in heaven, he asked,

'For there is hope for a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again,...If a man die, shall he live again?' (14:7,14).

Bowker also quotes Freud, from his New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-analysis. (1933:228), who in his critique of religion says that the destinies of man are incompatible with a universal principle of justice, 'Earthquakes, floods and fires do not differentiate between the good and devout men, and the sinner and unbeliever.' It is by no means the rule that virtue is rewarded and wickedness punished, (1970:2). Freud's insight is not original and was known in the Ancient Near East as for example when the three comforters present the 'religious' doctrine of retribution to Job,

Bildad: The wicked man's light will still be put out...(18:5)

Zophar: ...no wicked man has been happy for long. (20:5)

Eliphaz: Good men are glad and innocent men laugh when they see the wicked punished. (22:19)

Job who has personal knowledge of suffering, discounts their rote sayings,

'There is nothing left of your answers but falsehood.'(21:34)

He knows what happens in the world,

'Have you not asked those who travel the roads, and do you not accept their testimony, that the wicked man is spared in the day of calamity, that he is rescued in the day of wrath?' (21:29,30)

writers understanding, and for 'unmerited suffering' on their religious understanding and that of their audience. According to Bowker, suffering becomes a problem when it is related to other facts or other propositions which seem to be contradicted by it (1970:3).

For example, the plight of the 'righteous' suffer.

In the ancient wisdom dialogue, the *Babylonian Theodicy*, the sufferer does not repudiate the reality of the contradiction between his behaviour and his situation. He entrusts himself to the mercy of the gods and the god of justice. In the Sumerian and Babylonian monologues, the sufferer accepts as a ready made truth, that which Newson calls the divine created perversity in human nature (2002:101).

'Never was a sinless child born to its mother.' (Sumerian, *Lamentation to a man's god. (102)*

Suffering, caused by various demons, was a fact of life in Mesopotamia. Job's comforter's see no contradiction. They have made logical inferences. The wicked suffer, Job is suffering, therefore Job is wicked.

Job however has a problem. He knows that the wicked should suffer. He is not wicked. His problem is, why is a just God allowing him to suffer? The comforters answer the question, 'Why does suffering happen?' A generic question, for which they give approved answers. *The Riddle of Job* however suggests that Job's question is personal,

'Why is suffering happening to me?'

The genre of suffering always includes the element of the lament, the questions asked of God:

How could God let this happen?

How could God let this happen to his people?

How could God let this happen to me?

Job is seeking justice from a righteous God.

Justice for the Sumerian was a favour from the gods. As social order improved and policing became more effective, man sought a moral basis of ethical values to provide justice as a right (Frankfort 1946:228). However the reality of the occurrence of a righteous sufferer upset the balance between divine will and human ethics. The Mesopotamian solution to this problem was to sidestep and accept that man was too small and limited to understand the justice of the gods. In *The Dialogue about Human Misery*, (ANET:439), it is stated, 'True understanding is excluded for mankind.' Job echoes these sentiments in the Hebrew Bible,

> I know it is so of a truth: but how should man be just with God?
> If he will contend with him, he cannot answer him one of a thousand.
> ...We cannot understand the great things He does. (Job 9:2,3,10)

And Frost has God explain that,

> 'There's no connection man can reason out,
> Between his just deserts and what he gets.'

In the writings, in the wisdom of the Book of Proverbs we are told that the good will be rewarded and the wicked will be punished,

> 'The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked: but he blesses the habitation of the just.' (Prov. 3:33)

MacLeish still quotes this philosophy in the mouth of Sarah, the wife of J.B., who says that God is just, God rewards and God can punish.

The issue of Justice should probably be most straightforward in the Egyptian '*Protests of the Eloquent Peasant*,' who seeks social justice .

Unfortunately, as Bright points out, (1960:39) no law code, such as the Babylonian Code of Hamurrabi or the older Ur Nammu tablet (dated 2050 BCE), has ever been discovered in ancient Egypt. The god-king ruled by decree, fortunately it was his duty to uphold justice (ma'at).

One of the few sources of knowledge of Egyptian social law may be found in the mortuary texts or the 'Book of the Dead' in the form of a 'negative

confession' made by the newly dead to the Lord of Justice, Osiris, the Judge of the Dead.

A1. I have not committed evil against men...

A16 I have not caused anyone suffering. (ANET:34)

Job too has a negative form of confession in chapter 31.

The Egyptian peasant sought justice within a social system based on '*ma'at*', that which is right. The fact of apparent undeserved suffering presented a problem to the Egyptians but, 'their belief in retributive justice was safeguarded by their hope in a moral judgement after death.' (Terrien 1954:880) The peasant therefore refers to the scales of justice which would be used, after death, to weigh his heart to be judged according to his deeds on earth.' (Burns 1969:46)

So it appears that in all cases, if we accept that the Egyptian king represented the gods, and the steward represented the king, Justice is dependant on the relationship between man and his god, as basically presented in the Sumerian Lament, *'To a Man's God.'*

The Mesopotamian, the Sumerian and Babylonian, suffer the same pain and discomfort as Job, but they knew that man is too small and too limited in outlook to pass judgement on things that are divine, they deny that human standards or values can be applied to the gods. (Frankfort 1946:230)

'What to one's heart seems bad, is good before one's god. Who may comprehend the mind of gods in heaven's depth?' (*Ludlul II:35)*

In polytheistic Mesopotamia, life was a pretty arbitrary affair. Through obedience and service a man only might win the goodwill of his personal god, 'even justice is such a favour; it cannot be claimed but is obtained through personal connections, personal pressure, through favouritism,' (Frankfort 1946:223). Even the most perfect good life held out but a

promise, not a certainty, of tangible rewards. The justice of the gods is never questioned. It is not even assumed.

'All a man can do is weep.' (Andersen 1976:27)

Success depends on luck,

'They walk on a lucky path those who do not seek, those who devoutly pray [to a goddess] become poor and week. (70)

(*A dialogue about human misery*. ANET:439)

As a civilization grows old, its basic values are in danger of losing their hold upon the individuals who participate in it. Scepticism, doubt, and indifference begin to undermine the spiritual structure which comprises the civilisation. Frankfort, see above, was referring to the Mesopotamian civilisation of the first millennium BCE. Yet this philosophy of scepticism, doubt and indifference, is also that quoted by MacLeish, of himself, in *Time* magazine , '...me, a man committed to no creed, and more uncertain than I should be of certain ultimate beliefs.'

MacLeish, in the play, allows J.B. to accept his life back to live over again with all the hazards of pain and injustice, in spite of God, to live and to love because he is a man (Dec.22, 1958:34).

Katherine Worth describes J.B. as a self-satisfied tycoon convinced that God has been on his side, 'from the first silver dollar to the last controlling interest,' but when his world collapses he departs from the 'script', the book, the bible, that Mr Zuss and Nickles have followed to read the lines of God and Satan. They are then forced to leave their areas, stage heaven and stage hell, to take up positions on the same level as J.B. (1967:95) The Man, J.B, now directs the play, self made man, there is no good luck or bad luck, justice or injustice, just man. Man inflicts senseless suffering on man, and man looks within himself for strength to continue. Macleish felt that Job's labour, and that which he gave to J.B., was to learn to love through suffering, 'and to love even that which lets us suffer.' (1955:286)

Job was not answered by the voice in the whirlwind, he was silenced by the vision of the majesty of creation J.B. does not see creation, but recognises love.

In the South African, *Trials* of Job Goodman, Krummeck is writing a Christian play. A basic tenet of the Christian faith is that, 'the wages of sin is death.' (Rom 6:23) Wickedness will be punished, and suffering is to be accepted in Christ's name,

'It gives you a share in Christ's suffering, and that is a cause for joy.' (1 Pet.4:13), and the solution is found in love, not J.B's love for his wife, but God's love for humankind. As Job G. is sent back to his new farm he complains that it now lies within the borders of another State. But God reassures him,

> 'My children are not separated by human boundaries, Job. I hope that you will go back to your farm to tell your new neighbours how much you love it – and how much you love me.

Bowker points out the answers that are not put forward or confirmed in the book of Job. From verse one we are told that Job is perfect and upright, his suffering is no punishment for sin. There is also no suggestion that a solution might be found in a life after death, as Job states,

'But a man dies and wastes away, he breathes his last, and then where is he.' (14:10)

A solution to the problem of suffering of the righteous implied in Psalms is that suffering will only be temporary. (Hoffman 1996:234)

> Listen O Lord to my plea for justice; pay attention to my cry for help.
> But I will see you, because I have done no wrong. (Ps 17:1,15)
> (As for me I shall behold thy face in righteousness.(RSV))

The Psalms for Help, Thanksgiving and for Justice have the same theme and format as the Mesopotamian lamentations and hymns of praise,

> I will praise you Lord with all my heart…

Be merciful to me O Lord! See the sufferings my enemies cause me...
I will rejoice because you saved me. (Ps 9:1,13,14)

The difference is that the Hebrew Psalms are directed to one God, there are no demons bringing troubles, man is responsible, man is the enemy, the wicked have false gods but the Lord will prevail.

The Psalms tend not to be an appeal for Justice, rather an appeal for mercy, as Hoffman notes, (1996:236) God does not always react immediately to man's deeds. Man is given the opportunity to ask,

'Remember not the sins of my youth, or my transgressions.' (Ps25:7)

But Job does not follow the wisdom of the Psalms. Job does cry out for justice. But Job was not wicked, רשע, he was righteous, צדיק. His suffering was not punishment. God's answer to Job is not a solution to the suffering of the righteous. It is a response to Job's call, even as God answered the call of his people suffering in Egypt. (Ex. 3:7)

God's answer to Job does not mention suffering, but God does administer justice. Job had argued with God but he covered his mouth and repented. His friends were required to sacrifice to appease the wrath of God, because their interpretation of the law was incorrect, they did not speak right of God.

When Job prayed for his friends the Lord restored his fortunes twofold and blessed his days. The promise of Proverbs is confirmed as the righteous, Job, is rewarded.

In chapter 31, Job describes the punishment, justice, he is prepared to accept if he had committed any crime. In general he says,

'Does not calamity befall the unrighteous, and disaster the workers of iniquity?' (31:3)

Some of the offences he presents affect the community and are to be brought before the judges, others seen only by God may be judged by God. If he had raised his hand, '..let my arm be broken from my socket.'

Job and Eliphaz and his friends believe in the same God, they believe in the same punishment for sin and look to the same rewards for righteousness. The difference is in the religious application of dogma that earned the friends the wrath of God, and the personal understanding that Job had with God.

The works studied all tell us that suffering happens.

In Mesopotamia suffering was caused by demons.

Man was responsible for the suffering endured by the Egyptian peasant; a thief and an indulgent magistrate.

Job suffered to prove to Satan that man could praise God for nought.

T.Job was prepared to endure suffering to receive a reward in Heaven.

Prometheus bore his suffering, not quietly, but with the knowledge that he could not die, and that he would be saved.

Frost suggested that Job collaborated with God to disprove the Deuteronomist's theory that suffering was only visited on the wicked.

Macleish made J.B. act out the suffering of Job, but allowed him to find his own solution in love.

Job Goodman is made to suffer to let Satan try to force him to curse God.

In the final analysis modern works are no more able than the ancient to explain the justice, or the injustice, of the righteous sufferer.

Not one of any of these is prepared to leave the sufferer on the ash heap, but all provide a final release or reward.

Only one conclusion fits all works:

Man cannot accept injustice from his God.

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