

The Hebrew Corner

The book of Job may be historically the oldest book of the Bible in terms of the time of authorship. The events described in Job have been shown to be consistent with the time of Abraham. During this period, heads of the household would provide sacrifices for their families, and women were given inheritances, unlike the time of Moses and later. In addition, there was no mention of the Torah, Mosaic law, or Israel in this book. The marauding bands of the Sabeans and Chaldeans described in Job are characteristic of the patriarchal period. The use of the ancient monetary term kesita (קשיטה, kuh-see-TAH) in Job 42:11 also advocates for this era.

Whether or not the author of the book was a contemporary of Job is unknown, as the story of Job may have been passed down orally and then later written on a scroll by a scribe. Let us assume, based on the above considerations, that at least the events described in Job occurred during the patriarchal period in which Abraham lived. Since there was no Torah and no scripture, what was the basis for Job's contention that he was a righteous man

Chapter 31 of Job gives a detailed insight into Job's concept of right and wrong, and by extension, the standards of morality during the time of Abraham. Sexual sin is mentioned first in Job 31:1:

“I made a covenant with my eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?”

The Hebrew phrase translated here as “made a covenant with my eyes” is b'rit karatti l'aynah (ברית כרתי לעיני, buh-REET kah-RAHT-tee

luh-ay-NAH). The Hebrew word for covenant in this phrase is b'rit, and the phrase literally means to “cut a covenant with my eyes.” This evidently refers to the ceremonial slaughtering of an animal, dividing it into 2 pieces and spreading them apart, and then passing through the pieces (Genesis 15:7-21 describes the ritual). In the ancient Middle East it was a common practice to seal an agreement by sacrificing an animal, with the implication that if one of the two parties broke the agreement, that a similar fate would come to the covenant breaker.

In the B'rit Hadesha (New Covenant or Testament), we see that Jesus vividly endorsed Job's covenant (Matthew 5:27-29):

“Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body be cast into hell.”

Continuing in Job 31, we see that Job understands the morality of caring for the poor (Job 31:19-22):

“If I have seen any perish for want of clothing, or any poor without covering; if his loins have not blessed me, and if he were not warmed with the fleece of my sheep; If I have lifted up my hand against the fatherless, when I saw my help in the gate: then let mine arm fall from my shoulder blade, and mine arm be broken from the bone.”

Continuing in the chapter, Job states that trusting in his wealth would be a sin (Job 31:24-28):

If I have made gold my hope, or have said to the fine gold, Thou art my confidence; If I rejoiced because my wealth was great, and because my hand had gotten much; If I beheld the sun when it shined, or the moon walking in brightness; And my heart hath been secretly enticed, or my mouth hath kissed my hand: This also were an iniquity to be punished by the judge: for I should have denied the God that is above.”

In Mark 10, Yeshua, in his conversation with the rich young ruler, emphasized care for the poor as an important service equal to that of keeping the commandments, and laments the entrapment that trusting in riches brings, thus validating the message of Job (Mark 10:17-24):

“And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I might inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother. And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth. Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing that thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me, And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions. And Jesus looked round about, and saith

unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard it is for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!”

Other concepts of sin that Job was clearly aware of, outlined in Chapter 31 and other parts of the book of Job include the following:

Vanity.

Removing landmarks.

Stealing livestock.

Denying God.

Cursing God.

Lying.

Murder.

Thus we seen that although Job apparently lived at a time before the law was given by God to Moses on Mt Sinai, that Job still had a concept of right and wrong that conforms with biblical principles. This also suggest that people throughout the ages and even in today's world, who had never read the Bible, would have a way to know what is right and wrong, and so be accountable for the wrong that they do.

Job clearly had a perception of sin that was remarkably similar to that of Jesus our Yeshua. So was Job aware of Yeshua himself? There is one passage in Job that suggests a possible connection (Job 13:13-16):

“Hold your peace, let me alone, that I may speak, and let come on me what will. Wherefore do I take my flesh in my teeth, and put my life in mine hand? Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him. He also shall be my salvation: for an hypocrite shall not come before him.”

Here the literal translation from the Hebrew is, “also he is to me for salvation.” The Hebrew word which is translated as salvation is yeshua (ישועה, yuh-shoo-AH). Whether this indicates that Job was aware of Jesus at this time is not known, but Job clearly declares his need for a saviour, and Yeshua is the embodiment of salvation. Job's character in many ways represents one who exemplified the person of Jesus our Yeshua.

May you have a great month full of God's blessings. L'cha shalom!