

The Book of Job (Chapters 1 & 3)

Course Overview

This course offers a philological, cultural, and theological reading of the introduction and primary laments in the Book of Job (Chapters 1 and 3). The discussions integrate comparative analyses with parallel biblical texts, Ancient Near Eastern literature (such as Ugaritic texts), and an exploration of linguistic, mythological, and literary motifs.

Lesson Outline & Core Topics

Lesson 1: Introduction, Setting, and Job's Characteristics (Job 1:1–4)

- **Location and Identity:** Examining the land of Uz, its possible identification in the Edom region, and the meaning of Job's archaic name.
- **Canonical Traditions:** Comparing Job's character to other biblical figures (such as Noah and Daniel in Ezekiel 14) and examining its placement across various canonical traditions.
- **Wealth and Society:** Analyzing descriptions of Job's extensive possessions in contrast to the wisdom traditions of the "Children of the East" (*Benei Qedem*).

Lesson 2: Independent Worship and the Divine Council (Job 1:5–8)

- **Worship and Purification:** Job's practice of rising early to offer burnt offerings for each of his children.
- **The Divine Council:** The gathering of the "divine beings" (*Benei Elohim*) and the appearance of the Adversary (*Satan*) roaming across the earth.
- **Key Concepts:** Analyzing the idiom "blaspheme God" (literally "bless God") and Job's description as a blameless and upright man.

Lesson 3: The Question of Disinterested Piety and the Divine Hedge (Job 1:9–12)

- **The Motive Question:** Examining Satan's challenge—"Does Job fear God for nothing?"—and comparing it to unconditional love (Rabbinic sources in Pirkei Avot).
- **Metaphors of Protection:** Analyzing the root *s-v-kh/s-k-kh* and the imagery of the fence and hedge around Job's household.
- **Idioms of Harm:** The meaning of the metaphors "stretch out the hand" and "touch" in the context of inflicting harm or disaster.

Lesson 4: Disasters, Mourning Customs, and Acceptance (Job 1:18–22)

- **The Sequence of Events:** The rapid arrival of messengers bearing news of tragedy, using participles to depict abruptly disrupted action.
- **Ancient Mourning Rites:** Tearing garments and cutting hair, combined with comparisons to Ugaritic texts (KTU 1.5) and prohibitions in the Torah.
- **Acceptance:** Job's declaration "Naked came I out of my mother's womb" and blessing the name of God as part of a conventional psalm.

Lesson 5: Opening the Lament and Cursing the Day of Birth (Job 3:1–4)

- **Job Speaks Out:** The sharp transition from acceptance to cursing the day of his birth (comparing Jeremiah 20).
- **Poetic Terms:** Analyzing terms such as "Eloah" (a unique singular form in poetry), "naharah" (light associated with water), and the personification of night and day.
- **Structure of Chapter 3:** Categorizing units of time (dawn, year, months), body parts, and social classes mentioned in the lament.

Lesson 6: The Darkness of Creation and the Appearance of Leviathan (Job 3:5–10)

- **Darkness and Gloom:** Philological analysis of *salmavet* (deep darkness/shadow of death) and *kamrir*.
- **Mythological Allusions:** References to those who curse the day and those prepared to rouse Leviathan.
- **Polemic with Creation:** The inversions and analogies between the curses of the night in Job 3 and the creation account in Genesis 1.

Lesson 7: Yearning for Stillbirth, Womb, and Sheol (Job 3:11–16)

- **The Question of Early Death:** Why Job did not die at birth, and the significance of knees and breasts receiving the newborn.
- **The Realm of Repose:** Describing Sheol as a place where kings, counselors, and nobles who built ruins for themselves find rest.
- **The Fate of the Stillbirth:** Comparing Job's desired fate to a hidden stillbirth or infants who never saw the light.

Lesson 8: The Rest of the Wicked and the Sufferers (Job 3:17–21)

- **Peace and Rest:** Where the wicked cease from troubling, weary ones rest, and prisoners are entirely at ease without hearing the taskmaster's voice.
- **Social Classes:** Comparing the equality of small and great, and the slave being free from his master.
- **The Cry of the Bitter in Spirit:** Exploring why light and life are given to sufferers who wait for death more than hidden treasure.