

Job's Life: Moral Issues in the Discourses of the Book of Job

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ABSTRACT: This ethico-theological study analyzes aspects of moral issues from the accounts found in the book of Job. As described at the beginning of the book, the beautiful life that Job had is lost by him through a series of successive acts aimed at his mental destabilization. An apparent understanding between divinity, such as the one who blessed Job, and Satan, the one who wants to destroy Job, leads to the righteous Job losing everything he had in family and wealth, leaving only his wife, who seems to be he began to delirium mentally. This study is divided into seven essential parts for finalizing the aspects of moral issues. In the first part, we will deal with Job as a natural and historical person. Then we will focus on the moral issues that arise from the discourses found in the book of Job. In this part we will dwell on some ideas launched in the public space, such as Job as an experiment, the reasoning of Job's friends and their theological thinking, and then apply the filter of Kantian morality to this issue, ending with the suspension of normality in the book of Job and with the presentation of Job as a New Testament person.

KEYWORDS: Job, morality, friends, reasoning, normality, principle, experiment, retributive theology, Kantian principle

Introduction

The book of Job raises a wide-ranging discussion about God's morality and the way the wicked work. Reading this Bible book, we can see how a seemingly righteous man suffers because of an idea that Satan, the evil character, presents to God. God is the One who allows, at his insistence, the wicked to touch His righteousness. The perception of Job's reality in today's world is a cruel act or fact of the existing world. This perception is primarily due to the divine aspect or the involvement of the divinity for the punishment of man Job without any physical reason but only a demonstration in the metaphysical world.

The reason for Job's suffering or the metaphysics of chance presented at the beginning of the Book of Job takes us to a heavenly space to which only angelic beings have access. This discussion takes place in the transcendental space of our world but with connotations or physical consequences in the life of the supposed righteous Job.

In this study, we will first look at aspects of divine morality, but we will not limit ourselves to this analysis. In addition to this first aspect, which stands out at the beginning of the presentation of the biblical story, we will also discuss the morality of Job's friends but also the way in which Job exists.

Did Job work entirely as a moral man in what he did and said? Although we find some important facts related in the Bible, as the presentation progresses, we see that the central point of the book is placed around the words, words that present the deeds, oaths, thoughts of the past of Job. Was Job as he said he was and did everything he said he did? In other words, was Job the moral man who claims to have been?

In what follows, I would like to dwell on these issues or problems encountered in the book of Job. I do not claim to say that I will describe all the topics and solve all the questions, but I want to shed more light on this issue in the book of Job.

1. The spatiality of the character Job

Cojocariu (2007, 15) in the introduction to the book of Job to the Romanian translation of the Septuagint claims that, "the action and the main characters are located in Edom." Regarding the way of life of Job, we find references in the Old Testament to the prophet Ezekiel, who describes him as a righteous man, "even if these three men -Noah, Daniel and Job - were in it, they could save only themselves by their righteousness, declares the Sovereign Lord" (14:14), but also in the New Testament to Jacob, the brother of the Lord Jesus, "you have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy." (5:11), which shows us that Job was a real and historical person who truly lived on earth.

The name Job also appears in the letters of Tell el-Amarna, in the Egyptian texts of Mari and Alakh, as well as in Ugaritic documents, as proof that it was a well-known name in antiquity. In the ancient Middle East, writings of wisdom were widely circulated, even earlier than 2000 BC. Job is not a mystical or imaginary character created just to highlight the glorious qualities of the God of Israel. Job really lived through these things, and we understand that this book is a book inspired by the Holy Spirit. Speaking on this subject, Branzei (2007, 13) mentions the book's canonicity as being "recognized without difficulty by the Synagogue and the Church, where it was read in antiquity."

Other theological references to this book are found about a certain friend of Job's. Some scholars claim that Eliphaz of Teman is mentioned in Genesis 36:10-11 as one of Esau's descendants. Considering this reference as valid and true then Job's position in Edom is closer to the truth. Edom was a place outside the Philistine land at that time, but it became part of Israel after its conquest by the Jews.

If for the existence of Job as a man we found reference that it would be somewhere in the land of Edom, about the place where his book was written we have several hypotheses. Here we find two main locations, such as the Edomite region in the first place, but also Egypt as a country in the second place. Cojocariu is of the opinion that although we find in the biblical text signs of deep knowledge of Egypt, as well as other traditions of the East, such as Mesopotamian and Phoenician, "it does not necessarily mean that he came from there. information and cultural traditions were as normal as today" (Cojocariu 2007, 15-16).

The story takes place during the patriarchal period of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (from about 2100 BC to the sixteenth century BC) and before the Exodus (Thomas 2003, 1). Here are the arguments that place the book of Job in the patriarchal period and perhaps the oldest book in the Bible:

1. Job's life span (Job 42:16) - approx. 200 years - something that fits the patriarchal period (Abraham lived 175 years);
2. Social unity was the patriarchal family;
3. Job behaved like a high priest in his family (1:4,5);
4. The Chaldeans who killed his servants (1:17) were nomads who had not yet become inhabitants of the cities;
5. Job's wealth is valued in flocks rather than gold and silver (1:3; 42:12);
6. Eliphaz, the temanite, is possibly a descendant of Esau's eldest son (Gen. 36:10,11);
7. Silence of the covenant of God with Abraham, of the law of Moses, and of the exodus of the children of Israel.

2. Job as an experiment

The Bible account portrays Job as a rich man, but what makes him more special is the way the Bible presents him at first as a man who has a special love for his children, a love that is manifested through the periodic sacrifices he made on their behalf. Bulandra (2008, 71) presents

that through these ritual acts the very character of Job and the respect he had for the divinity is highlighted. "What Job did for his children, this habit, shows us a meticulous Job, attentive to every thought and gesture of his sons and daughters."

Bulandra describes the biblical stage of Job as an experiment, like today's laboratory experiments. He sees in Job "a laboratory object or, may we be forgiven for approaching a hamster" (Bulandra 2008, 16). Satan's introduction to the biblical account leads human reason to some rather strange thoughts about God. Cretia (1995, 21) is of the opinion that at this point God is presented as "partaker of a bet if not downright perverse, anyway of a terrible ruthlessness and immeasurability ... An omniscient God could have been without any proof. But perhaps Jehovah wants to put Job to the test just to convince Satan. This is an act of vanity and cruelty."

This experiment is not directed directly at Job, but is manifested as a result of cataclysms and tribal wars. It is not God Almighty who raises his arm directly toward Job, but this power is given to Satan. On the other hand, the latter, Satan, does not act directly on Job either "but through events specific to this realm: wars, plunder, lightning, etc." (Bulandra 2008, 22). This transcendental experiment, discussed in heaven but applied to the earth, will represent for the suffering Job overcoming the threshold of silent patience and passing through the door of liberating speech.

Throughout this experiment, Job was attacked with a hidden purpose, and his goal was to "make Job speak — to react to stimuli through verbal behavior. Satan expected a certain content and a certain addressability of Job's utterance" (Bulandra 2008, 51). He wanted him to forsake God and utter blasphemous words against God, just as his wife had counseled him.

The result of Job's experiment is that Job is a precious being who can still marvel at his qualities and his Creator. Thus, we have "at least one man who has the power to believe in his God and without thinking of a reward from Him, but only out of love for Him ... The purpose of Job in all his words is to tell the truth about God (because this) means not saying a word with sin" (Bulandra 2008, 30-52).

What is relevant in this experiment is that Job appears as a representative of humanity who has a discussion about the human condition with the Creator God himself. Following this discussion, Job takes the initiative to demand certain changes from the Creator, who miraculously seems to consider them.

3. The relation of the logical reasoning of the concepts of the three friends

The relationship of logical reasoning of Job's friends is based on the concepts of life that they publicly expose in their speeches. Thus, Job's friends are fighting against the logical reasoning presented by Job in his defense when everyone, including heaven, seems to be against him.

The reasoning of the three friends, Eliphaz of Teman, Bildad of Shuah, and Zophar of Naamah, is threefold. First of all, we have the social plan and it refers to the destruction of the family, the squandering of wealth and the isolation of the community. Secondly, we have the biological plan and discuss the physical illness it has. Last but not least, the psychic nightmares and the nightmares of obsessive interrogation during the day are discussed.

These reasonings used by the three friends have in the substratum of their conscience that traditional Jewish thinking about divine rewards and curses according to the good and evil you do. I will discuss this in more detail in the next chapter.

In the book of Job, we also find a logic of divinity, apart from that of Job's friends. This logic of God suggests to "readers the existence of a certain paradoxical logic of divinity, completely foreign to the structure of human logic (strictly rational, measurable)" (Badilita 2000, 73-74). The logic of the divine must be a pure logic that must not tarnish His image in any way. Thus "if God, by definition, says only what is true and does only what is right, it is clear that any untruth spoken corrupts the image of His purity" (Lucaci 2005, 190). Every word spoken by God is by definition pure logic and should never be questioned. However, this cannot be said of

people's reasoning, in our case the reasoning of Job's friends. Although the facts presented by them are true, the premises they appeal to are not valid.

4. The Jewish tradition as a retributive theology

The strongest aspect found in the speeches of Job's friends is that of thinking based on tradition. A thought that has its roots in tradition cannot be defined as clear, correct, concise and especially objective thinking. Lucaci (2005, 188) also discusses this aspect and says that "tradition is debatable when reason is short-circuited, because in this way a mortgage is put on the truth. Therefore, the punishment of any deed that contradicts the tradition acquires a false moral character. It is a question of an education through punishment." The morale of Job's friends regarding the human-God relationship, based on their traditional thinking, was one of retribution. This concept states that every human being is rewarded according to their merits. The thought of retribution is thus a wrong starting point for the speeches of the three friends. Even if they wanted to help their friend in some way, through these thoughts they did nothing but present the traditional thinking of the Jews (Lucaci 2005, 176).

Tatu (2009, 2) also remarks on this aspect, in his *Introduction to the Study of the Old Testament* when he states about Job's three friends that, "they are the representatives of the theology of retribution, according to which God blesses the righteous and punishes the unrighteous. Their argument leads to the conclusion that Job is inevitably guilty because his sin caused God to punish him." Cretia (1995, 30) concludes this idea and presents that "the very wise Eliphaz has the logical courage to force the facts to save the doctrine."

What is happening in the discussions of Job's friends is immoral because they do not search and do not wait to find out the full truth, but express their thoughts for her sake, not for the sake of the truth. They offer us personal experience, tradition and legalistic intuition as ways of knowing the divinity. Their failure is underscored by their inability to "convince" Job of his guilt.

Chambers (1996, 106), on the other hand, when he discusses Job's friends and their beliefs, concludes that with the support of their beliefs and the opposition they manifest, they come to doubt their beliefs, and the only one who keep the faith intact is Elihu, who chooses not to doubt anything. He "does not accept the belief of the other three, but has his own conception based on the idea of autocratic authority, on the fact that no man has the right to question whether God is good. This would be a challenge to His supreme authority, when in fact the only alternative is obedience." Continuing in the same line with Chambers, we identify that we are often unable to explain the reality in which we live. The actions we take or the actions we take in our lives often do not find a logical explanation. "Every fact related to the sense of reality demands in order to explain something that the sense of reality cannot give. Everyday realities reveal things that our thinking cannot explain" (Chambers 1996, 100). The direct combat of this type of thinking is found in God's discourse at the end of the book in which he acknowledges the justice of Job's words to the words used by his friends. Moreover, we see that it is God who initiates a request for sacrifice from Job for his visitors.

5. Approaching the moral problem in Job from the Kantian perspective

In his work, *Founding the Metaphysics of Morals*, Immanuel Kant outlines his theory of morality as a universal law. This law states it in the words "Act only according to that maxim by which you may at the same time want it to become a universal law" (Kant 1972, 214). In this way we find in Kant a strong aspect of personal desire for universal action. Kantian morality has a morality that man personally assumes and that he wants to be seen in any other person on the globe.

Kant (1972, 214-215) in the same book, states three postulates about God. These postulates are "of the immortality, liberty, and existence of God." Divine law implies morality and happiness as elements of the sovereign good. If morality can be resolved only in eternity, by accepting the

postulate of immortality, then the happiness corresponding to morality is possible "under the assumption of the existence of a cause suitable for this effect, that is, to postulate the existence of God which is necessarily related to the moral law of pure reason)" (Kant 1972, 215).

In the same note, Lucaci presents that Immanuel Kant has "in view the relations between morality and happiness, between human nature and the law of will, as well as between these two relations and their representation as law" (Lucaci 2005, 180). He goes on to say that "it is morally necessary for man to admit the existence of God" (Lucaci 2005, 180-181). God is the one who created man as an end in himself and thus he believed in divinity to desire the fulfillment of a moral life, encountered in Kant through the expression of moral necessity. This purpose in itself "means that humanity is holy, a conclusion that also results from the fact that man is the subject who assumes the moral law" (Lucaci 2005, 182).

For Kant, moral necessity must be assumed as a duty, and duty is the very essence of a free will. Happiness for Christians, Kant suggests, is the sublime form of duty to live your life with dignity. That is, happiness is not a conditional reward or hope for the future in another world, but the daily greeting of God in holiness.

The moral necessity assumed as a duty can also be found in Job's way of life. Thus, we have Job as the one who takes care of his children and their deeds in relation to God through the sacrifices he brings as an atonement for their potential iniquities. Job's actions regarding the father-son / daughter relationship, man-people, rich-poor, respect-respect, etc., make his morality a possibility of universal morality or more clearly his moral law can become, unequivocally, a universal law of morality.

For Immanuel Kant, the character of Job is characterized by the aspect of sincerity, because Job "says what he thought and felt, just as any person in his place would probably feel. His friends, on the other hand, speak as if they are being secretly pursued by the powerful Leader whose case is open to their verdict, and as if, by giving their verdict, they would care more to gain His favor than to find out the truth" (Kant 1996, 32).

Relating the maxim of Kantian morality to the world today we can see that moral perfection is not conceptual, because we have interests, inclinations, temptations, lusts that are hard to control. Doing your duty to yourself and others is a form of perfection. To be good, to love, to act for the happiness of another and one's own perfection are actions of duty with a high moral content. If we were able to obey the Moral Law (Rotaru 2015, 318-322) or the categorical Kantian imperative, then we would all be saints; we would no longer need the law, the state, because all our actions would be positive, human. In reality, "our world is dominated by what we might call anthropic entropy, where the one acting out of duty makes a discordant note, or is considered anachronistic. It is difficult to talk about Kantian morality in a world where man no longer has an inner life, being without authentic landmarks and incapable of self-knowledge" (Pohoata 2015, 1). In man it is the measure of the possibility of knowing the Creator or as St. Gregory of Nyssa writes that "in you is the measure of knowing God, because the One who created you has always given birth to this good by nature. God has imprinted in His composition the faces of the goodness of His nature, imprinting in you as in a piece of wax a carved image" (Grygore de Nyssa 1999, 88). What is remarkable here is that only in and through man is manifested the possibility of attaining morality which can become a universal law as is the Kantian maxim. Only by his will can it be achieved, and once done, morality can have the possibility of becoming a standard.

6. The suspension of normality in the book of Job

When I say about the suspension of normality in the book of Job, I mean the normal suspension of the Creator's relationship with creation. This relationship is metaphysical in nature and includes in this book the relationship between God-Creator and creature (Job) (Cojocariu 2007, 28).

Here we have Job, who is transposed by his righteousness into a discussion of the God-Usurper (Satan) relationship. His righteousness causes the wicked to accuse God of preferability, and thus a simple man becomes a subject of the angelic world. Later we see Job in direct dialogue with the Sovereign God after whom he acknowledges his smallness but at the same time in the end has the size of divine blessings. The relationship between God and Job redefines the relationship of faith itself, in the sense that here, for the first time, we are dealing with a personal one-on-one dialogue with the divinity.

Between the two persons, "there is no difference of ontological degree between Creator and creature, but one of ontological essence ... The sensation of absurdity comes precisely from the naive attempt to reduce the divine paralog to one of the structures of unconventional human logic" (Cojocariu 2007, 29).

Professor Florea Lucaci, speaking about good in this metaphysical framework, presents that "in the Creator-creature relationship, good is a transitive property, which in the case of man is regulated by a law" (Lucaci 2005, 173). God offers the good of man to his blessing. The divine good transits the physical space and covers the distance only for the good of humanity.

7. Job as the New Testament man

Although Job is an Old Testament character, most certainly contemporary with the pretop man, he is so current, so New Testament in what he is. Thus, we find in the words of Job and in his being the three states, knowledge, which the new man, the New Testament man, also possesses. The image of God in man, the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 3:22), and eternal life (John 5:24) are the three aspects of man that are never lost.

In Job's words we find new testamentary aspects such as judgment, "He is not a mere mortal like me that I might answer him, that we might confront each other in court" (Job 9:32), Christ's intercession for men, "Even now my witness is in heaven; my advocate is on high" (Job 16:19), about the redemption of men by the One who is eternally alive and who will appear on earth, "I know that my redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand on the earth." (Job 19:25), etc. Of Job's words, we have written the divine perspective, or God's recognition of his words, as righteous to those of his friends: Job 42:7-9: "After the Lord had said these things to Job, he said to Eliphaz the Temanite, "I am angry with you and your two friends, because you have not spoken the truth about me, as my servant Job has. So now take seven bulls and seven rams and go to my servant Job and sacrifice a burnt offering for yourselves. My servant Job will pray for you, and I will accept his prayer and not deal with you according to your folly. You have not spoken the truth about me, as my servant Job has. So Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite did what the Lord told them; and the Lord accepted Job's prayer."

The state that Job attains after the discourse of divinity is that of a man in a state of gratitude for his nothingness. It is a state of repentance in which he sees nothing before the Greatness of his God. It is a moment of silence and bowing down to the shame of his previous speech and the way he wanted to judge God. The judgment he desires once becomes a bow of his physique, of his humanity, of his existence, of his fullness, of his speech before the Creator. The desired judgment becomes a worship of creation before the Creator.

In Job's words, we find, as I said above, God's plan for the times to come. Job gives voice to a new conception of God, namely, the hope that in the end an intermediary will arise, a mediator who will justify not only God but also him. Job is the one who by his words thus foreshadowed the New Testament man and the way of his perfection.

Conclusion

The issue of morality in the book of Job is quite difficult to debate. In the present study we can see different opinions about this theological work called Job. From its perception as a laboratory

experiment, in the vision of Alexandru Bulandra, to an act of vanity and cruelty, in the vision of Petru Cretia.

Divine morality cannot be challenged because, as I presented in the study, God is the absolute of morality in the vision of Christians, and I am a Christian. It is God who has allowed all of this for Job to do even better. God always does what is moral because he is the absolutist of morality. Although the common man cannot perceive this divine act as a moral one, he is, in essence, a moral act. God is not the one who created evil. God does no harm. God is not the one from whom evil originates.

Even though Job's friends were imbued with the traditional thinking of the Jews, Job was not overwhelmed by their ideas even when they resorted to various logical reasonings based on reality and full of sentimentality.

Knowing that man after his creation, made in the image and likeness of divinity, suffered a tragic fall, and thus he distorted the purpose of creating humanity. Even though he fell, man remained related to his Creator in his image, and thus man needed the "moral law" to harmonize the two opposing elements (breath and possible mastery of the primitive senses) of human nature. The fall is therefore a violation of the moral law, and the restoration of the divine image in man presupposes obedience to the Law" (Lucaci 2005, 174).

In other words, these words express how humanity can have access to divinity through the morality that exists in its life. This morality is called by many Christians a fact of faith with an extreme need, a sine qua non condition for maintaining a relationship with God.

Thus, morality becomes an inner struggle in which man has an essential role. He is the one who must define and fulfill the supreme morality, he is the one who must distinguish between good and evil, because, as Grygore de Nyssa (1999, 88) said that in man "it is the measure of the knowledge of God, because He Who -shaped always gave birth to this good by nature. God has imprinted in His composition the faces of the goodness of His nature, imprinting in you as in a piece of wax a carved image."

Job remains the moral man in all things, even if the filter of morality is the morality of Immanuel Kant. Job is the one who uses the words that God validates as the right ones in the whole discussion. In his words, Job represents the New Testament man in relationship with the Mediator Jesus Christ. For Job, Jesus is the Redeemer who will one day appear in the future and appear on earth. Job is the one who recognizes the coming of a mediator who will not only justify God but will also justify him and that Mediator is the one who came, namely Jesus Christ.

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