

434 | He'Brew | Job Project Zion Podcast

Josh Mangelson 00:17

Welcome to the Project Zion Podcast. This podcast explores the unique spiritual and theological gifts Community of Christ offers for today's world.

Karin Peter 00:33

Welcome to "He'brew", the *Project Zion* series that reduces Old Testament bitterness, and there's a lot of it in this episode, 'cause this is Job, so just hang in there, people, but we do that through explanation, exploration and experiencing the text. Our guides through the Old Testament, or Hebrew Scriptures, are Tony and Charmaine Chvala-Smith, and I'm your host, Karin Peter. So, before we begin, I want to remind our listeners and watchers, although if you're watching this, I guess you knew, that you can view all the "He'brew" episodes, and see Tony and Charmaine's slides and all of the wonderful things that they share with us on the *Latter-day Seekers Ministries* [YouTube channel]. So, having gotten that little plug out of the way, we're going to today, look at the Book of Job, which I read the whole thing, and I can't say I'm really excited to get started, but at least I understand a little bit more about it. And I'm looking forward to hearing how we can make sense of it, and explore it, and experience it. So, let's get into the Book of Job.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 01:41

Very first, is that one of the things that will help you most in reading the Book of Job is to read a little bit about it first, because it's a bit of a Frankenstein book, in a way. It's been, it's two kinds of literature that have been stuck together, and once you understand that, and you understand what each kind of literature is, then it begins to make a lot more sense.

Karin Peter 02:15

So, Charmaine, that's what we talked about earlier that I did. So, normally, I read the scripture book that we're going to talk about, and then I go to the commentaries. Good Bible commentaries, go on cofchrist.org and download a piece of paper that tells you what commentaries to buy, but I go to the commentaries after I've read the text, to help me understand them. But this time, I went to the commentaries first to learn more about the Book of Job, because I was dreading it, and then I read the text, and it actually began to make sense. You could see the patterns that they talked about. You could see the different styles of writing. You, kind of, knew who the characters were. It made a lot more sense.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 02:55

Yeah, sometimes, especially for books that are going to be difficult, and for ones that have an interesting history, meaning it wasn't written by one person and translated, but that it was written probably by a number of people, edited by people, as I said, Frankensteined, chopped up and then reassembled, then it really is helpful to use something like Fant. Fant does a really nice job of, kind of, giving you a little background into wisdom literature, and, which Job is one of, but it also gives you

some of that historical understandings of the structure. And so, little things like, what kind of literature is the beginning of Job in those first bits? And,

Karin Peter 03:49

Horrible. Horrible literature in the beginning of Job.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 03:51

And, why, you know, why does this sound, kind of, familiar, you know, the cadence of it, and the numbers, and all this, kind of, stuff? So, yes, it's, that can be really helpful, because then you don't have to go, is this a historical person? Well, when did they, did this, who's taking notes in the heaven, for goodness sake? You know, I mean, you know, all these different kinds of questions, though, it does bring us back to the reality that scripture is written by people, in their time and place, because of their circumstances. And they're trying to figure out who God is, and how do we understand life. And that will help us too, in this case, to note, to remind ourselves, that's what this book is. It's written by people to try and deal with some of the issues in their time.

Tony Chvala-Smith 04:45

I mean, I think, trying to read the Book of Job, I guess we would say this, I would say this for the Book of Daniel too, but in a lot of books, that trying to read the Book of Job without a guide is about like trying to be dropped into the Amazon Basin without any preparation, or without a guide, and try to figure it out. And so, I think it's, this is one of those places where having some background in it before you go in, is really, really important for it being able to identify what you're seeing there. So, we're in the Book of Job and the, Job is in the third part of the Hebrew Bible, the Ketuvim. Just as a reminder, the Hebrew Bible is divided into three sections: Torah, or law, Prophets, which is subdivided into former and latter prophets, and then Ketuvim, which in Hebrew means writings. I think it should be called the miscellaneous department. And so, one thing that ties all the different kinds of literature in the miscellaneous department together is that, in different ways, these authors with different genres and different time periods, are trying to reflect on what does it mean for us to be Israelites, to be Judeans, to be Jews, for the postexilic part of this material, the later part? They're trying to figure out what it means to belong to this God in covenant. And so, the Book of Job is part of that whole drama of trying to figure out what the life of faith in God is supposed to look like. So, by way of a starter, lots of scholars like to say, the Book of Job is the Hebrew Bible's own version of when bad things happen to good people, to play off of Rabbi Harold Kushner's famous 1981 book. So, and that's helpful for a start, because the book, as a whole, is trying to deal with the question of; what does it mean? And how do you understand the situation when someone who's just living their life and living it the best they can, faces, like, immeasurable evil and suffering in their life? What is the meaning of that? So that's a good place to start.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 06:59

Right? And along with that is a question that we all ask, too, which, you know, is, why does suffering happen at all? And because it does happen to good people, bad people, all people, what does that mean about who God is? And, what can we trust about what our relationship with God should bring or not bring? So, in today's world, many of us have grown up with a kind of Christianity, even if it's not what we were taught, it's what we've picked up, that somehow if you're good, and if you're a good

Christian, then you should never suffer, that everything should go well, you should be successful and rich, and blah, blah, blah, blah, and if those things aren't happening for you, then the opposite is implied, that you must have done something wrong. You're not close enough to God or you're not faithful enough. So, even though it may not be said, it's definitely implied in much of popular Christianity. And so, the question when someone is suffering, is right there at the surface, saying, well, where's God then? And that is the undoing of many people's faith, because it's a faith that thinks that God's job is to give us an easy life. And when that doesn't happen, then it's, like, well, what good is this God then, and we miss all of the other sides of being in relationship with God, all the other possibilities of going deeper in ourselves and knowing that we are loved, and of worth, and all of those other pieces. So, it's a really relevant book, which is probably why it is in scripture, because it really nailed the question then, and throughout time.

Karin Peter 08:56

Well, it also, kind of, addresses, it's a little bit of a, to use a good Pentecostal term, a convicting book, in the sense that as you read it, and you read the discourse between some of the characters, there are some really super pious people saying, "Oh, if you were really good, this would not have happened to you." And

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 09:14

That's us.

Karin Peter 09:15

And, even though we want to say, "Oh, we wouldn't have, we're not the kind of Christian she just explained, Charmaine. We don't believe that." We do harbor some of that in our Community of Christ experience. We do have a little bit of this, well, if we don't drink or smoke, or do all these bad things, then we are good people, and that's what God wants from us. And then, when good things happen, we say things like, "Oh, God really blessed my family, or really blessed me," which is that turned on its head.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 09:43

Right. And I think for lots of people, especially maybe those who are more attuned to guilt,

Karin Peter 09:51

Oh, that would be me.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 09:52

I, just, you know, naming it for myself, is that it's when things are difficult, that that surfaces the most. And it's like, oh, I must have stepped wrong. I must have done something wrong that this would have happened, because if I am doing things right, God wouldn't have let this happen to me. And it's, that's not good theology. I mean, that's, there's nowhere that says if you follow Jesus, you're going to be a millionaire or that you're going to have an easy life. In fact, all the signs are that following Jesus is hard work, and you're going to have to look at yourself really deeply, and you may be homeless. Jesus was at times. You may be hungry, you may struggle, but there's that other message, that it's there. And so, actually, this book is, like, putting it out there for people in their time to see that there's a theology that

might be actually dangerous, that might, that definitely is not helpful in some settings, and may well be a barrier between people and God, so.

Tony Chvala-Smith 11:10

And I'm gonna give you a spoiler alert right now. The Book of Job does not answer the problem of suffering and evil. That's the spoiler alert. We'll work that through, but it actually has something better to offer. So, the next place to go would be, where's, what is this literature in the Hebrew Bible? Charmaine, if you'd like to pull up that slide, say Job, Book of Job belongs to a category that scholars refer to as wisdom literature. And the books, the primary books in wisdom that represent wisdom, literature are Proverbs, obviously, Job, Ecclesiastes, some Psalms are identified as wisdom psalms, and then in the Apocrypha, or Deuterocanonical books, which are Jewish writings that are not finally in the Hebrew Bible, but that were and are still used by many Christians as Scripture, the Book of Sirach, and the book called The Wisdom of Solomon, are also wisdom books. And the next question then would be, well, what exactly is wisdom literature? And simply put, a wisdom literature is a type of literature in the Hebrew Bible, that's grounded in a particular theological tradition, right. And the tradition says, I'll flesh this out, but the tradition is also called just simply the wisdom tradition, or wisdom theology. And this tradition differs from other traditions in the Hebrew Bible, because it's not as interested in things like God's action in history, God's saving acts, like the Exodus. It's not interested in the Temple. It's not interested in sacrifice. It's not interested in prophetic statements of judgment. Rather, wisdom theology focuses on everyday experience, and what it tries to do is, it tries to discern some kind of meaningful pattern in everyday experience, something like, what are the hidden rules that are at work in life. And once you flesh those rules out, then what that is, in Hebrew Bible, is wisdom, right? And you take those rules, and you turn them into a little device called a proverb. So, the proverb, as a literary form, becomes the carrier of different experiences of wisdom. This wisdom theology thinks that there's a moral order to the universe that's, kind of, eternal. It's the way things are, and what it means to be righteous is to follow wisdom, to live by wisdom. Now, here's the difficulty in the wisdom tradition in the Hebrew Bible. At the heart of wisdom theology is a particular conviction, and this conviction, scholars refer to as the Doctrine of Retribution. Some scholars used to refer to it as the Act-Consequence Syndrome.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 14:24

And we've talked about this at different times, as we've been going through the Old Testament, but it's really comes into sharp focus here.

Tony Chvala-Smith 14:31

So, you see this all through wisdom literature, and it goes like this. If you do good, you get good. If you do bad, you get bad. If you got bad, you did bad, right. It's a very, kind of, simple formula to describe the heart of wisdom. This is what life is about. And so, you have to keep in mind that at this point in ancient Israelite life and faith, there's no such thing as heaven and hell. Everything's worked out in this life. And so, the, you know, the old sages that sat at the village gates and dispensed their wisdom and watched life and everything, they thought that they saw this pattern in things. You know, something happened to so and so, and that's because he did this. If he hadn't done this, he wouldn't have got that. But so and so over here, they're really prospering. They must really have the fear of Yahweh, meaning, respect and awe towards this moral order that God has set in place. And so, this Act-Consequence

Syndrome, this theology of retribution, is at the heart of wisdom tradition. And it's also the thing that the Book of Job is going to argue with, even though it's a wisdom book,

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 15:53

Right. And just an observation is that this kind of seeking a formula, and then encompassing all of religious life into this formula, is usually done by people in a comfortable place, often by those who see themselves already as religious, and they now have this tool to judge other people by. And when you use this formula, you don't have to be, you don't have to get emotionally involved. You don't have to feel any responsibility for this person who is suffering, because it's obvious, they deserve what they're getting. So, in this time period, and in our time period, these, this is a very tempting thing to do, to have some kind of a formula, where you can say, well, here's the reason why this person is suffering. It's just exactly what's deserved, and I have no responsibility here. So, that's just a way to understand the psychology around it, back then and today.

Tony Chvala-Smith 17:11

So, in our own time, you hear something like this, in that tiresome, old saw, everything happens for a reason, right. It's the same kind of view of life that, you know, if you got cancer, you must have ate the wrong thing. Or if you did this, there must have been a reason behind it. Or there must be some larger, divine reason for it. Human beings, especially religious ones, are terrified at the possibility that there are things that happen that are irrational.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 17:46

Or that we can't understand. And that's the other piece of this, kind of, a formula is that it makes God manageable. It says, here's how God works, and we don't need to know anything else. So, that's a piece. Do we want to go on?

Tony Chvala-Smith 18:04

Yeah, let's go on. And so, one of the gifts of the Book of Job is that it's going to say, God is not manageable. God is not in anybody's pocket here. So, here's a quick outline of the Book of Job.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 18:16

Because we haven't told you what's in it yet.

Tony Chvala-Smith 18:18

That's right, we haven't. And, Karin, we could have saved you a lot of time by giving you this outline before you read all 42 chapters.

Karin Peter 18:23

I know, 'cause there are a lot of chapters in Job. Thank goodness some of them are pretty short, but still.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 18:30

It's true.

Tony Chvala-Smith 18:28

So, Job is a sandwich. At the start, chapters one and two, and at the very end, there's a folk tale, and I'm using the term "folk tale" very specifically. I'm gonna say more about that in a minute. It's a narrative prologue. It's an old folk tale, a folk tale about a righteous, fictitious Edomite. Job, in this text, is not an Israelite, he's an Edomite. And so, you know, we don't know whether the original storyteller chose an Edomite because there was a tradition of Edom being a place of wisdom, which there was, or whether what the author or editors of the book we're finally going to do was so dangerous that they didn't want to have an Israelite be the protagonist in the story.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 19:14

And there is one other option too, and that is that this folk tale, at the beginning of this book, may actually be an Edomite folk tale, that this is already a story that has been passed around, in, you know, a century or two, and everybody, kind of, knows it, and knows where it comes from.

Tony Chvala-Smith 19:38

So, what's in between, you know, the giant piece of something delicious between bread, is poetic dialogues, and that's a polite way to say, there's a really big fat argument going on between Job and first, his three, we'll call them friends, Bildad, Elihu and Zophar, and then finally, a lot of scholars believe an editor, who wasn't satisfied with Bildad, Elihu and Zophar's responses to Zilb-, they throw in, oh, I've got the name wrong. Bildad, Elihu, Zophar and I forget who the fourth person is. It's not Elihu, it's

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 20:16

Oh, the first person is Eliphaz.

Tony Chvala-Smith 20:19

Eliphaz, yeah, sorry, should be Eliphaz on top. Bildad, Eliphaz, and Zophar, my mistake.

Karin Peter 20:24

It's Elihu's the young one, right?

Tony Chvala-Smith 20:25

And Elihu comes in at the end, and he tries to improve upon the friends' three arguments, but he doesn't really improve on them at all. So, and then there's this long place in which Yahweh replies to Job's complaint. And then that part, the poetic part, ends with Job withdrawing his complaint against God. Then we drop back then to the narrative. The folk tale concludes with a quasi-happy ending, that is as if the poetry had never happened.

Karin Peter 20:59

It just gets tacked in there and you go, Oh, my! The author got tired of writing. It just ended everything.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 21:06

It's so, tell about what the content is. What's, what is this old folk tale? What's happening?

Tony Chvala-Smith 21:13

So, the old folk tale starts off in a once upon a time, where you can tell, when you're reading Job, chapter one, you can tell this is fiction, fiction, fiction. It's a story.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 21:28

"There was once a man in the land of Uz".

Tony Chvala-Smith 21:31

...whose name was Job. Once upon a time there was a man named Job, who lived in the land of Uz, yes. So, the folk story, chapters one and two, are about this righteous dude who's righteousness was so great that he covered himself and his kids, even when they really hadn't done anything wrong. He offered sacrifices just in case his kids had done wrong.

Karin Peter 21:55

That's my favorite part, the offerings in case my children have sinned.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 21:59

Yeah, or forgot to give the offering, then, hey, we're going to cover it all.

Tony Chvala-Smith 22:05

And so, then the scene shifts to the heavenly court. And in the heavenly court, God is, you know, all of these angelic beings who are part of the heavenly court are appearing before God, and there's one of them, and I'm gonna call him by his Hebrew name so we don't get him confused with something else. His name in Hebrew is a title, ha-satan. This later becomes Satan, a name, but here, it's just a title. The adversary, the accuser, the prosecutor, who obviously, in this tale, works for God and goes around on Earth looking for cases to present before God that should be prosecuted. And in the storyline, God says to ha-satan, have you considered my servant Job? He is just, oh, he is so awesome. And ha-satan says, "Well, nothing bad ever happened to him. So, remove the fence you put around him and just see what happens." And so, essentially then what happens is that there's a wager, kind of, between ha-satan and God, and God says, very well, don't kill him, but you can, you know, do what you need to do.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 23:18

To test him.

Karin Peter 23:2

Yeah. Do your worst.

Tony Chvala-Smith 23:21

Right. And so, the story goes on that Job begins losing everything, his 10 Kids and his animals. And then he, then subsequently in chapter two, he gets some horrible skin disease. His life has gone from the pinnacle of what the wisdom tradition taught, you know, if you do a good you get good. Job had a lot of good, he must have done really good. His life has gone from that, to a life where he's sitting in a pile of ashes using a piece of broken pottery to scrape his itchy skin because he has a skin disease.

And his wife is saying, "Why don't you just curse God and die?" you know. And so, that's how, that's the narrative. The narrative then ends with, you know, the original tale...

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 24:11

At the very end of the story.

Tony Chvala-Smith 24:12

Right. At the end of the book of Job, the original tale, we don't have. It, and the ending has been edited some. We can tell that. But the original folktale ended with Job getting everything back and more because he was patient and because he didn't speak badly with his mouth, etc. That was the original tale.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 24:32

Which means they didn't read the whole book either.

Tony Chvala-Smith 24:36

Yes, exactly.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 24:37

'cause Job is not, Job is impatient.

Karin Peter 24:41

He's not patient. He's not patient.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 24:41

He's impatient. He is really frustrated, and he's grieving terribly.

Karin Peter 24:48

And he's angry.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 24:49

Absolutely.

Tony Chvala-Smith 24:50

Totally. Absolutely.

Karin Peter 24:52

One of the commentaries I read was, one of the new commentaries I've got, *The Queer Bible Commentary*, and that author made a comment that really caught my attention. And he said, Job gets so angry with God that he basically says, "Can you just back off for a little while and give me enough time to swallow my spit?" So, I went and looked it up in chapter seven, and yes, that is pretty much what he says. I mean, it gets, he gets pretty angry.

Tony Chvala-Smith 25:22

Absolutely, yeah. He's lost everything for no reason. Now, here's the deal. The way that the book is set up, the reader has privileged information, because nowhere, not even in the little happy ending that's been added at the end, nowhere does Job ever find out that what happened to him was because of a wager between God and ha-satan to see, you know, what kind of righteousness Job actually had.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 25:53

And this is a good place to remind people that this is a folktale. So, a folktale or short story like this, is told to give a moral, and it's not a picture of something that actually happened. So, this idea of God and ha-satan having this, was, this little discussion about, well, is Job really righteous? Or is he just wanting the benefits of being in relationship with you, God, you know. And so, there's people who have this problem with scripture, who think that it's all history. And so, if it's history, then this is a snapshot of how God works and how, you know, what happens in heaven. And so, this is also, that's another reason to go back to this point that this is a folktale. So, it's like many others. It sets up a situation that is not based on reality or fact, but starts to create the situation in which the problem emerges and becomes very obvious and evident. So, that's what's happening here. And just want to keep reminding us of that, because too many people get hung up on, this is what God is really like? This is what God does? You know, God's testing us all the time or letting us be tested by, and usually people go to the Satan thing, not understanding that ha-satan is part of God's, one of God's employees.

Tony Chvala-Smith 27:39

Ha-satan is on God's staff. I've actually met this dude before on other staffs. The one who's, like, looking around for things people are doing wrong, right.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 27:49

Anyhow, so, sorry, that was a little cutaway, just because that's something that almost always comes up when we're dealing with Job.

Tony Chvala-Smith 27:57

So, my point here is that, you know, the original folk story probably was trying to teach something like patience in adversity, you know, God will come through. Whatever it was trying to teach, what's happened is that the author, but not final editor of the Book of Job, has stuck this immense slice of poetry in the middle, and we, as a reader, now go into that poetry, already knowing that Job is innocent, right. We go into the poetry already armed to take Job's side, right. Now, it's actually a little, it's kind of an ingenious literary device. We go in and, so, when the three friends, when Bildad, Eliphaz and Zophar starts, start trying to justify their traditional view, we know, as Job the character in the story knows, that they're off base, way off base on it. So, that's, kind of, our explanation part. Now we'll go into some, some exploration.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 29:03

So, do you want to say anything more about what the content, though, of that poetry is in relationship to the...

Tony Chvala-Smith 29:10

So basically, the poetry from 4-27, the poetry is an argument about the doctrine of retribution. Job's like, I have no idea why this has happened to me. I mean, Job is a wise person, a sage. He would know the doctrine of retribution inside and out. He would live by it. And now something's happened to him and his theological formula isn't working. And so, he's saying, what in the heck has happened to me? Well, the three friends, once they sit quietly with him for a while, it is suffering, but then they open their mouths, bad move, and then the three of them, in different ways, start saying, you know what, you know what the orthodoxy is. You know what the faith says. You did something wrong, Job. You just need to fess up. And Job's like, I have no idea what I did wrong. Well, your kids did something wrong. How could they have done something wrong? There's no crime that fits this if it's punishment. And so, the three friends in the poetry are the representatives of, they're representatives of what that the church always said, kind of, that they're the representatives of the orthodox wisdom view, that things happen because they are consequences, immediate consequences. You do good, you get good. You do bad, you get bad. And obviously, this is how we're going to interpret Job's situation. Job, you just need to face the fact that you have messed up somewhere.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 30:50

Yeah, and the writer of this midsection really is helping you see the unfairness of what they're saying. It really shines a light on how unjust it is for them to say this to him. And then, when we get to the place where, you know, Job in his anger, and frustration, and grief, demands God to respond to these questions, to his question about why is this happening. God's answer, God doesn't answer specifically.

Karin Peter 31:38

He trounces him. He trounces him when he answers, or she, maybe it's a she. That would explain a lot.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 31:45

Exactly.

Karin Peter 31:46

God trounces Job.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 31:48

Basically saying, do you know the things I know? Can you see what I see? And basically, in a way, it's challenging that formulaic response of orthodox approach in wisdom literature, that, yeah, you should be able to know everything about God, and this is exactly how God is. It's challenging, again, that idea that somehow, we should have an answer that makes sense of all of this. And God is saying, do you know these things? Do you know about these creatures of the deep? Do you know about the highest places in the world? Do you, do you know what it is to create something and...

Karin Peter 32:31

You make it sound so nice? God asks, he goes, who the heck are you, Job, to be questioning me? Look at what I've done? What have you done? I mean, it's not as nice as you're making it sound, Charmaine.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 32:42

Well, it, but it is saying, it is challenging the idea that there should be an answer, that there is one answer to why there is suffering, so.

Tony Chvala-Smith 32:55

In this story, not even God is coming clean on the answers. But actually, the whole book is trying to say something about that, which we'll get to later. So, I mean, just hang in there with us.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 33:10

But, I think, one of the things that we're just trying to, try to get it is that this, all of that poetry, and even God's response, are arguing with that idea that somehow we can just understand at all. We, if we're righteous enough, none of this should ever happen to us, and we can have, that relationship with God is some kind of a guarantee that we will have prosperity and peace.

Tony Chvala-Smith 33:40

Right, and that Christian ethics should be something like a spreadsheet, right? Oh, look, you've done this. Here's the columns, and here's the columns, and here's what adds up. And the Book of Job is, like, no, not at all.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 33:54

And so, it's this very elaborate set of arguments against that formula. Even God is arguing the, against the formula, which I think is kind of clever in all of this.

Tony Chvala-Smith 34:11

So, in our next section, where we explore, we're going to do some, what we're calling some takeaways, from the Book of Job that might touch on some of these issues that have been coming up. So, we've identified, there's certainly more, but there are nine takeaways for, we're going to work from. So, the first one.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 34:29

Is, I think it's really fascinating, that when is it that God shows up? And to whom does God show up? God shows up to the person who's asking the questions, the one who is challenging the status quo, the religious status quo. I think that is wonderful that God is responding, not to the ones who are always faithful and righteous and so self-congratulatory about their piety. God is responding to the one who's asking the hard questions.

Tony Chvala-Smith 35:08

And when God responds to the one who's asking the hard questions, and that one withdraws his lawsuit, then God turns, at the very end of the book, turns to the three twaddle spewing friends. And this is, I'm quoting from chapter 42, "After Yahweh had spoken these words to Job, Yahweh said to Eliphaz the Temanite: 'My wrath is kindled against you and against your two friends; for you have not spoken to me what is right, as my servant Job has.'" This is, this blows me away at the end of the book. "...now therefore take seven bulls and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering. My servant Job shall pray for you. I will accept his prayer not to deal with

you according to your folly; for you have not spoken of me what is right as my servant Job has done.” This, this is a blow away moment, because what the three friends had been speaking is the orthodoxy out of the Book of Proverbs, basically, right. They’ve been saying, you do this, you get this. You do this, you do that, on and on and goes, this is the way the universe works. We know this, this is how God has set it up. We’re righteous. Job, you did something and you’re not righteous. You got to fix it. And so here, God is saying in the whole storyline, Job’s the truth teller here. You guys are not. And I think that is an absolutely ironic and hysterical conclusion to the book. So, that’s pretty amazing when you think about it.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 36:42

And if you put words to it, what is the truth that Job is articulating? The truth is that this doesn’t make sense. This isn’t fair. There are things in life that just are not fair. How do we, where is God when we are suffering? And again, this is another thing that this book does, is that actually God meets Job in his suffering, which is another part of this, totally outside of the formula. The formula already has you judged and discarded by God, and here it is, God meeting Job in the depths of his despair. So that’s another piece that goes along with that.

Tony Chvala-Smith 37:36

Second takeaway from the book of Job is, scripture as a theological debate. Oh, I thought scripture was an answer book, that was a book simply that gave bumper sticker answers. Well, no. The Book of Job is a perfect example of how the Bible itself is this complicated library of books, is itself a conversation and sometimes an argument. And so, I think that’s really important for us to know, that scripture doesn’t always just settle everything. Scripture sometimes lifts up the validity of arguing our way through to something new. I think that’s pretty cool in this book.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 38:16

And the third one is that uncomfortable editor’s may have had the last word and that’s literal, that they actually said, oh, well, wait, wait, wait. We kind of like that formula. That’s, kind of, what we go with. So, we’re going to have to have some happy ending here that kind of proves it. But we really aren’t going to be able to cut out all these chapters in between. Someone might notice. And so, but to think about how differently, how less confusing this book would be, if we knew that it was a theological debate, and we let it end, before we go back, before that happy ending in chapter 42, verses 7-17. How, and maybe just to try reading it without that last bit on it, and let ourselves receive that as a gift, that argument.

Karin Peter 39:15

The other piece with that happy ending though, is it does the same thing that the, kind of, prologue does. It reminds you that, oh, yes, this is based, inserted into a folktale, because it’s the, “and they lived happily ever after” part that we get a fairy tale.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 39:30

It does, and.

Karin Peter 39:32

...that reminds us, oh, yeah, this was a story to explain, in this case, irrational, the irrational nature of human existence and our relationship with God is unexplainable at times.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 39:49

Yeah.

Karin Peter 39:51

That's okay to have that lesson embedded into this Cinderella story. Meaning it could have been Cinderella as much as this, it could have been, so.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 40:00

And if people are having problems with the idea that this is a short story or a folk tale, just take a look through and see how many things you can find that are like that, you know, like the happy ending, or like, you know, getting twice as much as everything, as he had before. And things like, how is it that of all the numbers of animals he has always are in, in groups of 10? I mean, they always end in a zero, you know, and his children, there's seven and 3-10. You know, everything all...

Karin Peter 40:31

His daughters were the prettiest in the land.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 40:34

Exactly. There's so many things. So just start looking for them. Don't be alarmed. It's okay to see them, and to say, "Oh, okay, this is setting something up". And then what is it that we end up hearing, both in that beginning and little tale, and then all of the discussion in between?

Tony Chvala-Smith 40:57

I suppose, if you want to take a meta view, you could say, well, we have this book in the canon, and it does have this editorial addition at the end, or this editorial shifting at the end. Is there any sense we can make of that? And I suppose one could say, on a large scale, sometimes people do come through absolutely horrific, tragic circumstances, and there's no sense at the end of the book that Job has been healed of his skin disease. He still itchy probably, and his original kids are gone. He's got new ones. There's no, this, because it's a tale, it doesn't go on to explore, did he still grieve for the others or anything like that. But I suppose in one sense, if you take the book as a whole in its current finished form, there is a sense that there is a possibility of new life beyond tragedy. But I also, the other places in the Hebrew Bible where an editor has tacked on a different ending, a case in point is the Book of Daniel.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 42:00

Which we'll be doing next.

Tony Chvala-Smith 42:02

Right, next time. Book of Daniel originally ended with one calculation of the end that didn't come to pass. And right in the Hebrew text there's an additional number that's added on, as a subsequent editor was like...

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 42:15

Like, oops,

Tony Chvala-Smith 42:16

That didn't work out that way. Let's recalculate. So, these editings do go on. Alright, so, fourth takeaway; who is God in this book? And here's something that's really interesting about God language in this book. Up until chapter 38, the language that's used for God is more distancing language; "God, the Most High," "El Shaddai", "Mighty God". You know, all these, kind of, title terms that indicate sort of a transcendent distant figure. In chapter 38, when Job finally gets his wish and God appears, all those terms for God aren't used any more. What's used in chapter 38 is the covenant term, "Yahweh", right? The name of God that goes back to, "I will be who I will be", the name of God that connotes, I will be with you. And so, yes, God pulls rank. Yahweh pulls rank there at the end with all the; where were you? Where were you? Do you know, this? No, there are, they're, like, unanswerable rhetorical questions. But interestingly, the fact that the editor, storyteller of the whole, switches to the term Yahweh, right as God is appearing to Job out of a whirlwind, is a very subtle way of conveying the return of some kind of intimacy, the return of some, kind of, connection to the God of the Covenant who knows us and who's interacting with us, who's not just a distant, you know, player in things, so. So, there's those two different sides of God.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 44:07

A nice subtlety. A nice subtlety that we might not normally be able to tell because we don't have the Hebrew text in front of us. The fifth takeaway is that suffering does not equal divine displeasure. And that's true in the scene at the beginning of the story, even though it tends to use that orthodox view of, you know, you get good if you do good. This suffering is not equal to divine displeasure, and God's encountering Job and, is not displeasure, maybe like Tony said, just some pulling rank. But, in fact, there's affirmation, there's confirmation that his asking the questions and bringing his anger and his despair to God, and his lack of an answer. But that's appropriate, that actually, God wants to interact with that in people's lives.

Tony Chvala-Smith 45:17

And that Yahweh...

Karin Peter 45:17

Or that when that happens, God's nearness happens after the complaining and the arguing and the bitterness and the rest of it, which is a, an irrational thought for us who have a fear of arguing with God and feel guilty when we don't just accept God's plan. I hear that from people, you know, I just have to accept the plan. And there's this unwillingness to engage in this bitter complaining...

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 45:44

Yes, way.

Karin Peter 45:45

...way, and yet, that's exactly what brings God closer.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 45:48

Absolutely.

Tony Chvala-Smith 45:48

And that's, I think, why at the end, Yahweh says to, "Job has spoken of me what's right, he's spoken rightly about me", right. I'm the covenant partner who can be argued with and you...

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 46:00

Blamed, and.

Tony Chvala-Smith 46:00

And you fought with me. You know, you can be really, really angry at me, and then I know you're in relationship with me.

Karin Peter 46:08

And I'm still here. So.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 46:11

And I'm not your pet, which is, the others are saying, this is how you work God to your own benefit, in effect. So, yeah, that, kind of, goes along with it. The sixth takeaway is that bad theology worsens suffering. Many people would say that the pastoral care that his friends brought, was being there silent for seven days, that they should have just resisted the temptation to say anything. And so, because what happens here is, as you can see, this escalation of Job's despair and anguish, because his friends are saying, well, this is how it works. And whether you're willing to acknowledge it, or admit that you've done something wrong, that doesn't change the fact that you're getting punished for it. Yeah. And so, it actually, it makes it worse for him. It doesn't fix anything. It doesn't make God more accessible. He becomes more deeply despairing, more depressed, and more angry. And so, I, just a good point that when we feel like we have to say something, bad theology can be dangerous, it can be harmful.

Tony Chvala-Smith 47:41

And, you know, it's, lots of times people think, well, the Book of Job was written to give some kind of answer to the problem of suffering. No, what if we say the book of Job was written to counter bad theology that makes suffering all the worse? You know, what if that was part of...

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 48:00

Or makes the victim...

Tony Chvala-Smith 48:01

Yeah.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 48:01

...the cause of their own suffering?

Karin Peter 48:02

Or blames the victim for suffering?

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 48:04

Yeah.

Tony Chvala-Smith 48:04

Right, and says, you know, some theological answers are just not answers at all. You know, if you go by that theology of retribution, that bad things happen because people did bad, and you look at, try to apply it in our current world, you see hurricanes and natural disasters hitting places where people are already impoverished and making their lives worse, a God behind that would be a demon, right. There's nothing about the God of the Bible in that. And so, you have to be very, very careful in one's theological claims and assumptions, and not try to have some sort of totalizing theory about, this is how things are happening and why they're happening. The Book of Job will really push back on you for that.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 48:50

So, number seven, the popular theology of the day loses. And in this case, it's the theology of retribution. If we were to look at it today, the idea that everything happens for a reason, that loses when you bring it to the book of Job.

Karin Peter 49:08

Or if you're a wicked, recovering heathen, like me, you can extrapolate a little further and go, ooo, piety loses. So, no, no.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 49:16

Exactly.

Karin Peter 49:17

It depends on how you want to look at it.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 49:18

That's the common denominator, past and present, is that, yeah, those who think that they know and that they, under, they, well, who take it upon themselves to do God's job of judging, whatever that, whatever God's judgment really means. But they take it on. Yeah, they're, they lose.

Tony Chvala-Smith 49:40

And think her about how cool is that in our scriptures, in these canonical, canonized texts, there are various theologies, and here's a book that takes on one of the theologies in, that's also canonized, and

says, no, that doesn't work all the time, right. There's a lot to learn about unity in diversity from that, and about how to be the church, and about how to deal with difficult theological issues. And, by the way, the book of Proverbs is still canon too. I wouldn't want to be understood to say, "We now drop the Book of Proverbs because Job has critiqued it". There's, there is a certain truth to that act-consequence thinking, you know.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 50:20

But, yeah.

Tony Chvala-Smith 50:20

There are consequences for certain kinds of actions. You just can't turn it into a totalizing system...

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 50:26

Right.

Tony Chvala-Smith 50:26

...of explanation.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 50:26

Some kinds of suffering happen because we make bad choices, or we have only bad choices to choose from. Some kinds of suffering comes from the kind of people that you choose to associate with. But you know, so there's cause and effect, kind of, suffering. But this is talking about, you can't look at all kinds of situations and say they all, the criteria is the same for why there is suffering. So that, yeah, that suffering is sometimes unexplainable. And we shouldn't try.

Tony Chvala-Smith 51:01

So, that, you know, that eighth take away, some suffering is unexplainable. What if the folk story that Job begins with is making a true statement about something? That is, there are types of suffering that are completely irrational. They have no legitimate explanation. And the way that the storyteller is trying to say that, is by having something go on over the character's head that they never find out about. It's an interesting narrative way to say, we don't know why some stuff happens. And the fact that God never refers back to it either is, kind of, interesting, in the book of Job. But how does one explain a leukemia that strikes a nine month old child, right? There is no explanation that, I mean, you can try to come up with biological and genetic, but they leave us cold because they don't fit the totality of the experience. So, I think that, in a sense, the folk story is saying something true; the origins of evil in the universe are over our head. We can't just get it and understand it.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 52:26

And then the last one, and this is a question from ha-satan himself, and basically, can we love God anyway? And that's a question for us all. You know, are we just loving God because we think we're going to get stuff, or get an easy life, or get whatever it is we want?

Karin Peter 52:51

Eternal salvation?

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 52:55

Then we're only loving God for what we get. And can we love God for God's sake, not for what we get out of it? And so, this is a really important question, and it weaves its way through other books, but here, it's right in your face.

Tony Chvala-Smith 53:13

Ha-satan's question, does Job fear God that he'll show awe and respect towards God for nothing? You know, 'cause...

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 53:23

Or because he thinks he will benefit from it?

Tony Chvala-Smith 53:26

It's...

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 53:27

It's the question...

Tony Chvala-Smith 53:27

This is so interesting because it's like this character is trying to say, well, what if Job's thinks of his relationship with you, God, is totally transactional, right? And so, the Book of Job then pushes back on any kind of transactional view of relationship with God. It's not a pop machine. Sorry, I spoke like a Michigander. It's not a pop machine; you put money in, you get pop out, right? It's a relationship, for goodness sakes. And so, there's give and there's take and there's growing and there's falling, falling back.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 54:00

And there's not understanding and there's acknowledging that you've made mistakes, but also acknowledging that some things are unjust.

Tony Chvala-Smith 54:11

And the great, my view, the great goal of the Christian life is, as Charmaine put it, learning to love God for God's own sake, and in so doing, learning to love neighbor and enemy, for their own sake, and not for some reward, or for what we can get.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 54:33

In this life, or the life to come.

Tony Chvala-Smith 54:37

Right. So, that's just a little bit of, you know, exploring the text. And now we're going to go into experiencing.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 54:44

Actually, I was going to ask first if Karin had any other questions in the explore that you'd like us to...

Karin Peter 54:49

No, I think you covered all the things that had come up for me when I was going through this. You might want to say a little bit more about how Job has been misused to set up that, Satan on one shoulder, angel on the other shoulder dualism, because that's where it gets taken, even though that's not what this is about.

Tony Chvala-Smith 55:11

Yeah, people habitually, when they read this book in translation, they read back into it whatever they think they knew about Satan from the New Testament. And by the way, the figure, ha-satan, develops in Israel's theology. Here, ha-satan is a functionary in the Divine Court. With it, with, you know, Job, the Book of Job's hard to date, but exile, immediately after the exile, say around 500 BCE, but within a couple 100 years, you have the book, the two books of Chronicles, or just the chronicler we'll call it. The chronicler has shifted the view of ha-satan to someone who actually provokes David, in that case, to do something bad. And then from there, when you get into apocalyptic and other types of Jewish literature that is non-canonical, but, you know, it's in this whole period, this figure rapidly develops, probably under some Persian influences, into almost a kind of arch-enemy of God and of God's people. And that figure then comes over into the New Testament. So, people, a lot of people don't know the development of the figure, and therefore they would read back into Job, you know, what they think they know already from, say, the New Testament. That's, and that's a bit of a problem. Another problem is that people assume, they like the statement, "the patience of Job", which actually comes from the New Testament. It's from, the Book of James refers to the patience of Job, and James, the Book of James may not be referring to the canonical Book of Job, but to a non-canonical text called the "Testament of Job". That's a story for another time. But the whole idea of the patience of Job then becomes a summary of a 42 chapter book that Karin slogged through...

Karin Peter 57:03

I did.

Tony Chvala-Smith 57:04

...that, in which for all but three chapters, Job proves to be anything but patient.

Karin Peter 57:12

Is not patient, although it does, this whole ha-satan thing, does explain, I think, if here, how it's written in the Bible is Satan, the name of the attorney, I think it explains where all the bad lawyer jokes started, because you can, kind of, see, right off the bat.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 57:30

What that's suggesting, that some of those lawyer jokes aren't deserved.

Karin Peter 57:37

Oh, well, I don't want any lawyers to email us here at *Project Zion Podcast*. Just email Charmaine directly.

Tony Chvala-Smith 57:47

Ha-satan, Attorney at Law, LLC.

Karin Peter 57:51

All right. So those, the mistake that we make, the couple of mistakes we make are just really important to keep pointing out to folks, that when you're reading, don't get confused, just because you see the term Satan. We're talking, you can put in there: solicitor, or accuser...

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 58:07

Yeah. Prosecuting attorney.

Karin Peter 58:09

Prosecuting attorney, yeah.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 58:11

Yeah, yeah. And don't project back a much more developed view of Satan as evil or the ruler of demons or something like that. That is not what's in mind at all here at this development, stage of development. Good. Right. So, we're gonna go into the experience part of this. And, as we try to say always, one way or another, is that for some people, scripture has been, is temporarily and sometimes permanently unusable, because of the ways that it has been used against individuals. And rightly they are very wary of letting themselves be vulnerable to scripture because they have been harmed by it. And so, we always remind people that we're approaching scripture as human writings from their time and place. And we think that's really important because it combats the idea that somehow everything in the Bible came directly from God's mouth or was dictated by God, and therefore, the things that are there are what God wants us to think, or do, or be. And so, we keep affirming that these are written by human beings. And so, for the experience part, what we want to do is to go into the human experience of the characters from this book, and we do that as a way of perhaps creating for those who are willing and wanting to enter into an experience with scripture, a safe way to do that, by looking at those things that make up all of who we are, and to identify with that, and let it ask us some questions about our own discipleship, or our relationship with God, so. So, that's how we'll be approaching it. Going to read this passage from the end of the second chapter of Job, and through most of the third chapter of Job, I've cut out a bunch of pieces, but I want us to get a sense, a feel for what is happening to Job. So, the story had started out in the first two chapters, or the first chapter with, Job is having all of this wealth, and happy family, and everything that people thought they would want, and then, all of a sudden, it's all taken away, and it's destroyed or killed. And so, he is in mourning and his friends come to him. So, that's where we begin, at the end of the second chapter. ¹³"They sat with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his suffering was very great." And then Job begins to express what's happening in him. So, "After this Job opened his mouth and he cursed the day of his birth, Job said: 'Let the day perish in which I was born, and the night that said, "A man-child is conceived." Let that day be darkness! May God above not seek it, or light shine on it. Let

gloom and deep darkness claim it. Let clouds settle upon it; let the blackness of the day terrify it. That night-let thick darkness seize it!...Yes, let that night be barren; let no joyful cry be heard in it...because it did not shut the doors of my mother's womb, and hide trouble from my eyes. 'Why did I not die at birth? come forth from the womb and expire?? Why were there knees to receive me, or breasts for me to suck? Now I would be lying down and quiet; And I would be, I would be asleep; then I would be at rest... Or why was I not buried like a stillborn child, like an infant that never sees the light? There the wicked cease from troubling, there the weary are at rest...small and the greater there, the slave are free from their master...Why is light given to one who cannot see the way, whom God has fenced in? For my sighing comes like my bread, and my groanings are poured out like water." It just about makes you want to cry. I mean, it just captures so well that part of human experience. And so, a couple of questions to consider as you let yourself feel with Job. When have I felt for a moment, or for longer, something of Job's despair or pain? And just to give yourself permission to go to that place for a minute to know that this story understands those places in our lives. And if that's a place that you would like to journal for a while, be, feel free to do that. But then also, this is more of an analytical question. Where do you hear prayer happening in Job's words? I think different ones of us will hear different prayer in different places in these words of accusation, these words of; why did I even have to experience this? This is, it is too much. So, after Job has said these words, "Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered:" Imagine him just, kind of, on tiptoes saying, well, "If one ventures a word with you, would you be offended? But who can keep from speaking? See, you have instructed many; you have strengthened the weak hands. Your words have supported those who are stumbling, and you have made firm the feeble knees." And here, he's basically saying, you know, Job, you've taught lots of people this theology of, you know, if you do the right things, then you're going to be blessed. And you know, you've really helped people who were struggling by teaching this to them. "But now it has come to you, and you are impatient; it touches you, and you are dismayed. Is not your fear of God your confidence, and the integrity of your ways your hope? Think now, who that was innocent ever perished? Or where were the upright cut off? As I have seen, those who plow iniquity and sow troubles reap the same. By the breath of God they perish, and by the blast of his anger they are consumed." Ah, what are friends for? Because, basically, as you read this and read it again, you basically hear him saying, your kids deserved what they got. They must have done something wrong, and their death and your losses are all deserved. So, consider, if you were in Job's situation, how might Eliphaz's predictable pat answer affect you? And how would it affect your perception of God? I think both of those are worth spending a couple of minutes with, because sometimes I think religious people don't understand how their pat answers open up chasms of separation for those to whom they're applying them, particularly chasms between an individual and God. So, the next friend in, to speak in the storyline of this book is Bildad. But we're going to go off script, and we're going to imagine that Bildad gets Job's anguish, and he sees how badly Eliphaz has failed your friend. So, consider if you were Job in today's world; what would you have Bildad say to you that would be helpful? What might he say that would make a path forward with God? It's just a whole different way of trying to use the wisdom of scripture and life experience to help connect people to God, rather than to judge them. And then another thing to consider, as you leave Job is; who are the Job's that you know, those who are suffering unjustly? And, I think, if we spend a minute with that, we can probably think of quite a few. What would be your prayer for them today? And I'd invite you to just take a few minutes to offer that prayer or write that prayer.

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:08:28

So, welcome and goodbye to the Book of Job.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 1:08:34

And we hope that if you haven't read it lately, that this discussion about it might make it a place that you might want to take a look and explore a bit.

Karin Peter 1:08:45

Well, reading it now, having read it a dozen years ago, forced reading in seminary, and reading it now is night and day because, as I said, I read about it first, to get a better understanding of what was happening. And portions of it, the lament in it, Job's lament in it, are so poetic that you almost feel like you're reading the dark side of one of Shakespeare's sonnets. I mean, they're that poetic in how they're written, in how they articulate despair, and how they articulate frustration, and how they articulate depression, all of those kinds of things. And we forget that those are in there and accessible to us, so that when we are feeling those same things, there's some, a place to go to say that's a legitimate way to feel, even in the midst of my relationship with The Divine. There's space for that.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 1:09:52

Absolutely, and it's invited.

Karin Peter 1:09:54

Yeah, very much so.

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:09:54

I think if you want to read a good 20th century companion piece to Job, to feel your way into the poetry, especially as Job articulates it, I can't think of anything better than the holocaust survivor, Elie Wiesel's book *Night*, which, though he survives the camps, you'd say there's no happy ending, really, except that he survived the camps. But his description of the experience is like reading Job chapter three, over and over and over again.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 1:10:36

And the fact that it required him to let go of the theologies that he'd inherited, and have to find a new way in order for him to make, not to make sense of it, because that's almost impossible to do in real sense, but to have some way to even begin to think about there being a God in the midst of any of that.

Karin Peter 1:11:09

Yeah, absolutely. Well, as you said, Job is an expression of the irrational nature of our experience, and we see some of that, and we also see the human yearning to make sense of it with our editors at tacking on the happy ending at the end. After you read all the chapters of Job, you're, kind of, okay with that happy ending showing up at the end. One of the things we didn't talk about was the last person that comes to counsel Job, and what I really like about that is, he's depicted as being young, and he's very condescending, not just to Job, but to the other people, the other three helpers, the friends, very condescending to them, as well. And I think it almost makes a statement about our own blindness to

our own assumption that we have experienced enough of life to have wisdom to offer regardless, because that's, kind of, the person he depicts as well at the end.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 1:12:22

I am so glad you brought that up, because it's when we look honestly at ourselves, we can see those times when we assume that we had a big enough understanding of life and how things work that our little answers surely, you know, this person hasn't thought about these things. Only I have a lot of these things and I can now, with magnanimous wisdom, share this with others. And it's, like, it's not respecting their experience. It's not acknowledging that they know life. Like, we don't know it.

Karin Peter 1:13:04

I was really just taken with that, I forget what chapter he shows up in, but...

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:13:10

He's up in 32.

Karin Peter 1:13:11

32. I was just really taken with how he's at first presented because you, kind of, look at it going, oh, maybe he's gonna be rational. Maybe he's gonna go, oh, you old people, you've screwed this up. You didn't help Job at all, and maybe he's gonna be helpful. And he's not. He's worse, and it's just really, and go to 32 and really read that, skim the rest of it, but go to 32 'cause it's really.

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:13:35

You know that the fact that Job doesn't even say anything, it's, kind of, like, you almost can depict Job like...what?

Karin Peter 1:13:48

I think there are some hand signs that might be involved in that, but we probably can't depict them 'cause this is video. But it is. It gives you that feeling of, oh my God, I cannot believe this. I mean, it's outrageous, yeah, in its piety. So, thanks for this little trek through Job. I do think it will help people make sense of something that is really hard to understand just at first reading. And I really hope that people, through this, can find not only the beauty in the writing, because some of it, as harsh as the subject matter is, is beautiful writing, but find ways to experience it with what you talked about, Charmaine, finding the opposite. This wasn't helpful so, what is when we're in this situation? So, any last thoughts or last comments before we leave Job and march to Daniel?

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:14:47

One would be that image of the God of the Covenant finally speaking, the God whose name means, "I am who I will be and I will be with you." You know, when my mother and I were standing by my grandfather's bed as he was dying, the only thing I could ever think to say out loud to him, because he was in a coma, was, "We're still with you, Grandpa." So...

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 1:15:19

There's power in that.

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:15:20

There's so much power in that without having some meta-explanation that actually cheapens the death, and the dying, and the suffering, turning it into a, kind of, formula that fits on somebody's little theological spreadsheet. It's just plenty, plenty enough to say, we belong to a God who is with us, come what may?

Karin Peter 1:15:45

Absolutely. Okay, well, that brings us to the end of our episode on Job. I do have a quote to end us with, and today our quote is from G.K. Chesterton. Chesterton, who was a lay theologian, who wrote the *Father Brown* mysteries, you may have seen them on BBC or PBS, they're kind of the ecclesiastic version of *Murder She Wrote*, if you're my age. But the, here is the quote about the Book of Job, "*The Iliad* is only great because all life is a battle, *The Odyssey*, because all life is a journey, the Book of Job, because all life is a riddle." I think that is a wonderful way to sum up our conversation about Job. So, with that, we look forward with some trepidation to our next episode, which is the Book of Daniel. Until then, I'm Karin Peter, and I'm with Tony and Charmaine Chvala-Smith. Thanks so much for being with us.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 1:16:58

We're glad to do this. Bye, bye.

Josh Mangelson 1:16:58

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