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Quest for Meaning:

Attitudes Toward Suffering and Surviving

in the Book of Job

by

Andrea Michelle Goldstein

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for Ordination.

Hebrew Union College -- Jewish Institute of Religion
Cincinnati, Ohio
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Referee: Dr. Samuel Greengus

This thesis is dedicated to my grandmother, Esther Goldstein.

Although I know little about the ordeals she suffered,
I will forever be inspired by the courage, strength, kindness, and love with which she survived and lived.

I would like to thank the following people,
without whom the completion of this thesis would not have been possible:

To Dr. Samuel Greengus,
who inspired me with his wisdom, support, and gentle encouragement

To my parents, Jay and Carole Goldstein,
who taught me to dream and endowed me with the gifts and skills I needed to make those dreams come true.

And finally, to my husband Brett,
whose love girds me with strength and gives me the courage to believe in myself.

Digest to

"Quest for Meaning:
Attitudes Toward Suffering and Surviving in the Book of Job"

Sages, scholars, and students have been analyzing the prose and poetry of the Book of Job for thousands of years in a quest to derive some sort of message, understanding, or meaning of the book as a whole. Conclusions have varied. Some scholars claim that the book testifies to the insignificance of human suffering as compared to the vastness of the universe. Others assert that the book demonstrates that God's ways are unknowable or that God's concept of justice is different than the human concept of justice. Some scholars believe that the theophany is the key to understanding the meaning of the Book of Job. For them, the theophany is proof that an individual's can solve her troubles by immersing herself in the power and beauty of nature. And some are convinced that the book's lack of definitive answers is an indication that there is no meaning or reason as to why we suffer.

Georg Fohrer, a German scholar, takes a different approach when looking at the possible meaning of the Book of Job. In his opinion, the problem of the book is not, "Why do the righteous suffer?" but "What is proper conduct of the one who suffers?" (Tsevat, 93) The purpose of this thesis rests more along these lines. In this study we are interested in exploring the different ways that Job responds to and copes with his sufferings. This study presupposes that Job, as well as being the ultimate sufferer, is also the ultimate survivor. By examining Job's speeches and responses to his suffering we will attempt to uncover

specific techniques used by Job in his struggle to survive. We will also explore how Job's attitudes toward himself, his suffering, and his relationship with God change throughout the course of his ordeal.

Our study begins with a review of modern scholarly understandings of the Book of Job (Chapter One). First, we provide a brief summary of the Book of Job. We continue by looking at the structure of the book and examining academic speculations regarding both the author and date of the Book of Job. Next, we survey a number of parallel texts of the ancient Near East which also deal with the themes of suffering and Divine justice. Finally, we analyze the literary genre of the Book of Job, focusing specifically on the category of lament. In this study we concentrated on the following works: Marvin Pope's study of the Book of Job in *The Anchor Bible* series, John E. Hartley's commentary on the Job in *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament* series, and Claus Westermann's *The Structure of the Book of Job: A Form Critical Analysis*.

Next we explore Rabbinic and Medieval responses to the theme of suffering and the Book of Job (Chapter Two). Specifically, we focus on the rather lengthy discussion on the Book of Job found within the Babylonian Talmud (Baba Bathra 15a-16b). We continue by surveying a vareity of Rabbinic responses to the problem of suffering in the Bavli. Finally, we analyze the commentaries of the Book of Job of two Medieval commentators: Saadiah Gaon and Maimonides.

In Chapter Three we move from the theme of suffering to the theme of survival. Here we examine, from a modern psychological perspective, ways in

which people respond to suffering, cope with stress, survive traumatic situations, and maintain faith in themselves, in life, and in God. We are specifically interested in understanding how an individual's quest for meaning in the face of suffering effects his ability to cope and survive. In this survey we concentrated on the following works: Bruce N. Carpenter's *Personal Coping: Theory, Research, and Application*, Gina O'Connell Higgins' *Resilient Adults*, and Viktor E. Frankl's *Man's Search for Meaning*, *The Unheard Cry for Meaning*, and *The Doctor and the Soul*.

Chapter Four consists of a critical analysis of Job's speeches within the dialogue portion of the Book of Job (Chps. 3-31). By reviewing Job's responses to his friends and his cries to God, we trace Job's responses to his suffering, taking note of where specific changes in his attitude occur. We also locate important principles of coping, resilience, and logotherapy within Job's responses.

For thousands of years people have turned to the Book of Job as the ultimate example of the righteous sufferer and have been drawn to book's timeless themes of suffering and Divine justice. For centuries, Job has been held up as model for those who suffer, who cry out in pain, who feel abandoned and alone. Throughout the course of this thesis we examine Job as a man who not only suffers, but also survives. It is our hope that this kind of study of the Book of Job can provide us with strength and resolve we need to face the challenges of our own lives.

Andrea Michelle Goldstein
February 24, 1998
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INTRODUCTION

Since Rabbinic times there has always been a great deal of academic debate over the Book of Job. Scholars disagree over when the manuscript was written, the unity of the text, and whether or not a real Job even existed. However, for most people, Job's universal themes of human integrity, the suffering of the innocent, Divine justice, and the nature of God supersede these scholarly debates. People have been drawn to, unsettled by, and outraged at the Book of Job for centuries. The profound questions and challenges raised by the Book of Job (and its notable lack of any definitive answers) make it one of the most compelling works in all of Western culture.[1] Every human being can relate, in some way, to Job's suffering, his claims of innocence, and his loss.

Job is a "blameless and upright" man whose life is devastated when, due to a bet between God and Satan, he loses his children, all of his material possessions, and his health. Alone, in unimaginable pain, emotionally abandoned by his friends, fearing that he has also been abandoned by God, Job becomes the quintessential example of individual, undeserved human suffering. Yet, Job does not remain perpetually lost in his own despair. There are moments when Job is able to rise above his helplessness to demand a trial before God (23:1-5) or to search for meaning within his suffering (10:2-3). Job does not only suffer; he also survives.

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[1] Leo G. Perdue and W. Clark Gilpin, *The Voice from the Whirlwind: Interpreting the Book of Job* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992), 11.

Sages, scholars, and students have been analyzing the prose and poetry of the Book of Job for thousands of years in a quest to derive some sort of message, understanding, or meaning of the book as a whole. Conclusions have varied. Some scholars claim that the book testifies to the insignificance of human suffering as compared to the vastness of the universe. Others assert that the book demonstrates that God's ways are unknowable or that God's concept of justice is different than the human concept of justice. Some scholars believe that the theophany is the key to understanding the meaning of the Book of Job. For them, the theophany is proof that an individual can solve her troubles by immersing herself in the power and beauty of nature. And some are convinced that the book's lack of definitive answers is an indication that there is no meaning or reason as to why we suffer. Georg Fohrer, a German scholar, takes a different approach when looking at the possible meaning of the Book of Job. In his opinion, the problem of the book is not, "Why do the righteous suffer?" but "What is proper conduct of the one who suffers?"[2] The purpose of this thesis rests more along these lines. In this study we are interested in exploring the different ways that Job responds to and copes with his sufferings.

In recent decades numerous psychological studies have been conducted which examine an individual's ability to cope with suffering and stress and which explore an individual's ability to resume a "normal" life after the stressful event has ended. Most notably, Viktor E. Frankl, psychiatrist, professor, and

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[2] As quoted by Matitiahu Tsevat in "The Meaning of the Book of Job" in *Sitting with Job: Selected Studies on the Book of Job*, edited by Roy B. Zuck (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1992), 209.

concentration camp survivor, was a man much concerned with the ideas of suffering, surviving, and meaning. He was the founder of Logotherapy, the Third Viennese School of Psychotherapy. Logotherapy (*logos*, from the Greek for "meaning") asserts that the quest for a meaningful existence is a human being's primary motivational force in life.[3] What comprises a meaningful existence will be different for each individual and is subject to change as that individual grows, experiences, and develops. Logotherapy states that a meaningful existence can be realized in three different ways: 1) by a creative act or deed, 2) by inwardly experiencing something (such as a work of nature or the value of truth) or encountering another human being through a loving relationship, and 3) by the attitude we take when we are confronted with unavoidable suffering.[4] Every individual has the freedom and the responsibility to transcend that suffering in some way, in order to discover meaning in one's life. For example, meaning can be found in the courage with which one bears pain, or in the dignity with which one faces an unalterable fate.

The intention of this thesis is to explore Job's attitudes and responses to his own suffering, and to come to an understanding of how Job is able to survive his ordeal. This study presupposes that Job, as well as being the ultimate sufferer, is also the ultimate survivor. By examining Job's speeches and responses to his suffering we will attempt to uncover specific techniques used by Job in his struggle to survive. We will also explore how Job's attitudes toward

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[3] Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning: An Introduction to Logotherapy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984), 104.

[4] Ibid., 115.

himself, his suffering, and his relationship with God change throughout the course of his ordeal. Specifically we will be exploring such questions as: How does Job evolve from being a helpless victim to a bold accuser of God? How is Job able to maintain his integrity throughout this tragedy? Does Job's attitude toward his suffering correspond to Frankl's understanding of suffering? Does Job's attitude reflect other modern psychological views on suffering, coping, and surviving? In what ways should Job be looked to as a model for those who suffer and are in pain?

In attempting to answer these questions we have gained a deep appreciation and admiration not only for Job's courage and strength in dealing with his suffering, but also for his tenacity and his resilience in being able to survive. Job teaches us how face tragedy with honesty, dignity, and integrity. In most cases, these are life lessons that can be learned only through experience. However, turning to Job, not as the ultimate sufferer, but as the ultimate survivor, can guide us on our way.

CHAPTER ONE

MODERN SCHOLARSHIP ON THE BOOK OF JOB

A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE BOOK OF JOB

A prose prologue introduces Job, a wealthy, generous, pious, and loving man, whose life is turned upside-down when God enters into a wager with the Satan, the adversary angel. God singles Job out for his exceptional moral character and unwavering faith. The Satan, however, questions Job's piety and insinuates that if Job had not been so blessed by God his faith might not be so exemplary. In order to test Job's faith God grants the Satan permission to destroy all of Job's material possessions, kill his children, and rob him of his health. Witnessing her husband's misery, Job's wife begs him to "blaspheme God and die." (2:9) Yet despite all of his physical and emotional losses, his excruciating pain, and his wife's pleas, Job does not curse God. His faith seems unshakable as he utters, "The Lord has given, the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." (Job 1:21) The prologue ends with Job's three friends – Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shukhite, and Zophar the Na'amatite – coming to mourn with him and comfort him. (Chapter 1-2)

At this point the style of the text changes from prose to poetry. As the book's literary style changes so does the attitude of its main character. Job goes from being a model of patient piety and acceptance to being a rebellious and outspoken critic of Divine justice. The poetic section begins with a lament from Job. Here, Job curses the day of his birth and longs for death as an escape from

his misery and pain. (Chapter 3) This lament is followed by three cycles of dialogues between Job and his friends.

Throughout the dialogues, Job's friends uphold the doctrine of Divine retribution. Because God is just, God would never allow an innocent person to suffer. Therefore, Job must somehow be guilty. After accusing Job, they insist that the only way for him to end his suffering is to confess his wrongdoings and repent. They assure him that once he does this, God will restore his health. Job, however, maintains his innocence. The more that his friends provoke him, the stronger his convictions become. As the dialogues progress, Job seems to be addressing God more than his friends. He challenges God to a trial and appeals for an arbiter to argue his case. (Chapter 4-27)

Chapter 28 is a poem on wisdom. As it appears in the text, the poem seems to be attributed to Job. However, this point is debatable. In fact, many scholars think this poem was a later addition to the Book of Job.[5] It speaks of wisdom's incomparable value and Divine nature, and concludes that the only way to attain wisdom is through fear of God. In the next three chapters Job continues to maintain his integrity and affirm his innocence. He longingly recalls his former days of wealth, respect, and happiness, (Chapter 29) and then contrasts those days with his present misery. (Chapter 30) He concludes by taking an oath, listing all of the sins that he swears he has never committed. Here Job ends his defense and waits for God's reply. (Chapter 31)

Chapters 32-37 contain the speeches of Elihu, a young acquaintance who

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[5] Marvin H. Pope, *The Anchor Bible: Job* (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1973), XXVII.

feels the need to address the issues broached in this debate. Elihu rejects the premise that suffering is the necessary consequence of sin. However, he also calls Job a blasphemer for accusing God of injustice. God's ways are beyond human understanding. Job's only hope is for an intercessor to come and plead to God for mercy on Job's behalf.

After Elihu's monologues finally come to an end, God miraculously "answers Job out of the storm wind." (38:1) God's speeches (Chapters 38:1-40:2 and 40:6-41:26) contain beautiful, detailed descriptions of the order of the cosmos and the workings of nature. In the midst of these illustrations God challenges Job to describe how the earth was formed or how the stars in the sky were set. When Job admits that he cannot speak to these things, God accuses Job of ignorance. Although God's speeches are powerful, they do not provide any sort of answers to Job's probing questions regarding Divine justice. Even so, when God finishes speaking Job's challenges cease. In the end Job humbly acknowledges, "Therefore I have uttered that which I did not understand." (42:3)

Returning to prose form, the epilogue describes God rebuking Eliphaz and Job's other friends. They have not spoken truthfully about God as Job has. At God's request, Job prays on behalf of his friends. God then restores all of Job's fortunes and doubles the possessions that he had lost. God even blesses Job with new children. Job lives 140 years and dies contented in his old age. (Chapter 42:7-17)

THE STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK OF JOB

It is interesting to note that although the content of the Book of Job is often criticized for being rambling and repetitive, the structure of the Book of Job can be interpreted as being quite precise. John E. Hartley, Biblical scholar and Hebrew Bible professor at Azusa Pacific University, sees the structure of the Book of Job as being symmetrical, composed of groupings of two's, three's, and four's. His outline of the structure of the book is as follows.

I. **THE PROLOGUE** (Chapters 1-2)
   - A. Introduction of Job (1:1-5)
   - B. The First Wager Between God and Satan (1:6-12)
   - C. The Loss of Job's Children and Wealth (1:13-22)
   - D. The Second Wager Between God and Satan (2:1-7a)
   - E. Job's Physical Afflictions (2:7b-10)
   - F. The Introduction of Job's Friends (2:11-13)

II. **JOB'S LAMENT** (Chapter 3)

III. **THE DIALOGUE** (Chapters 4-27)
   - A. The First Cycle
     1. Eliphaz (Chapters 4-5)
     2. Job (Chapters 6-7)
     3. Bildad (Chapter 8)
     4. Job (Chapters 9-10)
     5. Zophar (Chapter 11)
     6. Job (Chapters 12-14)
   - B. The Second Cycle
     1. Eliphaz (Chapter 15)
     2. Job (Chapters 16-17)
     3. Bildad (Chapter 18)
     4. Job (Chapter 19)
     5. Zophar (Chapter 20)
     6. Job (Chapter 21)
   - C. The Third Cycle
     1. Eliphaz (Chapter 22)
     2. Job (Chapters 23-24)
     3. Bildad (Chapter 25)

4. Job (Chapters 26-27)[6]

IV. THE HYMN TO WISDOM (Chapter 28)

V. JOB'S VOW OF INNOCENCE (Chapters 29-31)

VI. THE ELIHU SPEECHES (Chapters 32-37)

VII. THE THEOPHANY (Chapters 38:1-42:6)
- A. God's First Speech (38:1-40:2)
- B. Job's Response (40:3-5)
- C. God's Second Speech (40:6-41:26)
- D. Job's Response (42:1-6)

VIII. THE EPILOGUE (Chapter 42:7-17)

When laid out in this fashion, the symmetry within the Book of Job becomes evident. The prologue is made up of three sets of two's (two introductions, two wagers, two accounts of loss). There are three rounds of dialogues, and Job responds three times in the first two rounds. Job's vow of innocence is also made up of three parts. Later sections of the book are divided into groupings of four. Elihu delivers four unanswered speeches, and the theophany consists of two speeches by God and two responses by Job.[7] This simple, symmetrical structure is in sharp contrast to the complex and weighty subject matter of the Book of Job. The uniformity of structure might also lead one to conclude that the Book of Job was authored by one person.

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[6] Due to the content of 27:13-23, many scholars, including Hartley, believe that these words actually belong in Bildad's speech. Other scholars claim that these verses belong to Zophar, since, as the text is presented, Zophar does not speak in the third cycle of dialogues.

[7] John E. Hartley, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Job* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988) 35-37.

THE AUTHOR OF THE BOOK OF JOB

Scholars have put forth numerous speculations regarding who they believe to be the author of the Book of Job. Opinions vary with regard to the religion of the author, the nationality of the author, and even the number of authors. Due to discrepancies regarding the literary integrity of the Book of Job, certain scholars (e.g., Pope, Dhorme) have concluded that the completed manuscript can only be understood as a compilation of numerous texts from numerous authors. However, other scholars have speculated that it is just as likely as it is unlikely that the Book of Job was written by a single individual. But who was this person? The majority of scholars seem to agree that the author was a Jew who wrote the book in his native language of Hebrew. However, this opinion is not unanimously accepted.

It has been suggested that the setting for the story of Job is Edom. Therefore some scholars have speculated that the author of the text was an Edomite, an actual descendant of Esau, Jacob's brother. Edom was well known for its wisdom, so perhaps the Book of Job is an example of Edomite wisdom literature. However, because no other Edomite texts exist with which to compare language, structure, or theme, this theory is difficult to prove.

Because of the book's vocabulary Ibn Ezra and other commentators of his era have proposed that the text of Job was translated into Hebrew from either Arabic or Aramaic. This idea has led some scholars to suggest that the Book of Job was written by an Arab. For example, Guillaume believes that a Jew living in Tema between 552 and 542 BCE wrote the original text in Arabic. However,

these theories are not widely accepted. Although scholars often turn to Arabic to assist them in their translations of Job, the results attained from this method are not consistent enough or frequent enough to conclude that the book was originally composed in Arabic.[8]

While the discrepancies over the authorship of the Book of Job are numerous, most scholars do agree that there were certain characteristics that this author had to have possessed. Commentators almost unanimously uphold the argument that the author of the Book of Job was part of the elite, upper class of his day. He was also highly intelligent and well educated. Judging by the wealth of vocabulary used in the Book of Job, it seems safe to assume that the author was well versed in literature from other cultures and was probably literate in a number of ancient Near East languages. He has been described as a poetic genius, and his poetry reveals the depth of his wisdom. He had extensive knowledge of animal behavior, and seems to have been an expert in biology, horticulture, gemology, and weather patterns. He was also a religious person with a profound interest in spiritual matters. It has been suggested that Job's author was one of the wise men of ancient Israel. These men, who worked as counselors, scribes, teachers, and ambassadors, believed in maintaining a disciplined life through upright conduct and a spiritual life based on ethical monotheism. Although this theory seems to make sense, it too, for now, is just a hypothesis.[9]

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[8] Ibid., 5-6.

[9] D.J.A. Clines, "Why Is There a Book of Job and What Does It Do to You if You Read It?" in *The Book of Job*, ed. W.A.M. Beuken (Leuven: University Press, 1994), 5.

The difficulty in unmasking the precise details of the author of the Book of Job may be frustrating to many commentators and scholars. However, this uncertainty also seems appropriate. The story of Job addresses the universal problem of undeserved suffering. In some respects, this book could have been written by any person, of any nationality or religious background, at any time. This fact is one among many that contributes to the greatness of the Book of Job.

THE DATE OF THE BOOK OF JOB

Scholars vary widely in their theories of when the Book of Job was actually written. Opinions range from the time of the patriarchs to the post-exilic era. These scholars generally rely on two different approaches to help them establish an approximate date. The first approach requires looking at the language of the Book of Job. However, this technique is complicated by the fact that the Book of Job contains such a rich and diverse vocabulary. It also has a unique dialect, which differs greatly from the "Jerusalem dialect" of most of the other works in the Hebrew Bible. The second approach involves comparing similarities between the Book of Job and other texts in the Hebrew Bible. This technique is also hindered by two factors. First, it is often difficult to precisely date many of the Biblical passages to which one would like to compare the Book of Job. Second, it is also difficult to determine whether the Job passage is dependent upon the Biblical passage or the Biblical passage is dependent upon the Job passage, or if both passages are dependent upon a third source.

Scholars generally propose three main times periods in which the Book of Job might have been written: the early 7th century BCE, during Hezekiah's time, the mid-6th century BCE, after the fall of Jerusalem, and the 4th - 3rd century BCE during the Second Temple era. Each speculation has its own merits and its own points of doubt. People like Gordis and Fohrer, who support the 4th - 3rd century BCE dating of the Book of Job, do so due to the large quantity of Aramaisms found in the text, the emphasis placed on the individual over the community, and the figure of the Satan in the prologue. Unfortunately, each of these points can be counter-argued. Scholars have come to realize that a great deal of Aramaic and Hebrew interchange has existed as far back as the 9th century. Therefore, documents cannot conclusively be dated late simply because they have a large number of Aramaisms. Also, the theme of individual responsibility, while more prevalent in the works of Jeremiah (31:29-30) and Ezekiel (Chapters 18 and 33), does appear much earlier in the Bible. (Exodus 20:22-23:33). Finally, it is true that the late dated books of Chronicles (21:1) and Zechariah (3:1-2) make reference to "the Satan" as a proper name. However, the Book of Job uses "the Satan" as a title so this proof is not conclusive.[10]

Individuals who support a mid-6th century BCE date do so for two main reasons. First, there are many associations between the Book of Job and chapters 40-55 of Isaiah, which some scholars believe was written around 550 BCE. Also, the Babylonian captivity would have provided Job's author with a significant reason and an audience for a work on suffering. This theory, though,

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[10] Hartley, *The New International Commentary*, 17-18.

is often doubted. The Babylonian exile was generally understood as a punishment for the sins of a wicked nation, while the Book of Job addresses the issues of the sufferings of an innocent individual.[11]

According to Hartley an early 7th century BCE date musters the most support. Hartley notes that the Book of Job contains many allusions to Canaanite religion. Therefore it seems logical that the book would have been written during a time, long before the Exile, when Israel was still coming into contact with Baalism.[12] Hartley also explains that a number of scholars, who are not persuaded by the argument of a Deutero-Isaiah, believe that Isaiah, himself, authored chapters 40-55 late in his career during the early 7th century BCE. When comparing the two books, evidence seems to indicate that the Isaiah text was influenced by Job. Therefore, the Book of Job would have had to have been in existence anywhere from the late 8th century BCE to the early 7th century BCE. While this evidence is not overwhelming, most scholars today tend to agree that the most logical dating for the Book of Job is the early 7th century BCE.[13] However, Nahum N. Glatzer's comment in his book, *The Dimensions of Job*, may be the most accurate statement regarding the dating of the Book of Job. He writes: "Considering the efforts, from ancient times to this day, to re-form, recast, reconstruct the work in various media, it is, in a sense, timeless."[14]

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[11] Pope, *The Anchor Bible*, XXXV.

[12] Hartley, *The New International Commentary*, 19.

[13] Pope, *The Anchor Bible*, XL.

[14] Nahum N. Glatzer, *The Dimensions of Job*, (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 1.

PARALLEL LITERATURE OF THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

The themes of human suffering and Divine justice dealt with in the Book of Job were also addressed by other cultures of the ancient Near East. In the last 150 years, numerous texts from ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Syria have been recovered and translated. Many of these works parallel the Book of Job either in structure or in theme.

"A Dispute Over Suicide" is an Egyptian text that is dated around the second half of the 3rd millennium BCE. The structure of this text is similar to the Book of Job in that it contains a prose prologue and epilogue, with a mid-section made up of a poetic soliloquy. The protagonist of this story is weary and fed up with life's trials. Longing for death as an escape from his intolerable suffering and pain, he contemplates suicide. However, he is afraid that his soul will not remain with him in the after-world if he attempts to take his own life. A debate ensues between the man, who argues for self-destruction, and his soul, who rejects all forms of suicide. The soul tries to persuade the man to forget about his troubles and, instead, concentrate on all of life's pleasures. However, the man will hear none of this. Similar to Job, he pleads for an advocate from among the gods to come to his defense. He also speaks of the beauty and wonder of death, comparing it to pleasant weather and the feeling of returning home after a long journey. The man declares that there is no justice or love in the world and that death should be welcomed as a release from pain or as freedom from bondage. In the end, the soul is won over, and it agrees to accompany him into the world beyond. While "A Dispute Over Suicide" touches

on the same theme of human suffering as the Book of Job, its resolution of the dilemma is quite different. The protagonist of the Egyptian text yearns for death as the only solution to his troubles. Although Job contemplates the idea of death, he discovers (whether despite of or because of his suffering) that there is greater meaning to be found in life.[15]

Another Egyptian manuscript, "The Protests of the Eloquent Peasant", dates around the 21st century BCE. Its format, consisting of nine semi-poetic speeches set between a prose prologue and epilogue, is also similar to the format of the Book of Job. In this story, the protagonist is robbed by an official of the chief steward. Unfortunately, when he presents his case before the chief steward, his complaint is dismissed. The peasant, however, will not accept this pronouncement. He returns to the chief steward day after day pleading his case and demanding that justice be upheld. Although the peasant fears that he might be put to death because of his bold statements and accusations, he adheres to his convictions and persists in speaking his mind. In the end, justice prevails as the steward awards the peasant the property of his assailant. In comparing this Egyptian text to the Book of Job we find that the peasant and Job both cry out against injustices that have been committed against them; the former protests a lack of social justice, while the latter questions Divine justice. Both men believe strongly in their causes and in themselves. They would rather accept death than tolerate injustice.[16]

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[15] Hartley, *The New International Commentary*, 7.

[16] Ibid., 8.

A Sumerian poem dating from the 2nd millennium BCE is the earliest known Mesopotamian work on the theme of suffering. The poem describes a man much like Job; he had been prosperous and generous, but is now stricken with severe pain and disease. The man laments his terrible situation, but never accuses his god of injustice. Instead he praises his god, pleads for mercy, and admits his guilt. He is committed to the Sumerian belief that all human beings are somehow sinners. Once he does this, his god restores him to his former state of health and wealth.[17]

The most famous parallel to the Book of Job is a Mesopotamian work entitled "I Will Praise the Lord of Wisdom." Also known as "The Poem of the Righteous Sufferer" or "Babylonian Job," it was probably written between 1600 and 1100 BCE. The protagonist, again like Job, is wealthy and free from sin. Nevertheless, he is afflicted with disease and suffers from excruciating pain. He is abandoned by his friends, his family, the people of his town, and even his gods. After lamenting for a full year he experiences no relief. He cannot understand why he is being afflicted so and recounts all of the ways in which he is ritually pure. Although he seems to want to directly question and accuse Marduk, the chief God, he never does. Finally, the sufferer has three dreams in which Marduk sends angels to drive away his illnesses. Once he has been restored, the man praises Marduk in a lengthy hymn. There are obvious similarities between the "Babylonian Job" and the Biblical Job. Both accounts revolve around prominent, wealthy individuals who have been struck down with

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[17] Pope, *The Anchor Bible*, LX.

debilitating afflictions. In both texts the characters provide detailed descriptions of their diseases, question the reasons for their sufferings, and, in the end, are restored to their former health and status. However, there are also important differences between these two works. First, the Akkadian text is written entirely as a poetic monologue. The two protagonists also have different attitudes regarding their innocence. The "Babylonian Job" stresses his ritual purity, while the Biblical Job emphasizes his ethical purity. The "Babylonian Job" is afraid to accuse his god of injustice, while the Biblical Job speaks his mind freely both to his friends and to God.[18]

"The Babylonian Ecclesiastes," is another Akkadian work which, despite its name, contains many similarities to the Book of Job. This text, also known as "A Dialogue About Human Misery," was written around 1000 BCE and contains 27 strophes arranged acrostically. The protagonist is an innocent sufferer named Shaggil-kinam-ubib, which means "May Esagil (Marduk's temple) declare the righteous pure." He enters into a dialogue with his friend regarding human suffering and divine justice. The sufferer complains that he has only experienced misfortune and suffering in his life, even though he has always tried to live humbly, to seek out the gods, and to perform good deeds. He blames the gods for his miseries. His friend answers his complaints with many of the same responses used by Job's friends. He accuses the sufferer of sinning and tells him that the gods' ways are unknowable. In the end, the sufferer begs for understanding from his friend and mercy from the gods. While this text only

[18] Ibid., LXI.

contains a dialogue between two people, some scholars think that "The Babylonian Ecclesiastes" may have influenced the structure of the Book of Job.[19]

Compared with these parallel texts, the Book of Job still retains numerous unique features. First, the author achieves a major literary breakthrough by composing a dialogue that takes place between four people. The Book of Job also surpasses all of these other texts in its criticism of the traditional beliefs of reward and punishment and Divine retribution. Job's convictions are bold and his questions and accusations are unapologetic.

LITERARY GENRES OF THE BOOK OF JOB

During the past fifty years literary critics have made numerous attempts to describe the literary genre of the Book of Job. Due to the fact that the Book of Job is such a complex literary achievement, scholars admit that this is no easy task. Some have concluded that the author purposely wrote a book that is *sui generis*. Many genres were used for the expressed purpose of probing the depths of human suffering and exploring the various dimensions of theodicy. Hartley identifies numerous genres within each of the friends' speeches (e.g., consolation, wisdom instruction, accusation, praise of God) and in each of Job's speeches (e.g., lament, lawsuit, petition, vows of innocence, trust in God).[20]

All scholars agree that more than one genre exists within the Book of Job.

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[19] Hartley, *The New International Commentary*, 9.

[20] Ibid., 38-41.

Nevertheless, some critics have still tried to categorize the Book of Job under one comprehensive literary genre. Those who have undertaken this challenge generally place the book within one of three main genre categories: the lawsuit, or legal genre; the controversy dialogue, or dispute genre; and the lament genre.

Some scholars view the entire Book of Job as set within the context of a legal battle. There is a significant amount of legal terminology used throughout the book, and Job's goal of bringing God to trial does seem to be a major theme working to propel the story forward. Sylvia Huberman Scholnick, in her doctoral dissertation, describes the Book of Job as a "lawsuit drama" in which Job takes God to court. The friends, who act both as witnesses and judges, resolve the legal guilt or innocence of the two parties.[21] Other scholars also place the Book of Job within the legal genre. Their studies outline most of the book as a lawsuit in which Job, as the plaintiff, is basically suing his friends and God. According to Richter's interpretations, chapters 4-14 describe an attempt at an out-of-court settlement. Since this fails, a formal trial ensues (chapters 15-31). Because there is no rebuttal made against Job's oath of innocence (chapter 31), Richter sees Job as the victor of the trail. Elihu appears in chapter 32 to make the case for an appeal, and in chapters 38-41 God appears as the litigant questioning Job, who has now become the defendant. In chapter 42 Job withdraws his complaint, and reconciliation between the two parties is finally achieved.[22]

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[21] See Sylvia Huberman Scholnick's Ph.D. dissertation, *Lawsuit Drama in the Book of Job*, (Brandeis University: 1975).

[22] Gregory W. Parsons, "Literary Features of the Book of Job," in *Sitting With Job*, ed. Roy B. Zuck (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1992), 36-37.

Some scholars have proposed that the overarching literary feature of the Book of Job is its controversy dialogues. Therefore they place the Book of Job within the dispute genre. Ludwig Kohler describes the purpose of the speeches of this genre as follows: "The intention is not, as in a Platonic dialogue, to find truth in speech and counterspeech, but the presentation of a point of view already determined beforehand with such forcefulness as to persuade the listeners."[23] According to James L. Crenshaw, if one looks at the Book of Job as a whole -- prologue, poetic dialogues, and epilogue -- the most appropriate category for it is the dispute genre. This genre was prevalent in ancient Near East literature, containing many of the same elements found in the Book of Job. In fact, much of Mesopotamian wisdom literature is made up of a mythological introduction and conclusion, a poetic dispute, and a theophany in which a god resolves the debate. However, Crenshaw also acknowledges that if one were to disregard the prose prologue and epilogue a more appropriate category for the Book of Job would probably be the lament genre.[24]

Pope notes that "lament was a common genre of Mesopotamian literature in which the sick and the persecuted pour out their complaints in order to obtain divine mercy and forgiveness. The lament of the sick is thus a sort of liturgy for healing."[25] Claus Westermann also believes that lament is the genre that dominates the Book of Job. In his opinion, the Book of Job was written to

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[23] Ludwig Kohler as quoted by Claus Westermann in *The Structure of the Book of Job: A Form Critical Analysis* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), 17.

[24] James L. Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981), 121.

[25] Pope, *The Anchor Bible*, LXXI.

address existential issues, specifically the personal question of "Why must I suffer?" This type of existential question is not a response to the *question* of suffering. It is a direct reaction to the *experience* of suffering, and it is called lament. Although Westermann acknowledges the existence of a controversy dialogue in Job 4-27, he points out that this dialogue is framed by Job's laments in chapter 3 and chapters 29-31. He also notes that lament makes up most of what Job utters within the dialogues, themselves. (See 3:3-26, 6:2-7:21, 9:25-10:22, 13:23-14:22, 16:6-17:9, 19:7-20, 23, 29:1-31:37.) These speeches are similar to the personal laments found within many of the Psalms. (See 22:2-19, 38, 88.)[26]

Some scholars have gone as far as to suggest that the Book of Job is a paradigm of the answered lament. The author employed the same form as three of the parallel ancient Near East texts in which God answers the sufferer's pleas for mercy. The main distinction between the Book of Job and these other texts is that Job does not beg for God's mercy. Instead, he demands a trial with God. Crenshaw notes that referring to the Book of Job as a "paradigm of the answered lament" implies that Job was written in order to teach people how to properly respond when confronted with suffering.[27]

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[26] Westermann, *Structure of Job*, 4-6.

[27] Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom*, 122.

CHAPTER TWO

RABBINIC AND MEDIEVAL RESPONSES TO SUFFERING AND THE BOOK OF JOB

RABBINIC RESPONSES TO THE BOOK OF JOB

The Babylonian Talmud (the Bavli) contains a rather lengthy discussion of the Book of Job.[28] Among the topics covered in this deliberation are when (or if) Job existed, what kind of person Job was before tragedy befell him, and how Job responded to his ordeal and his suffering. By looking at this section of the Bavli we can also gain some understanding of the Rabbis' attitudes toward suffering, protest, and complaint.

In Baba Bathra 15a-b, our Sages provide us with a number of suggestions regarding the time period in which Job lived. By using the technique of the *gezeirah shava*, the Rabbis come up with at least seven different opinions of when Job lived. The first opinion claims that Job was a contemporary of Moses, living in Canaan when the spies were sent out to explore that territory. One suggestion even states that Moses was the author of the Book of Job. Another opinion suggests that Job was born when the Israelites entered Egypt and died when the Exodus occurred. R. Yokhanan and R. Eleazar both explain that Job was among those who returned from the Babylonian exile, and that he established a house of study in Tiberias upon his return. Some of the Rabbis maintain that Job lived during the time of the Judges; others say it was during the time of Ahasuerus. Some claim that Job was a contemporary of King David;

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[28] Baba Bathra 15a-16b.

others insist that he lived during the time of our patriarch, Jacob, becoming Jacob's son-in-law by marrying his daughter, Dinah. One of the most famous Talmudic quotations regarding Job states that he never existed at all.[29] R. Isaac ha-Kohen affirms this belief, stating that no person could have possibly endured what Job had to suffer and lived.[30] This opinion suggests that Job is only a fictitious character, and that his story of extreme suffering is intended to set an example for others.

There is also some debate among the Rabbis as to whether or not Job was Jewish. Some opinions state that Job was a gentile prophet who prophesied to the "heathens." Supporting this idea, Job has also been described as "the most pious Gentile that ever lived, one of the few to bear the title of honor 'the servant of God.'"[31] However, the majority of Rabbis agree that Job was an Israelite. The proof for this comes from the belief that after the death of Moses, prophecy was not granted to gentiles. Therefore, only the Rabbis who believe that Job lived during the time of Jacob can unequivocally claim that Job was not an Israelite.[32]

Despite all of the differences in the above-mentioned opinions, almost all of the Rabbis are in agreement when it comes to praising Job's charitableness, kindness, and compassion. In fact, according to the Rabbis, Job's actions and

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[29] Baba Bathra 15a-b.

[30] Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1925), 5:386, n. 25.

[31] Ibid., 2:225.

[32] Baba Bathra 15b.

deeds were so great and so generous that they led one sage to declare that "greater praise was given to Job than to Abraham."[33]

From the Biblical text we know that Job was a wealthy man. The Rabbis expound on this idea, emphasizing that Job was extraordinarily wealthy, and that he obtained his wealth and good fortune through almost magical means. His animals did not live according to the rules of nature; instead of wolves attacking his goats, his goats would attack the wolves. The Rabbis also tell us that God blessed Job with a taste of the world-to-come here on earth. As soon as his oxen would finish plowing the seeds in his fields, grains and produce would immediately spring forth from the earth for his livestock and family to eat. Job's good fortune also extended to anyone who came in contact with him. R. Samuel b. Isaac said that whoever took a *prutah* from Job had good luck with it. And many people had the opportunity to receive at least one *prutah* from Job, for it is stated that Job was more than generous with his money.[34]

If Job was asked for a business loan and the borrower promised to donate part of the proceeds of his business to *tzedakah*, Job would not demand any sort of security deposit on the loan except for the borrower's signature. And if, for some reason, the borrower was unable to repay the money, Job would either send his promissory note back to him or tear it up in his presence. Job was also generous with his possessions. It is stated that Job had no less than 130,000 sheep, 800 dogs, 340,000 asses, and 3,500 pairs of oxen. These animals were

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[33] R. Yokhanan makes this statement in Baba Bathra 15b.

[34] Baba Bathra 15a - 16b.

not owned for selfish reasons, but were used to feed and clothe the needy. In fact, Job was extremely sensitive to the needs of the poor, especially to the needs of the orphan and the widow. He would load up his ships with food and supplies and send them out to destitute cities throughout his land. He also had doors on all four sides of his house so that sojourners and needy individuals could enter his home from every direction. At all times he kept thirty tables set with food, and he employed servants whose only job was to wait on the poor who visited his home. Often these visitors were so moved by Job's kindness that they volunteered to help him serve others. Although Job always accepted their help, he also always insisted on paying them for their time. Job did not want to merely provide for the physical needs of the poor; he wanted to provide for their spiritual needs as well. Job wanted to help them come to know God. After every meal in his home, Job would ask all of his visitors to join him in singing praises to God.[35]

Just as Job felt a need and a desire to praise God, the Rabbis felt a need and a desire to praise Job. It is important to note, however, that most of these praises describe the Job of Chapter 1, before any testing or tragedy strikes at Job's admirable and idyllic life. Job has not yet done anything even remotely rebellious, and so the Rabbis feel comfortable in making real the description of Job as "a blameless and upright man who feared God and shunned evil." (Job 1:1) After Job is tested by God and Satan, the Rabbis' opinions of Job become much more complex. At first glance of Baba Bathra 16a-b, one might think that

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[35] Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, 2:229-230.

the Rabbis of the Talmud held an extremely negative view of the suffering, rebellious, poetic Job. However, a more careful approach proves that some of the Rabbis did, in fact, feel sympathy for Job. A few even felt the need to defend at least some of his words and actions.

Perhaps by taking a closer look at an excerpt from Baba Bathra 16a-b that deals specifically with some of Job's harshest protests and complaints, we can illuminate some of the Rabbinic attitudes and responses toward suffering.

> "In all this, Job did not sin with his lips." (Job 2:10)
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> Rava said: With his lips he did not sin, but he did sin within his heart.
>
> What did he say [that would indicate that he sinned within his heart]? "The earth is given into the hand of the wicked; God covers the faces of the judges thereof. If it is not [God], then who?" (Job 9:24)
>
> Rava said: Job sought to overturn the dish.[36]
>
> Abbaye said to him: Job only spoke concerning Satan.
>
> The same difference of opinion is found between Tannaim: "The earth is given into the hand of the wicked." Rabbi Eliezer said: Job sought to overturn the dish. R. Joshua said to him: Job was only referring to Satan.
>
> "Although you know that I am not wicked, and there is none that can deliver out of Your hand." (Job 10:7)
>
> Rava said: Job sought to exculpate the whole world. He said: Sovereign of the Universe, You have created the ox with cloven hoofs and You have created the ass with whole hoofs; You have created Paradise and You have created Gehinnom; You have created righteous men and You have created wicked men, and who can prevent You?[37] His friends answered: "You do away with fear and restrain devotion before God." (Job 15:4) If God created the evil inclination, God also created the Torah as its remedy.[38]
>
> Rava said: What is meant by the verse, "The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me, and I caused the

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[36] He wanted to upset the balance of the world, to declare that all of God's creations were worthless.

[37] Since God has created the wicked this way, how can God hold them responsible for their own wickedness?

[38] Literally, "spices."

widow's heart to sing for joy." (Job 29:13) This shows that Job used to rob orphans of a field and improve it and then restore it to them. "I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy" [teaches that] if ever there was a widow who could not find a husband, he used to associate his name with her,[39] and then someone would soon come and marry her.

"Oh, that my vexation was but weighed and my calamity laid in the balances together." (Job 6:2)

Rav said: Dust should be put in the mouth of Job, because he makes himself the colleague of heaven.

"Would there be an arbiter between us, that he might lay his hands upon us both." (Job 9:33)

Rav said: Dust should be put in the mouth of Job; is there a servant who argues with his master?

"I made a covenant with my eyes; how then should I look upon a maid?" (Job 31:1)

Rav said: Dust should be put in the mouth of Job; he refrained from looking at other men's wives. Abraham did not even look at his own, as it is written: Behold, now I know that you are a fair woman to look upon." (Gen. 12:11)

"As the cloud is consumed and vanishes away, so he that goes down to Sheol will come up no more." (Job 7:9)

Rava said: From here [we learn] that Job denied the resurrection of the dead.

"For [God] breaks me with a tempest and multiplies my wounds without cause." (Job 9:17)

Rabbah said: Job blasphemed with a tempest, and with a tempest he was answered.

He blasphemes with a tempest, as it is written, "For [God] breaks me with a tempest." Job said to God: Perhaps a tempest has passed before You and caused You to confuse *Iyov* (Job) and *Oyev* (enemy).

He was answered through a tempest, as it is written, "Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind[40] and said . . . ." (Job 38:1) God said to him: I have created many hairs in a man, and for each and every hair I created a follicle, in order that two hairs should not be nourished from the same follicle. For if two hairs drew nourishment from the same follicle, they would darken the sight of man. I do not confuse one follicle for another; then how shall I confuse *Iyov* with *Oyev*?

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[39] Rashi explains that Job would claim to be her relative or pretend to court her.

[40] The Hebrew word *se-arah* can also be translated as "hair."

Generally speaking, this sugya is filled with numerous criticisms and condemnations of Job. Job is attacked for questioning God's judgment. He is critiqued for his haughtiness and for thinking too highly of himself. He is accused of not believing in the resurrection of the dead, and he is condemned as being a blasphemer. However, is it fair to say that Job is condemned absolutely by the Rabbis of the Bavli? One cannot deny that some of the Rabbis mentioned in this passage do defend Job -- or at least try to present a more balanced picture of him.

First, Abbaye and R. Joshua do attempt to soften Job's challenge to Divine justice. Job proclaims that "the earth is handed over to the wicked one." Instead of reading this as a protest regarding the apparent lack of justice in God's world (and therefore, as a protest against God), Abbaye and R. Joshua interpret "the wicked one" as Satan. These two rabbis try to defend Job since they understand Job's protest as a complaint against Satan, rather than as a questioning of God's justice or judgments.

Second, in the middle of numerous criticisms regarding Job's actions and attitudes Rava, who is one of Job's harsher critics in this sugya, provides us with a short account of some of Job's positive traits. Why does this account of Job's good deeds appear here, in Baba Bathra 16a, when most of Job's praises are sung earlier, in Baba Bathra 15b? One possible explanation is that Rava did not want to forget or negate Job's description as a kind and upright man. Or perhaps he felt a sense of sympathy for Job's situation and could not bring himself to condemn him completely. Whatever the reason, the fact that the

Rava chose to expound upon some of Job's admirable actions at this point in the discourse points to a sense of ambivalence among at least some of the Rabbis regarding Job's responses to his suffering and their own views on suffering.

Finally, at the very end of this sugya, we read: "'Job speaks without knowledge, and his words are without wisdom.' (Job 34:35) Rava said: This teaches that a man is not held responsible for what he says when under duress."[41] Rava's explanation shows us that although the Rabbis may not have approved of Job's challenges to God, they were not willing to completely condemn him for voicing these challenges either. Because they were not comfortable with his protests, the Rabbis came to understand Job's criticisms and complaints as an expression of his overwhelming grief. It is clear that, in the end, the Rabbis of the Bavli were never able to support Job's protests. However, they did allow room for him to make them.

RABBINIC RESPONSES TO SUFFERING

The topic of suffering is not dealt with in any kind of detail in much of Rabbinic literature. The Mishnah hardly acknowledges this topic, while the Tosefta,[42] and the Yerushalmi Talmud simply tend to uphold the inherited doctrine of Divine retribution The Yerushalmi Talmud is also clear on the point

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[41] Baba Bathra 16b.

[42] It is interesting to note that while the Tosefta may not support Job's words and actions, it is also not very supportive of his friends' words either. In Baba Metzia 3:25 we read: "Just as there is overreaching in trade, so too is there oppression by words, and moreover, oppression by words is [a] greater [wrong] than oppression with money. . . . If illnesses and sufferings were coming upon him, or [if] he buries his children one should not speak to him as Job's colleagues spoke to him."

that the proper way for a person to deal with suffering is to accept it graciously and to endure it stoically, without protest.[43] The Babylonian Talmud, however, deals with the topic of suffering on a much broader scope. The Bavli contains a variety of discussions on the nature of suffering, and offers many more approaches for responding to and dealing with suffering. Although the traditional views of Divine retribution are upheld in the Bavli, we also find some instances where the Rabbis acknowledge that suffering can touch the lives of people who have not sinned.

In Shabbat 55a-b there is a lengthy debate regarding a statement made by R. Ami. Here, R. Ami is quoted as saying, "There is no death without sin and no suffering without transgression." His proof for this opinion comes from Ezekiel 18:20, which reads: "The person who sins, he alone shall die. A child shall not share the burden of the parent's guilt, nor shall a parent share the burden of a child's guilt; the righteousness of the righteous shall be accounted to him alone, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be accounted to him alone." However, other sages reject R. Ami's view, offering numerous examples of Biblical figures, such as Moses and Aaron, who suffered and died, yet never sinned. In the end, R. Ami's opinion is rejected. The gemara concludes by saying, "We learn from this that there is death without sin and there is suffering without transgression, and the refutation of R. Ami is a definitive refutation." Leaving no room for further debate, this conclusion emphatically affirms a reality

[43] David Kraemer, *Responses to Suffering in Classical Rabbinic Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 154.

of everyday experience – innocent people do suffer. This gemara, however, offers no alternative explanations as to why this is so.[44]

Some Rabbis of the Bavli explain this kind of suffering of the innocent as a sign of God's love, and advise the recipients of such sufferings to accept them with love. Most often associated with the school of R. Akiva, these "chastisements of love" (*yissurin shel ahavah)* are given to us by God out of goodness and love, even without evidence that these chastisements have any positive effects or results.[45] However, most of the Sages find it difficult to completely disassociate *yissurin shel ahavah* from the more traditional teachings on suffering. Many of the Rabbis will still explain these chastisements as attempts to help people atone for their sins, or to encourage people to spend more time studying Torah.[46] Berakhot 5a-b attempts to define the concept of *yissurin shel ahavah* more clearly, while also exploring some possible Rabbinic responses to personal suffering.

> Rava, and some say R. Hisda, said: If a man sees suffering coming upon him, he should examine his deeds, as it says, "Let us search and examine our ways and turn back to the Lord." (Lam. 3:40)
>
> If he searched and did not find [that his deeds were the cause of his sufferings], he should attribute it to neglect of Torah, as it says, "Happy is the man whom you discipline, O Lord, the man You instruct in Your teaching." (Ps. 94:12)
>
> And if he reviewed it, but did not find [his study to be lacking], then it is clear they are afflictions of [God's] love, as it says, "For whom the Lord loves, [the Lord] rebukes." (Prov. 3:12)
>
> Rava said R. Sekhora said R. Huna said: Anyone whom the

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[44] Ibid., 184-187.

[45] Ephraim Urbach, *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs*, Israel Abrahams, trans. (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1979), 442.

[46] Rachel Mikva's rabbinic thesis, *Talking Back to God: An Examination of Chutzpah K'lapei Shamaya in the Babylonian Talmud*, (Cincinnati: 1990), 91.

> Holy One, blessed be [God], desires, [God] afflicts with suffering, for it says, "And the one whom the Lord desires, [the Lord] crushes with illness." (Is. 53:10)
>
> Is it possible [that this is so] even if he does not accept them willingly? Scripture says, "if he made himself an offering for guilt." (Is. 53:10) Just as an offering is [offered] willingly, so too must suffering [be accepted] willingly.
>
> And if he accepted them [willingly] what is his reward? "He might see his offspring and have a long life." (Is. 53:10) And not only so, but his learning will remain with him, as it is said, "And that through him the Lord's purpose might prosper." (Is. 53:10)
>
> R. Jacob b. Idi and R. Akha b. Chanina dispute. One says: What is suffering of love? Any [suffering] that does not cause the neglect of Torah, for it says, "Happy is the man whom You discipline, O Lord, the man You instruct in Your teaching."
>
> And the other says: What is suffering of love? Any [suffering] that does not cause the neglect of prayer, as it says, "Blessed is God who has not turned away my prayer, or [God's] faithful care from me." (Ps. 66:20)
>
> R. Aba the son of R. Chiyya b. Abba said to them: This is what R. Chiyya b. Abba said [that] R. Yokhanan said. Both these and these (sufferings that cause neglect of Torah study and/or prayer) are sufferings of love, as it says, "For whom the Lord loves, [the Lord] rebukes."

The first section of this sugya attempts to outline the proper way to respond to personal suffering. A person should first examine her ways to see if she has sinned at all. Here the Bavli maintains the importance of the traditional view of Divine retribution. If a person has not committed any sins, then he should do some serious soul-searching to see if he has been neglecting his Torah study. If he has not neglected his studies, then he can safely conclude that his sufferings are chastisements of love. If the sufferer is able to accept this kind of suffering willingly then he is in store for great rewards.

On the surface it seems as if this sugya is simply reiterating a typical, traditional response to suffering. Check your own deeds first. If you find nothing

offending or lacking in your actions then you should know that God is causing you to suffer chastisements of love in the present in order for you to receive even greater rewards in the future. It is interesting to note, however, that these chastisements of love are conditional. Sufferings can be termed chastisements of love only if the sufferer is willing to accept them as such. If there is doubt or hesitation on the part of the sufferer, then the sufferings cannot be understood as chastisements of love. R. Jacob b. Idi and R. Akha b. Chanina also claim that sufferings which prohibit the sufferer from studying Torah or praying cannot be called chastisements of love. Although R. Yokhanan ultimately rejects these views, their appearance in the text proves that at least some of the Sages acknowledge the fact that there do seem to be extreme cases of suffering for which no answer or explanation is sufficient.

Further on in this sugya the Talmud quotes a teaching from the halakhic midrash of the Mekhilta and Sifrei. "It is taught [that] R. Shimeon b. Yochai says: Three good gifts did the Holy One, blessed be God, give to Israel, and all were given only by means of suffering. And what are they? Torah, the land of Israel, and the world-to-come."[47] In *Responses to Suffering in Classical Rabbinic Literature*, David Kraemer, a former professor at the Jewish Theological Seminary, notes that the Bavli omits the original introduction to R. Shimeon's speech. In the Talmud, the quote begins: "Three good gifts did the Holy One, blessed be God, give to Israel . . . ." But in the Midrash, the quote begins with the words, "Suffering is precious, for three good gifts . . . ." Whether or not this

[47] Berakhot 5a.

opening phrase was omitted intentionally by the Talmudic Rabbis, it is clear that the Bavli does not wholeheartedly support the idea that suffering is precious.[48] In fact, further on in this Talmudic passage three of our Sages reject this notion outright.

> R. Chiyya b. Abba became ill. R. Yokhanan went in to him and asked him: Are these afflictions dear to you? [R. Chiyya b. Abba] answered him; Neither they nor their reward. [R. Yokhanan] said to him: Give me your hand. [R. Chiyya b. Abba] gave him his hand and [R. Yokhanan] revived him.
>
> R. Yokhanan became ill. R. Chanina went in to visit him and asked him: Are these afflictions dear to you? [R. Yokhanan] answered him: Neither they nor their reward. [R. Chanina] said to him: Give me your hand. [R. Yokhanan] gave him his hand and [R. Chanina] revived him.
>
> R. Eleazar fell ill and R. Yokhanan went in to visit him. Seeing that he was lying in a dark room, Yokhanan bared his arm and light radiated from it. He noticed that R. Eleazar was weeping an he said to him: Why do you weep? If it is because you did not study enough Torah, surely we learned, "the one who [sacrifices] much and the one who [sacrifices] little are as one, provided that the heart is directed to Heaven."[49] If it is lack of sustenance, [note that] not everybody has the privilege to enjoy two tables.[50] If it is due to [lack of] children, this is the bone of my tenth son!
>
> [R. Eleazar] replied: I am weeping on account of this beauty[51] that is going to rot in the earth.
>
> [R. Yokhanan] said to him: For this you should surely cry. And they cried together.
>
> [R. Yokhanan] asked him: Are these afflictions dear to you? [R. Eleazar] said to him: Neither they nor their reward. [R. Yokhanan] said to him: Give me your hand. [R. Eleazar] gave him his hand and [R. Yokhanan] revived him.[52]

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[48] Kraemer, *Responses to Suffering*, 194.

[49] Menakhot 110b.

[50] The Soncino note explains "two tables" as learning and wealth, or this world and the next.

[51] The beauty of R. Yokhanan.

[52] Berakhot 5b.

Rabbis who had once expounded on the values and lessons of suffering radically change their tune when they are the ones who are forced to endure pain and cope with anguish. When suffering befalls them personally they do not want to ponder theological teachings or listen to promises of future rewards. It seems as if they would gladly relinquish all of their rights to future rewards if they could only find some relief from their present sufferings.

While these Rabbis do not cry out against heaven, they also do not accept their sufferings willingly or graciously. They do not wait stoically for God to restore them, but turn to the comforting hands of their friends and companions. They also do not accept many of the traditional explanations of suffering. In trying to comfort R. Eleazar, R. Yokhanan rejects the idea of suffering as a punishment for lack of Torah study. R. Yokhanan reminds R. Eleazar of a Mishnaic teaching which states that God is not interested in the quantity of a person's Torah study; rather, God is interested in the intention behind one's studies. R. Yokhanan also rejects the ideas that lack of wealth or lack of children is a punishment from God.

As it turns out, R. Eleazar is not upset or concerned over the possible reasons for his sufferings. Instead, he is crying over the realization that his beautiful friend (and probably also that he, himself) will one day die and be buried. He is weeping over the loss of real things – his body, his friendships, those objects and people that bring beauty to his world. A belief in the world-to-come or an understanding of why he is suffering (at least at this point), is not enough to extinguish his pain and sorrow over the loss of these things. In the

end, R. Eleazar's tears come from his real experience of suffering and loss, not from existential questions or theological explanations.

The promise of future reward was the most prevalent explanation for suffering during the Rabbinic period. However, as we have just seen, this reasoning provides little comfort or hope for those in the midst of despair. This was true for at least some of our sages. And at least one Talmudic aggadah claims that this was also true for God. After the destruction of the Temple the people cried out:

> Woe, woe it is he[53] who has destroyed the Sanctuary, burnt the Temple, killed all the righteous, driven all Israel into exile, and is still dancing around among us! You have surely given him to us so that we may receive reward through him.[54] We want neither him, nor reward through him! Thereupon a tablet fell down from heaven for them, upon which the word "truth" was inscribed.[55]

According to this aggadah, it seems as if God acknowledges that the prospect of future reward is often an insufficient explanation for suffering. The people do not want the promise of a far-off reward. They want the Sanctuary and the Temple, and they want to go home. By sending down a rock inscribed with the word "truth," God validates Israel's pain and frustration over this hollow notion. Perhaps this text also suggests that, for ordinary human beings, for the Rabbis, and even for God, sometimes there are no sufficient answers or explanations for why people suffer.

So what do the Rabbis see as a proper response to suffering? Obviously,

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[53] The evil desire for idolatry.

[54] If Israel can resist the evil desire successfully they will be rewarded in the future.

[55] Yoma 69b.

many of the Sages do believe that one should accept sufferings as chastisements of love from God, and then wait patiently for God's bestowal of future rewards. However, it also seems that for at least some of the Rabbis, responding graciously to suffering is not always the answer. Sometimes, an acceptable response involves addressing the pain and injustice that one feels. Sometimes, it means crying out in sorrow and voicing one's anger and despair. These types of responses, while not endorsed the majority of the Rabbis are also not rejected. They are even modeled to us by some of the Sages themselves.

SAADIAH'S RESPONSE TO THE BOOK OF JOB

Saadiah ben Joseph (882-942) is most widely known today as Saadiah Gaon due to his leadership of the ancient Talmudic academy of Sura in Babylon. As a philosopher, Saadiah was well versed in the studies of logic, science, languages, and astronomy. As a Bible scholar, he had an extensive knowledge of Scriptural texts, Talmudic law, and Midrashic interpretations. L.E. Goodman, a professor of philosophy at the University of Hawaii who translated Saadiah's *The Book of Theodicy* from Arabic into English, notes that Saadiah read Scripture "philosophically and thematically, not as the mere handmaiden of Halakhah, and still less as a vehicle of pure homily or legend."[56] As an exegist, Saadiah found it permissible, and often necessary, to deviate from the plain

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[56] L.E. Goodman, *The Book of Theodicy: Translation and Commentary on the Book of Job by Saadiah ben Joseph Al-Fayyumi* (New Haven: Yale University, 1988), 5. Hereafter this work will be referred to as *Saadiah on Job.*

meaning of a text in order to maintain coherence with other Biblical or Rabbinic details, the dictates of logic, and the confirmed facts of nature. This conviction is well demonstrated in *The Book of Theodicy*, Saadiah's translation and commentary of the Book of Job.

It is interesting to note that two years after his appointment to the position of Gaon at Sura, a dispute ensued between the academic and secular leaderships of the Babylonian Jews. During this time, Saadiah was accused of blasphemy and became the victim of libels, beatings and assassination attempts. This ordeal had a profound effect on Saadiah and, therefore, on his interpretation of the Book of Job. Goodman writes:

> In his memoir of the ordeal, which he entitled *Sefer ha-Galui* ("The Open Book"), Saadiah expresses his hope to serve as an example for others who are unjustly injured and disgraced. His personal experience of persecution combines with the communal experience of his people in history . . . to give existential substance to Saadiah's philosophic underscoring of the Jobian theme that worldly success need not be commensurate with deserts. . . . His remark that Job's adversary and accuser must have been the spokesman of a faction who unjustly disparaged Job's piety reflects his own experience in persecution.[57]

As has been noted earlier in this chapter, the Rabbis of the Midrash and Talmud are able to praise Job for his numerous positive qualities. In these works Job is often described as patient, restrained, charitable, hospitable, and generous. Saadiah also praises Job for these admirable traits, as well as for remaining loyal to God throughout all of his trials. The Rabbis are also highly critical of the ways in which Job responds to his own suffering. In general, they find his responses to be rebellious and blasphemous in thought, deed, and word.

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[57] Ibid., 21.

Here is where Saadiah and the Rabbis differ. Saadiah's reading of the Book of Job is much more sympathetic to Job than the older Rabbinic interpretations and opinions. While in agreement with some of Job's harshest Rabbinic critics that Job would have sinned had he blamed God for his suffering, Saadiah vigorously denies that Job committed any such sin. In *The Book of Theodicy*, Saadiah goes to great lengths to show that Job's speeches and actions are not impious or blasphemous, but rather understandable and even admirable.

The Rabbis of the Talmud and other traditional commentaries use Job's own words to demonstrate that Job was one who denied God's justice and God's power, and therefore, deserved the suffering that befell him. Many of Job's radical outbursts give the Rabbis the proof they need to declare Job a blasphemer. Saadiah does not believe that Job deserved any of the pain and misfortune that he was forced to endure. For Saadiah, suffering does not imply guilt. His commentary and translation seek to "correct" this traditional understanding of Job as someone who denied God's powers, who believed that God's judgments and actions were unjust, and who deserved to suffer.

For example, in Job 3:1-3, we read: "After this Job opened his mouth and cursed his day. Job spoke out and said: Perish the day on which I was born, the night that said, 'A male child is brought forth.'" Traditional commentary[58] on this verse claims that by cursing the day of his birth Job may as well have been cursing God, for God is the creator of all days and is the ultimate force behind all births and creations in the world. Saadiah does not believe that Job ever uttered

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[58] See Exodus Rabbah 30:11.

words that were intended to curse God. Therefore, his translation of these verses is somewhat different. Saadiah renders Job 3:1-3 in the following manner: "After this, Job opened his mouth and blamed his time. And Job began to speak, saying: Lost from recall, by my perishing, be the day wherein I was born, and the night when it was said, 'Born is a manchild.'"[59] In his notes, Saadiah provides an explanation for these translations.

> Job 3:1: We must clarify Scripture's saying of Job that "he cursed his day." For a day is not the sort of thing that can be cursed or reviled. So I glossed it as "blamed his time." Now one's lifetime or span of days, like any other segment of time, cannot be blamed either, for that matter, except by reference to the body. For the body is the actual object to which misery and misfortune attach . . . . [Therefore] the meaning of "he cursed his day" . . . would be "he deplored his fate."[60]

Job is in agonizing pain when he utters these words. Saadiah observes that Job does not mean to literally curse the day, God's creation. Instead, Job is crying out against the pain that has ravished his body. If only this day would cease, then perhaps his pain would end as well.

> Job 3:3: [Job's] appeal to his Lord, "perish the day wherein I was born", is not a petition that God destroy the day on which Job was born; for that day is already over and done, like every other span of time gone by. Rather he beseeches his Lord to make an end for him, for with his death the day of his birth will perish from memory and be forgotten by people. As long as he lives the day of his birth is remembered, but when he dies people will forget it . . . . It is purely from the intensity of his agony that he appeals to his Lord to let him die. He feels that death would be easier to bear, just as Moses felt that death would be easier to bear than remaining the sole survivor of the entire nation, and said, "Blot me out, I pray,

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[59] Saadiah, *The Book of Theodicy*, as found in Goodman, *Saadiah on Job*, 178-179.

[60] Ibid.

from Your book which You have written." (Ex. 32:32) [61]

Job is in deep despair over the recent events and circumstances of his own life. His sense of loss is so great that he is unable to comprehend how he is supposed to go on living. According to Saadiah these verses are simply Job's poetic expression of his wish for God to end his life. Saadiah does not take Job's words literally, but understands them within the context they are uttered.

In Job 7:9 Job declares, "As the cloud is consumed and vanishes away so he who goes down to the grave shall come up no more." This seems to be a rather straightforward denial of God's power to resurrect the dead. The Rabbis of the Talmud certainly found this to be true, and accused Job of denying resurrection.[62] However, Saadiah, because he adamantly believes that Job never loses faith in God, is able to interpret this verse differently. In his commentary Saadiah writes:

> When [Job] says "clouds perish and pass . . . ", he does not mean that God is not able to raise the dead from the grave, or that [God] is able but has not promised to do so. On the contrary, [God] has the power, and moreover, has promised resurrection, as [God's] prophets attest and [God's] community all believe. But Job here reflects on human powerlessness, on man's inability to affect what comes after death and thus to resurrect himself. This is like David's words, "And [God] remembered that they are flesh, a breath that passes and does not return." (Ps. 78:39) [63]

Here Saadiah explains that Job is not bewailing God's powerlessness over death, but his own powerlessness over death. This is a turning point for

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[61] Ibid., 179.

[62] See Baba Bathra 16a.

[63] Saadiah, *The Book of Theodicy*, as found in Goodman, *Saadiah on Job*, 209.

Job. Although he longs for death in order to alleviate his suffering, he also fears death, for he knows that he does not have the power resurrect himself. He does not even have the power to determine when his resurrection might occur. Therefore, he must seize the opportunity to speak out while he can (while he still has the power to do so)[64] regarding his inquiries into why this suffering has befallen him, and what it all might mean. According to Saadiah, this verse deals with Job's own sense of power and powerlessness. It has very little to do with God.

In Chapter 9, Job cries out "[God] multiplies my wounds without cause" (Job 9:17b and "Therefore, I said, it is all one;[God] destroys the innocent and the guilty." (Job 9:22) The Rabbis interpret these words as accusations of God's injustice. However, for Saadiah, these verses serve as proof of Job's fidelity to God and of his intense grief. Saadiah translates Job 9:17b as "God has multiplied my hurts gratuitously," explaining that Job does not feel that God has wronged him or been unjust to him in any way. Rather, Job is simply acknowledging the fact that God is able to do whatever God pleases. According to Saadiah, this statement is actually a testament to God's boundless powers. Saadiah also retranslates Job 9:22, commenting that this is not the statement of a blasphemer, but the complaint of a grief-stricken man crying out against the inevitability and the universality of death.[65]

For Saadiah, Job's responses to his sufferings are perfectly natural and

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[64] See Job 7:11.

[65] Saadiah, *The Book of Theodicy*, as found in Goodman, *Saadiah on Job*, 222-223.

appropriate. His words and actions do not have to be excused because Job was experiencing severe duress.[66] According to Saadiah, Job can be held accountable for his numerous responses to his suffering because there is nothing wrong with these responses. These statements do not deny God's power or claim that God is unjust. Therefore they can be seen as acceptable, understandable, and even courageous ways of dealing with suffering and pain.

One of Job's most profound responses to his suffering is his desire to confront and question God. Saadiah does not accept the Rabbinic traditions that compare Job unfavorably to Abraham, David, and others who almost never question God's actions or motives.[67] He thinks that it is natural for Job to want to know the charges that are being brought against him, and he admires Job's conviction in demanding this information from God. According to Saadiah, Job's desire to confront God arises from the way in which he chooses to deal with his ordeal. Job is able to endure his suffering by probing for the reasons behind it and the meaning within it. Saadiah believes this probing is what allows Job to finally encounter God.

Saadiah views Job as a prophet. This understanding comes from the tradition that Job's experience with the whirlwind was revelatory. In Avot de R. Nathan we read: "Job prophesies and did not know what he was prophesizing . . . that the Holy One, blessed be [God], would again give him good."[68] However,

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[66] See Rava's comment in Baba Bathra 16b, "Man is not held responsible for what he says when under duress."

[67] Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, 2:225-226.

[68] As quoted by Goodman in *Saadiah on Job*, 63-64.

according to Saadiah, Job's capacity for prophecy is unique in the Biblical canon. First, other Biblical prophets do not have to endure any kind of suffering or tribulation in order to first receive prophecy from God. Moreover, most of the prophetic experiences recorded in the Bible are presented as external phenomena. Saadiah explains that Job's ability to receive prophecy is an internal process. As Job develops his abilities to struggle with pain, to formulate meaningful philosophical inquiries, and to express himself poetically, he also develops an awareness of prophecy. According to Saadiah, these developmental processes are related. In his comments on Saadiah's Book of Theodicy, L.E. Goodman writes that the Book of Job leads its readers through

> the questionings and explorations by which [Job's] personality grows from conventionalized piety to moral, philosophical, and spiritual mastery. [It] recapitulates the stages in the forging of an identity of whom it is not incredible to say that God's voice was heard by Job.[69]

The Rabbis tell us that four individuals came to know God through their own efforts -- Abraham, Hezekiah, the Messiah, and Job.[70] These individuals did not simply rely upon tradition in coming to know God; instead they relied upon their own experiences and struggled with their own theological concerns. These actions, reflections, and introspections are not impious or blasphemous; they are the processes that bring a person closer to knowing God.

Job's suffering is the catalyst that sparks *his* desire to wrestle with his inherited beliefs and with God. His experiences of pain and undeserved anguish

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[69] Goodman, *Saadiah on Job*, 64.

[70] Numbers Rabbah 14:2.

move him to ask questions and demand answers, both from himself and from God. Many commentators have been troubled by the fact that God does not directly answer Job's questions and accusations in the whirlwind speeches. But for Saadiah, God's silence is part of God's wisdom. If God had explained the reasons for Job's sufferings or foretold of the great rewards that were awaiting him at the end of his ordeal, God would have robbed Job of any meaning that he might have gained from his experience. Instead, the "diversion saves the meaning that Job imparted to his sufferings by refusing to break with his own integrity, curse God, and die."[71]

Through his struggles Job is able to discover meaning within his suffering. According to Saadiah, that meaning comes from being able to maintain one's integrity while maintaining faith in God. This struggle also results in profound changes in Job's personality, values, and beliefs. It is clear that if Job had not been forced to go through this ordeal he would never have matured from a good man who adhered to conventional piety to a wise and spiritual man who was able to receive prophecy.

But does all of this justify Job's suffering? Can we now say that undeserved suffering has a purpose and is worthwhile? Saadiah's answer is "No". Job, after having endured his trials, may be able to say these things. We, however, can not. We cannot come to this answer until we ourselves struggle with our own theological dilemmas and philosophical beliefs. Saadiah is clear that our struggles do not have to be born out of the same sort of physical,

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[71] Goodman, *Saadiah on Job*, 96.

emotional, and spiritual pain that Job endured. However, if we are to come to know God at all, those struggles must exist. As Goodman writes: "We need not fully share the agony, but we cannot know what Job knew unless we have shared the vision. And we cannot share the vision unless we somehow know the agony."[72] Saadiah fervently believes that there is meaning to be found in undeserved suffering. However, only the victims of suffering, by their attitudes and their actions, can determine what that meaning is.

What then should we take away from our study of the Book of Job? Saadiah strongly encourages the study of the Book of Job because the account of Job enhances humanity's awareness of the problems associated with Divine justice and raises the level of our responses to these problems. Saadiah also believes that the Book of Job was written as an example to all to people to teach them how to deal with suffering and adversity.[73] In 19:23, Job cries out that he wishes his words could somehow be written down or inscribed in a book. In his comments on this verse Saadiah believes that Job wants his sufferings recorded in order for future generations to learn not only how sufferings might be borne, but also that sufferings can befall innocent people.[74]

Job's attitude toward his suffering is one for which everyone should strive. From the moment Job refuses to "curse God and die", Job chooses life. According to Saadiah, Job never wavers from this position. Even when his

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[72] Ibid., 114.

[73] Ibid., 64.

[74] Saadiah, *The Book of Theodicy*, as found in Goodman, *Saadiah on Job*, 288-289.

words and his body cry out for death, there is at least some part of Job that wants to cling to life. Saadiah believes that Job has been promised eternal life. But it is important to Saadiah that Job has no knowledge of this promise.

> Without the certainty of recompense beyond this world, without the absolute assurance of a hereafter or the promise of otherworldly transcendence, Job still maintains his trust and his integrity. He does not pronounce life evil. . . . Which is to say that Job's conviction -- even in his agony and against his agony, shared with all those who have chosen life when the choice was theirs -- is for life without impatience about "quality of life," without reference to a beyond, and without precondition.[75]

Job's attitude toward life, in the midst of his despair, is a courageous example to all who suffer and struggle. Above all else, Job intends to live his life honestly, faithfully, and with integrity. For Saadiah, this is the most important message of the Book of Job.

MAIMONIDES' RESPONSE TO THE BOOK OF JOB

Rabbi Moses ben Maimon (1135-1204), also known as the Rambam and Maimonides, was one of the greatest and most influential figures in all of Jewish history. Born in Cordova, he studied the Talmud and secular subjects with his father. However, due to religious persecutions, the Maimon family was forced to flee Cordova in 1148. For almost twenty years the family wandered throughout Spain, Morocco, Palestine, and finally settled in Cairo. Here, Maimonides became renown for his scholarship. He was an expert in the fields of Jewish law, philosophy, medicine, and ethics. He also became the *Nagid* (Head) of the Jews of Egypt and a recognized authority on Jewish law for Jewish communities

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[75] Goodman, *Saadiah on Job*, 113.

around the world.

Between 1185-1190 Maimonides composed *The Guide of the Perplexed* for one of his favorite students, Joseph B. Judah. It covers a wide spectrum of philosophical problems including: claims of reason versus revelation; the existence, unity, and incorporeality of God; the creation of the world; prophecy; evil; and providence. In his introduction Maimonides explains that *The Guide* was written in order to illuminate the secrets of prophecy and to explain the apparent incongruity between the literal meanings of Biblical and Talmudic homilies and the concepts of reason. However, Maimonides feared that exposing these secrets to the common, uneducated reader or to the literalist Talmud scholar could produce disastrous results. Due to this fear, Maimonides deliberately wrote and organized *The Guide* to be ambiguous and challenging to comprehend.[76] Therefore, it is with great humility that this author sets forth in an attempt to explore Maimonides' response to the Book of Job as recorded in *The Guide of the Perplexed*.

In Chapters 22 and 23 of the third section of *The Guide*, Maimonides illuminates what he understands to be the true meaning of the Book of Job. According to Maimonides, the Book of Job, which he describes as "extraordinary and marvelous,"[77] is a parable that addresses the issue of humanity's knowledge of God. In his comments, Maimonides refers to the Talmudic debate

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[76] Colette Sirat, *A History of Jewish Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 157-203. See also: Isadore Twersky, A Maimonides Reader (West Orange, NJ: Behrman House, Inc., 1972), 1-29.

[77] Moses Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, trans. Shlomo Pines (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963), 486.

over whether the story of Job is based on an actual account or is merely parable. He concludes that whether one thinks that Job was an historical figure or a fictional figure, every person who has been endowed with reason must agree that the prologue was written only as a parable. However, Maimonides makes it clear that this parable is quite powerful. He writes: "[This] is not a parable like all others, but one to which extraordinary notions and things that are the mystery of the universe are attached. Through it great enigmas are solved, and truths than which none is higher become clear."[78]

Maimonides begins his explanation of this parable by looking at its very first verse: "There was a man in the land of Utz . . . ." (Job 1:1) Interested in exploring the meanings of the seemingly insignificant word *Utz*, Maimonides notes that it is found as a proper name in the Book of Genesis (Gen. 22:21) and in its imperative form in Isaiah. (Is. 8:10)[79] From this reference in Isaiah, Maimonides comments, "It is as if [Scripture] said to you: Meditate and reflect on the parable, grasp its meaning, and see what the true opinion is."[80]

Maimonides' reflections on the parable lead him to a number of conclusions. First, Maimonides by examines the nature of the Satan carefully, noting three interesting observations. Maimonides discovers that Satan exists and acts only on earth.[81] While he might be allowed to visit the heavenly realm, he is not permitted to remain there. Satan also has no dominion over the soul,

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[78] Ibid.

[79] Here, *utzu etza* means "to take counsel together."

[80] Maimonides, *The Guide*, 486-487.

[81] Cf. Job 1:7, 2:2.

which, according to Maimonides, is the part of a human being that exists after death. Finally, Maimonides comes to believe that Satan is not one of the "sons of God." For his proof he cites Job 1:6: "Now there was a day when the sons of God presented themselves before the Lord, and *the Satan came also among them*." But if the Satan is not one of the sons of God, then what is he? Taking all of his "facts" into consideration, Maimonides quotes a passage from the Talmud: "Rabbi Simon ben Laquish said: Satan, the evil inclination, and the angel of death are one and the same."[82] Maimonides explains that the word *satan* is derived from the verb *satan* which means "to turn away." [83] Therefore, in the Book of Job, the Satan is actually the evil inclination which turns Job away "from the ways of truth and makes [him] perish in the ways of error."[84]

Maimonides goes on to cite a number of passages from the Talmud which elaborate on the idea of the evil and good inclinations. The Sages believed that the evil inclination became a part of a human being at his birth, while the good inclination became a part of a person only when he had perfected his intellect.[85] According to the Sages, these inclinations also assumed the forms of angels.[86] As will be seen, these Talmudic ideas become relevant to Maimonides' understanding of the meaning Job's story.

Continuing his evaluation of the Book of Job, Maimonides observes that, if

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[82] Baba Bathra 16a.

[83] Cf. Num. 22:32.

[84] Maimonides, *The Guide*, 489.

[85] Sanhedrin 91b.

[86] Shabbat 119b.

not read carefully, the speeches of Job and his friends sound very similar to one another. Therefore, Maimonides sets out to clarify the point of view of each of the five human characters. Throughout the dialogues Job maintains that he has done nothing to incur such wretched pain and misery, and he questions God's motives for making him suffer so. While Maimonides agrees that Job is an innocent sufferer, he also speculates that Job cannot understand the true meaning of his suffering due to his lack of knowledge. In fact, Maimonides notes that "the most marvelous and extraordinary thing" about the Book of Job is that Job is never described as being knowledgeable or intelligent.[87] While he is praised for his moral virtue and righteous acts, he is never distinguished for his wisdom. Maimonides interprets this to mean that Job had only previously known about God through the beliefs and theories of his inherited tradition. He had never sought to acquire knowledge of God using his own faculties of reason and observation.

On the opposite end of the spectrum from Job, Eliphaz firmly believes that suffering is a sign of a person's guilt, and that Job is clearly being punished for some sin he has committed. For him there is no such thing as an innocent sufferer. The idea of undeserved suffering is a negation of God's justice, and therefore unthinkable to Eliphaz. Bildad is more willing to consider Job's innocence. He believes that God is causing Job to suffer now in order to his increase his rewards later in life or in the world-to-come. Zophar does not offer any reason for Job's sufferings, and thinks that trying to formulate any

[87] Maimonides, *The Guide*, 487.

understanding God's actions is absurd. In his opinion, human beings "are incapable of penetrating the secrets of [God's] wisdom, which necessitates [God's] doing what [God] wills without there being another reason."[88]

Maimonides does not concur with the opinion of Job or his three friends. However, he finds a great deal of value in the opinion and approach of Elihu. It is Elihu's mention of an intercessor, an angel, (Job 33:23) that Maimonides finds powerful. Maimonides interprets this angel to be the good inclination, which comes to turn Job back to the path of truth. Job's ordeal, the speeches of Elihu and God, and the good inclination help Job to realize his misconceptions about God and the world. Job comes to understand that humanity's sense of justice, governance, and creation cannot be compared to God's sense of justice, governance, and creation. Prior to his experience of suffering Job also thought that his money, his family and friends, and his health were the most valued aspects of his life. However, after enduring his suffering, Job understands that true knowledge of God must be the ultimate goal of every human's life. Here Maimonides is reading his own beliefs into Job's experiences and words. For Maimonides strongly believes that it is possible to attain at least some true knowledge of God in this world, and that the process of acquiring that knowledge has the ability to redeem the hardships we are forced to endure here.

Because he had been led astray by the evil inclination, because he had not sought God on his own, because had he tried to adhere to the ignorant beliefs of the masses, Job made numerous erroneous statements about God in

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[88] Ibid., 494.

the course of the dialogues with his friends.[89] However, in the end, God praises Job when God addresses Job's friends saying: "For you have not spoken of Me the thing that is right, as My servant Job has." (Job 42:7) How can God say this if Job uttered so many false statements about God? Maimonides explains that during the course of his ordeal, Job begins to gain a more honest and intellectual understanding of God. By the time God speaks to him, Job knows that he had been led astray; and by the end of the book he realizes that striving to know God is the only way to bring any sense of meaning to one's life.

The Rabbis, Saadiah, and Maimonides all agree that God is all-knowing, all-powerful, and all-just. Although God could, God would never inflict suffering upon a person or a nation for no reason. However, God's reasons are not always apparent to the people who must endure the suffering. If a person is suffering, reflects upon his deeds, and knows that he has done nothing to deserve the kind of pain he is experiencing, then he can be confident that he is not being punished by God. What, then, is the reason behind his suffering? According to the Rabbis, God causes people to suffer out of love. According to Saadiah, God causes people to suffer in the present in order to grant them greater rewards in the future. Maimonides rejects both of these notions. According to Maimonides, God causes suffering in order to present people with an opportunity to come closer to knowing God.

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[89] According to Maimonides, an example of one of these mistakes would be Job's denial of the resurrection of the dead in 7:9.

CHAPTER THREE

PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON SUFFERING AND SURVIVING

In the previous chapter we surveyed Rabbinic and Medieval responses to Job's attitude toward suffering. In this chapter we will examine, from a modern psychological perspective, ways in which people respond to suffering, cope with stress, survive traumatic situations, and maintain their faith in themselves, in life, and in God.

COPING

Recent years have witnessed a tremendous growth in the study of coping. From these studies, researchers have concluded that coping is fundamentally related to stress. Almost all perspectives on coping focus on how the efforts of an individual or system can better respond to stress. But what exactly is coping? Scholars generally agree that coping cannot be described as a personal attribute. Instead, researchers understand coping as a process that extends over the course of a stressful event. This process sometimes begins with an anticipatory phase before the actual onset of the stressful event, and continues until some sort of resolution has been reached. Research has also shown that as the process of coping continues, people tend to modify their coping techniques. While much of the coping research remains inconclusive, there are a number of elements of the coping process upon which experts do agree. These elements include stress, stressors, resources, and appraisal.

Generally speaking, the term *stress* holds one of three meanings. First, stress can be explained as the configuration of reactions and responses that one exhibits when the demands of life seem greater than one's available resources. From this point of view, stress is the sum total of how one feels about and responds to burdensome demands. Researchers who define stress in this manner are interested mainly in people's reactions to overwhelming demands. These reactions might be expressed physiologically, psychologically, emotionally, or behaviorally, and are usually experienced as harmful by the individual. Other investigators understand stress to be the specific situation which has produced such seemingly high demands in combination with perceived limited resources. Finally, and most recently, a small number of researchers have proposed that stress be viewed as the process which links an anxiety-provoking situation to its respective responses and outcomes. While some specialists have employed this understanding of stress, most researchers still prefer to distinguish the concept of stress from the notion of stressors. *Stressors* refer to the specific demands that might lead to a stressful reaction. Researchers favor this distinction because it "makes it easier to account for wide differences in individual reactions to seemingly similar environmental demands."[90]

The differences in individual reactions can also be accounted for by looking at individual coping potential, or *resources*. Resources can be defined as anything that an individual feels will help him deal with his environmental or

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[90] Bruce N. Carpenter, "Issues and Advances in Coping Research" in *Personal Coping: Theory, Research, and Application*, ed. Bruce N. Carpenter (London: Praeger, 1992), 2.

internal demands (stressors) and the resulting stress. These resources can be categorized as personal (e.g., abilities and personalities) or environmental (e.g., social support and tangible resources).

Most researchers agree that during stressful situations an evaluation process occurs where people contrast their perceived demands against their perceived resources. Known as *appraisal*, this integral part of the coping process relies upon one's personal evaluation of a given situation and is obviously subjective. Appraisal is also considered to be an on-going process. As a stressful situation progresses, new information is constantly being gathered and reviewed, and shifts in beliefs, as well as actions, can transpire. Understanding appraisal as a process helps researchers explain how and why people's stress responses change over time. Experts explain that there are two major types of appraisal: primary and secondary. Primary appraisal refers to the assessment of the demands that are being made by a particular situation. Secondary appraisal refers to the evaluation of available resources and possible outcomes.[91]

The coping process, in general, can be understood on at least two different levels. First, coping is most often viewed in terms of the specific coping strategies that people employ when confronted with stressful experiences. Coping strategies can be used to serve a variety of functions. On the macro-level, researchers distinguish between *problem-focused coping* and *emotion-focused coping*. Problem-focused coping concentrates a person's efforts on

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[91] Ibid., 3.

trying to change the stressful situation, while emotion-focused coping tends to center on efforts to regulate one's own emotional state. On the micro-level, investigators have discovered at least eight different types of coping strategies. These include confrontational, distancing, self-control, accepting responsibility, escape-avoidance, seeking social support, planned problem-solving, and positive reappraisal. Research has shown that, in general, people who use more active coping techniques experience better outcomes and report fewer psychological problems. In assessing coping processes it is also important to take into account the personal and social resources available to the individual who is enduring a stressful situation. Personal resources include a sense of personal competency, problem-solving skills, and a sense of optimism. Social resources consist of a supportive social network that is able to provide practical and emotional support.[92]

Social Support

Studies have shown that social support can enhance the coping process in numerous ways. First, involvement in meaningful and fulfilling relationships, prior to any sort of stressful event, helps to gird people with strong senses of self-esteem. Knowing that others care for them helps people view themselves as worthwhile and capable human beings. Researchers hypothesize that this

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[92] Bruce E. Compas, Vanessa L. Malcarne, and Gerard A. Banez, "Coping with Psychological Stress: A developmental Perspective" in *Personal Coping: Theory, Research, and Application*, ed. Bruce N. Carpenter (London: Praeger, 1992), 49-50.

kind of confidence can empower people to take action when stressful situations occur.

Of course, social support is also very important once a stressful situation has manifested itself. Studies have shown that a positive correlation exists between social support and positive outcomes of stressful events. Social support that is offered during the actual coping process

> might lead to a sense of well-being and mastery . . . and might cause one to feel that problems are surmountable and solutions are within one's grasp. Such emotional support might, during the act of coping, encourage a positive emotional state [that] counteracts that [which has been] brought on by stress and lead to more positive appraisal.[93]

Although coping with difficult situations is an individual and often lonely experience, actively reaching out to friends, family, or any sort of social network is an important part of the healing process. Maintaining and developing connections with others reminds people who are struggling to cope that, no matter how lonely they may feel, they are not alone.

Perceived Control

Another important aspect of the coping process is the concept of perceived control. Researchers claim that belief in one's ability to exert control over a situation is a major factor in determining the way in which one confronts crises. A stressful event will be that much more debilitating if a person does not feel that he is able to exert any control over the situation. However, the person

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[93] Bruce N. Carpenter and Susan M. Scott, "Interpersonal Aspects of Coping" in *Personal Coping: Theory, Research, and Application*, ed. Bruce N. Carpenter (London: Praeger, 1992), 99.

who retains faith in her ability to act will do so. She will take whatever active measures she can in response to the stressful circumstances that confront her, and these actions, in turn, will fortify her energy and her resilience.

Psychiatrists who have studied response outcome expectancies note that the development of positive response outcome expectancy depends, to a large extent, on this idea of perceived control.[94] If possibilities exist for an individual to exercise control over a situation, and that individual is aware of and accepts these possibilities, then the positive response outcome expectancy is much greater. Perceived control can only be achieved once a person has been made aware of the choices and contrasting viewpoints that exist within a given situation. Therefore, in order to help someone through a stressful time, it may be critical to point out aspects of the stressful situation that can be regulated. For example, regardless of other limitations, a person always retains her ability to control her attitude toward a given situation or event.

Humor

Along with perceived control, researchers have found that the use of humor plays an important role in the coping process. Humor can help a person transcend, at least for a moment, a stressful circumstance. During stressful times humor requires a sense of perspective, and perspective requires distance. In order to derive humor from a stressful situation, a person must be able to

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[94] Herbert M. Lefcourt, "Perceived Control, Personal Effectiveness, and Emotional States" in *Personal Coping: Theory, Research, and Application*, ed. Bruce N. Carpenter (London: Praeger, 1992), 111-116.

stand back and assess what is happening without losing a sense of involvement in the current moment. Certain researchers have concluded that due to its implied remoteness, humor takes on the function of "preserving the sense of self . . . . It is the healthy way of feeling a 'distance' between one's self and the problem, a way of standing off and looking at one's problem with perspective."[95]

Some scholars have argued that humor is only effective in dealing with acute stressors. Others contend that humor seems to work only after a person has already established some sense of perceived control over the situation. However, these conclusions are debatable. The use of humor while dealing with a stressful event can be seen as an active means of exerting control over the situation. The person who can make fun of himself and/or the stressful situation in which he finds himself demonstrates that the situation has not completely overpowered him. He proves to himself that he still has the ability to choose how he will react and respond to that specific situation. He is not completely helpless, and therefore the situation is not completely hopeless.

Coping and Personal Growth

While most coping research investigates ways in which people might better deal with stressful experiences, some research has been conducted which looks at coping as an opportunity for personal growth. These researchers do not deny the significant amount of pain and struggle that individuals immersed in the coping process must face. They simply assert that the coping process, more

[95] R. May, *Man's Search for Himself* (New York: Random House, 1953), 54.

often than not, affects people in a positive way.[96]

In general, three positive outcomes can be acquired through the coping process. First, an individual might experience an enhancement of personal resources. These resources include a heightened sense of empathy, changes in basic values and priorities, and an improved sense of self-reliance and self-understanding. It has been shown that self-reliance often increases when people develop new skills, become more independent, and/or successfully negotiate an overwhelming experience. Second, a person might also experience enhanced social resources such as the development of stronger, deeper relationships or the formation of new support networks. Times of crisis can compel people to share some of their innermost thoughts and fears with friends, loved ones, and even strangers. Expressing these kinds of emotions can help to establish more meaningful, confident relationships with others. Finally, surviving crises provides people with a renewed sense of confidence regarding their abilities to formulate coping strategies. By going through the coping process, individuals will acquire new cognitive coping skills, such as an ability to evaluate crises and break them down into more manageable, controllable parts.

Some researchers have found that cognitive coping strategies often involve an effort to discover meaning within the crisis. In their article, "Life Crises and Personal Growth," Schaefer and Moos recount a study of cancer patients conducted by Taylor in 1983. They write:

> Taylor found that cancer patients' search for meaning helped

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[96] Jeanne A. Schaefer and Rudolf H. Moos, "Life Crises and Personal Growth" in *Personal Coping: Theory, Research, and Application*, ed. Bruce N. Carpenter (London: Praeger, 1992), 149-151.

> them to understand the crisis and its implications, to regain mastery over the crisis and over their life, and to restore their self-esteem. For many cancer patients, the meaning they derived from their experience brought a new attitude toward life, reordered priorities, and increased self-knowledge.[97]

Certain researchers have taken issue with these kinds of studies. They argue that the patients are simply trying to rationalize or deny their illnesses. They understand these "searches for meaning" as defense mechanisms instead of indicators of positive change. However, there is no proof to suggest that these coping processes are not sincere "cognitive redefinitions and positive comparisons." Schaefer and Moos state:

> Cognitive redefinition and positive comparisons can be effective coping strategies that enable individuals to maintain hope, master painful emotions, and bolster their mood and self-esteem. Therefore, we emphasize the positive outcomes that may flow from cognitive strategies that minimize the traumatic aspects of crises and involve a search for the meaning of a difficult situation.[98]

The willingness of people to search for meanings in stressful events, like the use of humor, demonstrates their ability to exert some measure of control over the circumstances in which they find themselves. It also allows them to derive something positive out of what might appear to be hopeless, meaningless situations. Unfortunately, in desperate and extreme situations there seem to be few people who are able to engage in this type of search for meaning. In the next section we will look at the characteristics and coping skills of these rare individuals, whom at least one researcher has termed *resilient*.

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[97] Ibid., 166.

[98] Ibid.

RESILIENCE

Gina O'Connell Higgins is a licensed psychologist, an instructor at Harvard Medical School, a staff psychologist at Massachusetts General Hospital, and a fellow at the Clinical Developmental Institute in Belmont, Massachusetts. In her book, *Resilient Adults*, she focuses on how some individuals who have been treated abusively during their formative years emerge as balanced, healthy individuals who know how to live well and love well. In describing these kinds of individuals Higgins prefers the term *resilient* as opposed to *survivor*. The use of resilient implies that these people went far beyond simply making it through a tragic ordeal or trauma. Resilient adults are individuals who found the means to negotiate the challenges of their tragedy and continued to grow and develop in a normal, healthy way once their tragedy had ended. Higgins' study is an attempt to answer three main questions. First, Higgins is trying to determine the mechanisms that spur on-going resilient capacities. Second, she wants to know if there are similar themes in people's lives that can explain how they rose above their cruel pasts. Finally, Higgins wants to be able to prove her theory that resilience is not a collection of traits, but rather a process that evolves and grows over time.

Through her work with resilient individuals Higgins has discovered that most resilient adults possess a variety of important character traits. They have high IQ's, are creative and talented, and are involved in political and social activism. They remain committed to self-reflection and new perspectives and are flexible in their problem-solving skills. They operate with the belief that

knowledge is power and that their futures will only be enhanced if they respond pro-actively to their life situations, as opposed to reactively. Moreover, they are able to discover positive meanings in their life experiences despite disappointments, and they have the capacity to form and cultivate a vision of the world that is far better than the one that they actually experience. Higgins notes that this ability to form a vision of a better world can be described as a profound form of faith. This faith is "imaginatively sustained through an elaborate system of myths, symbols, and ideas that can survive highly discrepant experiences in the actual world."[99]

In her study, Higgins notes that two major themes associated with resilient individuals are *faith in surmounting* and *faith in human relationships.* But how are these kinds of faith developed and sustained in people who have been forced to suffer through tragic, horrifying ordeals? Higgins feels that exploring certain aspects of faith development theory can illuminate some of the sources of this underlying faith as well as explicate how this faith is often expressed.

Faith Development Theory

Faith development theory arises from a dialogue between developmental psychiatry and religion, and explains faith as the activity of meaning-making in its ultimate form. According to this definition faith is something that one does, not something that one possesses. Faith is a process that consists of finding pattern, order, and significance in our lives. Faith development theory describes

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[99] Gina O'Connell Higgins, *Resilient Adults* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1994), 20.

faith as *convictional knowing* and asserts that faith can be distinguished from formal religious beliefs. This theory also maintains that faith is an inherently relational enterprise, and that faith can be sustained by the imagination. These understandings of faith coincide well with the way that resilient individuals develop and utilize their faith.

Sharon Parks, a faith developmentalist, understands faith as convictional knowing. In trying to articulate more precisely what this means, she writes that faith "is the unseen order one 'sees.'"[100] Faith development theory views faith as an integrated pattern which organizes people's deepest convictions about themselves, about others, and about the world. These convictions make up the core understanding of what a person knows to be true. Convictional knowing is the force that grounds and orders a person's life. It is also an activity, or a process, of meaning-making into which people invest their entire selves. This process of meaning-making can also be understood as a process of connection-making. The connections that are forged in this process, whether shallow or profound, weak or unwavering, make up one's understanding of the workings of the world. These connections are not necessarily based on actual experiences. Rather, they are based on what an individual believes or knows to be true. Convictional knowing weaves these connections into a pattern, and this pattern reinforces one's understanding of truth. James Fowler, another faith developmentalist, refers to this process of developing patterns as "the logic of conviction." He explains that people are constantly involved in the process of

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[100] Sharon Parks, *The Critical Years: Young Adults and the Search for Meaning, Faith, and Commitment* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1986), 19.

making sense out of their lives. They do this, whether consciously or unconsciously, through their convictions.[101]

Like Ann Frank, resilient individuals can live through despair, tragedy, and pain and still maintain their faith that "in spite of everything . . . people are really good at heart."[102] Resilient people are proof that faith can endure

> in spite of the massive evidence of the finite, the mundane, and the ugly in human experience [because human beings still have the ability to] harbor a perennial conviction that "we were made for more." Something more was promised; . . . time, the world-as-it-is, the world of sight is to be transcended.[103]

Faith development theory also claims that faith does not necessarily depend upon formal, religious affiliations. People of faith do not have to associate with a particular synagogue, church, denomination, or religion. Faith development theory asserts that in order to have faith, people simply must acknowledge and believe in something that is greater than themselves. In his book, *Experiential Religion*, Reinhold Neibuhr affirms this assertion. He writes, "whenever we see [people] giving themselves for that which is greater than themselves and greater than all the particular forces impinging upon them, there we meet the faithful human being."[104] While it is true that resilient individuals may indeed be devout practitioners of a specific religious faith, it is also clear that

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[101] James Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1981), 41.

[102] Ann Frank, *The Diary of a Young Girl* (New York: Washington Square Publication, 1967), 237.

[103] Sharon Parks, *Faith Development and Imagination in the Context of Higher Education* (Th.D. diss., Harvard Divinity School, 1980), 36, as quoted by Higgins in *Resilient Adults*, 174.

[104] Reinhold Neibuhr, *Experiential Religion* (New York: Harper Collins, 1972), 39.

they do not necessarily feel constrained by formal religious ties. Higgins speculates that many resilient people maintain their faith outside the boundaries of organized religion because their experiences of suffering have made them less comfortable in traditional faith communities. These communities tend to impose an "uncritical acceptance of ideologies," while most resilient adults prefer to worship in an atmosphere that encourages the questioning of practices and beliefs.[105] It is important to note, however, that their rejection of organized religion does not mean that they also reject God. On the contrary, resilient individuals tend to hold rather strong convictions about some form of a Higher Power. Generally speaking, they are also anchored by the belief that people have the potential to be better, kinder, more compassionate human beings.

In order to be anchored by this kind of belief, faith development theory professes that faith must be an inherently relational activity. Faith is formed by being in relationship with an "other." Similar to the "Thou" in Martin Buber's I-Thou relationship, faith development theory contends that this "other" might be a work of nature or art, a pet, or another person. Faith development theory also asserts that a person can be in direct relationship with God. The sense of connection that one experiences within these positive, nurturing relationships is healing. These types of relationships, even if they are only lived out in the minds of the resilient, have the power to sustain resilient individuals in times of hopelessness, desperation, and despair. They also enable and encourage resilient people to form more of these kinds of positive connections in actuality

[105] Higgins, *Resilient Adults*, 192.

and on their own.

The Role of Imagination

As was stated above, some connections that resilient people form with others are imaginary, existing only within the mind of the resilient individual. Faith development theory places a great deal of emphasis on the importance of imagination in the faithing process, claiming that people use their imaginations to create coherent "master narratives" of their lives. These master narratives are the vehicles through which people attempt to order their world and discover the meanings upon which they wish to build their lives. Parks writes: "Our 'master stories' are the interpretive paradigms, conscious or unconscious, by which we make order or coherence of the force fields of our life. They help us discern the . . . overarching meanings unto which we seek to fit – or oppose – our lives."[106]

Human beings have the unique ability to create and utilize images and symbols that help them to discover meaning and sustain their faith despite extreme situations. Resilient individuals use this ability to help them choose how they view the world. They understand that they have the freedom to choose who they want to become and who they do not want to become. Higgins writes that resilient people "share Viktor Frankl's realization that perhaps the greatest freedom in any human circumstance is our capacity to forge our own view of ourselves and our plight, particularly in extreme situations."[107] Imagining helps

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[106] Parks, *The Critical Years*, 131.

[107] Higgins, *Resilient Adults*, 178.

them to do this. First, it is possible to transcend (at least for a short time) an unbearable existence by the use of one's imagination. These moments of transcendence offer the person in crises some respite from the horrors of their daily lives. Imagining also helps people in crisis gain some sense of control over their anxiety. This is accomplished in three different ways.

First, some resilient individuals actually experience a sense of relief by acting out horrific and unimaginable occurrences in their minds. They feel that by willingly imagining these gruesome events, they will be better prepared to confront their fears if they should actually come to pass. This type of negative imagining seems to provide a sense of control to some people, helping them to more easily cope with their lives. Events do not seem as frightening or overwhelming if they can be imagined first. A second type of imagining employed by resilient individuals involves more pleasant thoughts. During times when life becomes frightful or dire, resilient people might try to call up images or memories that are somehow comforting or soothing. These images provide people with a sense of tranquillity, promise, and hope. Finally, imagining allows resilient individuals to visualize a broader range of opportunities and possibilities than they might otherwise discern. Situations do not always look as bleak once people realize that their choices are not as limited as they had originally thought.

While this last type of imagining helps people to cope with or survive times of suffering and distress, it also propels them to move forward, to journey on, to live active, healthy, and normal lives. The use of imagination coupled with the guiding force of convictional knowing helps resilient people feel that they have

the power to determine what kind of person they will or will not be. For example, statistics show that two-thirds of abused children do not go on to abuse others.[108] Although abuse is often the only form of relationship that many of these children have ever experienced they do not go on to become abusers themselves. They are able to choose a different way of being. How is this possible? It seems that resilient individuals somehow find a way to disidentify with models of behavior and values that they know to be wrong. At the same time, they exert a great deal of effort incorporating minor instances of kindness or brief encounters with caring people into their master narratives. Higgins explains:

> It seems that these resilient people selectively internalize more humane ways of being so that they deeply identify with the better models that they encounter and ferociously disidentify with the worst. They developed an alternative imagination to hold their hope. Why and how they hoarded "better," coaxing these coals until their lives were aflame with humane choices, is ultimately an unsolved mystery. But they knew that they were made for more, and they began by repudiating the worst.[109]

The Courage of the Resilient

Resilient people, as well as being faithful, imaginative, resourceful, and goal-oriented, are also courageous. Despite all odds, these individuals have found a way to trust themselves and have discovered a way to maintain their belief and knowledge in what is true. For example, most people would rather see themselves and others as bad people in a just and ordered world than see

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[108] Ibid., 185.

[109] Ibid., 191.

themselves and others as good people in a chaotic, disordered world. Therefore, resilient people must be able to stand firm in their beliefs that they have done nothing to deserve the kind of pain and suffering that they are being forced to endure. In doing this, resilient individuals are taking a risk at a new (and potentially scarier) way of thinking, and this takes courage.

Resilient individuals also exhibit bravery when they are willing to risk confrontation. For the resilient, confrontation seems to be linked with a sense of integrity and authenticity. It has already been stated how much resilient people value truth. In order to be true to oneself, there comes a point when the resilient individual must speak his mind or have her say. These moments of confrontation are vital for the resilient spirit. They provide the resilient individual with an opportunity to be heard and to make others aware of her suffering. Often this is done for personal reasons, as well as out of a sense of responsibility. The resilient individual who has suffered through any form of abuse will do whatever she can to make sure that no one else will ever have to endure that same kind of pain. However, it is important to note that regardless of the outcome, the confrontation, in and of itself, has value.

In the end, Higgins concludes that resilience is a process that can be nurtured and developed. She insists that just as people can "*de*volve over time, [people can also] encourage the self-replication of resilience so that an upward spiral of personal evolution can emerge."[110] In order to foster resilience, people need to be able to possess and retain a generous dose of self-compassion

[110] Ibid., 172.

throughout their times of trial. They also need to feel a sense of responsibility for their own lives. It appears that once the resilient accept responsibility for their own actions and behavior, their confidence begins to rise. In turn, this rise in confidence spurs resilient individuals to continue to respond pro-actively to challenging and stressful situations in their lives. Finally, resilient people are able to maintain the conviction that there is meaning behind their suffering.

LOGOTHERAPY

Viktor E. Frankl, psychiatrist, professor, and concentration camp survivor, was a man much concerned with the ideas of suffering and meaning. He was the founder of logotherapy, the Third Viennese School of Psychotherapy. Logotherapy, (*logos*, from the Greek for "meaning") can be translated as "therapy through meaning" or "healing through meaning." These definitions are in sharp contrast with more traditional views of psychiatry, which assert that meaning and healing can be discovered only through therapy. Logotherapy differs from traditional psychoanalysis in other ways as well. First, logotherapy is much less retrospective and introspective than more traditional forms of psychotherapy. Logotherapy tends to focus on the future, specifically on what kind of meanings a patient might be able to fulfill for herself in that future. Logotherapy also "defocuses all the vicious-circle formations and feedback mechanisms which play such a great role in the development of neuroses. Thus, the typical self-centeredness of the neurotic is broken up instead of being continually fostered

and reinforced."[111] Instead of searching for the root causes of the patients' problems, patients are encouraged to discover or reorient themselves to the meanings in their lives. Frankl contends that specific neuroses can actually be conquered by the person who actively struggles to uncover the meaning that exists in his or her life.

Human beings' search for meaning is the central focus of logotherapy. In fact, logotherapy's main tenet asserts that the quest for a meaningful existence is a human being's primary motivational force in life. What comprises a meaningful existence will be different for each individual and is subject to change as that individual grows, experiences, and develops. What ceases to change, however, is that individual's desire to discover and create meaning in life. According to Frankl, people possess "a positive vector, a natural bent toward an objective goal in transcendent space."[112] Frankl describes these goals as values that need to be actualized or meanings that need to be discovered, and he refers to this desire or "natural bent" as the *will to meaning*. Frankl notes that psychiatrists often categorize meanings and values under the headings of defense mechanisms or rationalizations for behavior. While Frankl acknowledges that there are instances where a person's concern with values is actually an unconscious attempt to cover up a deep inner conflict, he maintains that these kind of cases tend to be the exception rather than the rule.

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[111] Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning: An Introduction to Logotherapy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984), 104.

[112] Reuven P. Bulka, "Logotherapy and Judaism – Some Philosophical Comparisons" in *Tradition*, XII (1972), 75.

The Will to Meaning

Frankl's sees the will to meaning as a greater, more all-encompassing description of what motivates a person's actions and behaviors than Freud's "will to pleasure" or Adler's "will to power." In making this distinction, Frankl is not attempting to replace these long adhered to methods of psychoanalysis. He respects and values the truth that exists in the works of both Freud and Adler, and does not dispute the fact that people desire both pleasure and power in their lives. However, Frankl does argue that pleasure (in the form of sex, or otherwise) is not the ultimate desire of human beings. He maintains that real pleasure exists only as an added benefit from meaning-making attitudes and activities.[113] Frankl responds similarly to Adler's theories regarding power. He does not deny that people possess a "will to power." However, he also does not feel that this theory takes into account the entire make-up of human beings. Although Frankl is a great admirer of both Freud and Adler, he finds both of their theories to be lacking in this respect.

Frankl views human beings as much more than mere products of their heredity and genes, their instincts and drives, and their economic and social environments. Instead, he understands human beings as existing and functioning on three integral levels: the somatic, the psychic, and the *noological*, or spiritual.[114] The somatic dimension is made up of a person's body and all of

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[113] Earl A. Grollman, "The Logotherapy of Viktor E. Frankl" in *Judaism*, XIV (1965), 26.

[114] The term noological comes from the Greek word, *noos*, meaning "mind." For logotherapists, this term refers to anything which relates to the specifically human dimension. Frankl uses this term because it does not call to mind the same type of religious connotations that the term "spiritual" does.

the systems that are functioning within it. The psychic dimension is composed of a person's psychological traits and needs. And the noological dimension is comprised of a person's transcendent qualities and values. Frankl contends that psychiatrists do not spend nearly enough time focusing on the noological aspects of their patients, and, in doing so, ignore the dimension that makes their patients truly human.[115]

In contrast with the more traditional forms of psychotherapy, logotherapy's main concern is with the noological dimension of human beings. Concentrating on an individual's noological dimension means examining that person's spiritual aspirations. Therefore, logotherapy involves a process of struggle to determine the meanings, purposes, and values that an individual wishes to actualize in his life. It requires focusing on a person's will to meaning. As the principal driving force within every human being, the will to meaning urges people to confront the existential questions in their lives. Frankl views existential questions as personal questions, with answers that are as specific and unique as the individuals who seek them. In other words, for Frankl, an appropriate existential question is not "What is the meaning of existence?" but rather, "What is the meaning of *my* existence?"

To testify to the power that personal meaning holds for human beings, Frankl cites two studies done in the early 1970's focusing on the life goals of college students. A study sponsored by the American Council on Education surveyed 171,509 students and found that their most highly valued goal (held by

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[115] Nathan Grossman, "The Rabbi and the Doctor of the Soul" in *Jewish Spectator*, XXXIV, No. 1 (Jan. 1969), 8-9.

68.1 percent) was to "develop a meaningful philosophy of life." In a second study, conducted by Johns Hopkins University, 7,948 students at forty-eight different colleges were asked to rank their life goals in order of importance. The results revealed that only 16 percent of the students ranked "making a lot of money" as their most important goal, while 78 percent placed "finding a purpose and meaning to my life" at the tops of their lists.[116]

It is interesting to note that a similar study, conducted in Poland in 1973, found that 78 percent of the students listed "improving their standard of living" as their highest purpose in life.[117] One might view the combined conclusions of these last two studies as proof for Maslow's hierarchy of needs. A person can only take time to ponder the existential questions of life after all of her basic needs have all been met, and after she has established a comfortable standard of living for herself. However, is this really the case? Frankl writes:

> Maslow's motivation theory does not suffice here, for what is needed is not so much the distinction between higher and lower needs, but rather an answer to the question of whether individual goals are mere means, or meanings. . . . [W]hile food is certainly a necessary condition for survival, it is no sufficient condition to endow one's life with meaning and thus relieve [a] sense of meaninglessness and emptiness.
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> Maslow's distinction between higher and lower needs does not take into account that when lower needs are not satisfied, a higher need, such as the will to meaning, may become most urgent."[118]

Frankl concludes that the will to meaning exists within every human being, regardless of race, gender, or social class. The wealthy and the poverty-stricken

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[116] Viktor E. Frankl, *The Unheard Cry for Meaning: Psychotherapy and Humanism* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978), 34.

[117] Ibid.

[118] Ibid., 35-36.

have an equally intense need to fulfill goals, to realize values, and to discover meaning in their lives.

The Freedom of Will

If any obstacle arises that hinders the attainment of these goals, values, and meanings (i.e. – anything that prevents the will to meaning from being realized), a person will experience *existential frustration*. Existential frustration arises when life seems utterly void of meaning. If the frustration is severe enough, existential frustration can result in *noogenic neuroses*. These neuroses have their origins in the noological level of human existence, as opposed to the psychological level. Instinct, inherited traits, and environment are all factors that can potentially impede a person's will to meaning. However, Frankl does not find any of these factors to be absolutely determinative. He insists that, regardless of our instincts, inherited traits, or the environment in which we exist, we are always able to retain our *freedom of will*. While our instincts might urge us in a particular direction, we are not ruled by our instincts. We are able to exert control over our instincts by choosing whether or not we wish to follow them. As human beings, we are also able to exert control over our inherited traits by choosing the ways that we intend to use them. Finally, we have the power to rise above our environments.

Frankl notes that in the concentration camps, many inmates sunk to the level of "bestiality" of the environment in which they found themselves. Some prisoners, however, did find ways to transcend the horrors of their environment;

these individuals behaved like angels in hell. Because only minorities of the prisoners were able to rise above their situations, many would say that this example supports the theory that environment plays a critical factor in determining human behavior. But Frankl does not define freedom of will as an aspect of human behavior. Instead, he views it as "a potential to be realized."[119]

Frankl does not deny that the camps were systematically designed as environments where human life had absolutely no value. He knows first-hand how valiantly people had to struggle against this environment if they were to retain even an ounce of their self-respect or dignity. In a place like this it is obviously easy to forget that people still possess inner freedom. However, according to Frankl, within any given situation, people always retain the freedom to choose how they will react or behave. Because a person allows herself to be influenced by the nature of her surroundings does not mean that her freedom of will does not exist. Frankl also does not believe that physical deficiencies or societal restrictions inhibit a person's freedom.

It is important to note that Frankl does not claim that instinct, inherited disposition, environment, and physical and societal limitations have no effect upon a person's behavior. Instead, he views these factors only as partial determinants. They are partial in the sense that "they establish the specific boundaries of human behavior."[120] For example, these factors might determine what kind of job a person is able to retain or where a person must live. However,

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[119] Bulka, "Logotherapy and Judaism," 77.

[120] Ibid., 75.

within these boundaries, people are free to determine how they will react and behave. According to Frankl, a person retains his freedom as long as he "retains his ability to actualize values."[121] This freedom is a spiritual freedom that is attained only in the noological realm.

Figuratively speaking, the noological realm rests above the somatic and psychic realms. From this level, a person is able to "look down" and get a clearer understanding of the physical and psychological limitations that society places upon her or that she places upon herself. With this understanding she is then able to challenge, and eventually even rise above, these limitations.

It is clear, then, that a person's spiritual freedom is inhibited only by factors that thoroughly impede a person's natural inclination to make real specific values. However, according to Frankl, every determining factor is coupled with the possibility of rejecting it. Therefore, in actuality, no such comprehensive determining factors exist. All people are spiritually free – either because they challenge, conquer, and reshape their specific determining factors, or because they willingly submit to them. Spiritual freedom cannot be taken away, and this freedom is what makes life meaningful. Frankl does not require any proof for his conclusion. For him, this conclusion is obvious from experience.

The Meaning of Life

While Frankl acknowledges that partial determining factors do exert some influence over a person's life, he maintains that no external factor has the power

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[121] Ibid., 76.

to deter a person from realizing the meaning that exists in his life. He emphatically insists that "what is demanded of man is not, as some existential philosophers teach, to endure the meaninglessness of life, but rather to bear his incapacity to grasp its unconditional meaningfulness in rational terms."[122] But how does an individual actually go about realizing the meaning that exists within his or her life?

Some logotherapists have explained that the process of discovering meaning is similar to a process of Gestalt perception. In Gestalt perception an individual perceives a figure against a background. In discovering meaning, one perceives a "possibility embedded in reality."[123] Here, a possibility can be seen as a specific response to a specific situation, while reality is viewed as the sum total of the unique and specific situations that present themselves to us in life. Since each situation is unique, it follows that the meanings inherent in each situation will be unique, and the possibilities of confronting each situation will be unique as well. Possibilities are unique in the sense that they are transitory. If a person does not take advantage of the opportunity to do something to actualize the potential meaning that is embedded in a situation, then that opportunity passes by and is gone. It is important to remember, however, that only the possibilities are transitory. Once a person actualizes the possibility for meaning within a situation that possibility becomes a reality, and that reality exists for all time. Regarding this reality, Frankl writes:

> We have, as it were, rescued it into the past. Nothing and

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[122] Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, 122.

[123] Frankl, *Unheard Cry*, 42.

> nobody can deprive and rob us of what we have safely delivered and deposited in the past. In the past, nothing is irretrievable and irrecoverable lost, but everything is permanently stored. Usually, to be sure, people see only the stubblefield of transitoriness – they do not see the full granaries into which they have brought in the harvest of their lives: the deeds done, the works created, the loves loved, the sufferings courageously gone through.[124]

Logotherapy asserts that a meaningful existence can be realized in three different ways: 1) through a creative act or deed, 2) by experiencing something or encountering someone, and 3) through the attitude we take when we are confronted with unavoidable suffering.[125] The first approach to discovering meaning focuses on things that we can accomplish, create, and achieve. Creating something that adds beauty, meaning, or value to the world fills one's life with purpose. Meaningful acts, such as helping others who are in need or teaching others, also give people a sense of purpose and direction in life. Unfortunately, due to physical limitations such as age, illness, and disability, not everyone is able to achieve meaning this way.

The second way of finding a meaning in life is by experiencing something, such as a work of nature or the value of truth, or by encountering another human being through love. As opposed to some other forms of psychiatry, logotherapy does not consider love to be a side effect of sex. Love is the only way for us to truly come to know the essence of another human being. This deep and abiding knowledge of another soul has the power to sustain us and to infuse our lives with meaning. In Frankl's autobiographical account of his internment in Nazi

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[124] Ibid.

[125] Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, 115.

concentrations camps, he poignantly recalls how the love he felt for his wife girded him with strength and gave him a reason to struggle on in life. He writes:

> [M]y mind clung to my wife's image, imagining it with an uncanny acuteness. I heard her answering me, saw her smile, her frank and encouraging look. Real or not, her look was then more luminous than the sun which was beginning to rise. A thought transfixed on me: For the first time in my life I saw the truth as it is set into song by so many poets, proclaimed as the final wisdom by so many thinkers. The truth – that love is the ultimate and the highest goal to which man can aspire. Then I grasped the meaning of the greatest secret that human poetry and human thought and belief have to impart: the salvation of man is through love and in love. I understood how a man who has nothing left in this world still may know bliss, be it only for a brief moment, in the contemplation of his beloved. In a position of utter desolation, when man cannot express himself in positive action, when his only achievement may consist in enduring his sufferings in the right way – an honorable way – in such a position man can, through loving contemplation of the image he carries of his beloved, achieve fulfillment. . . . A thought crossed my mind: I didn't even know if she were still alive. I knew only one thing – which I have learned well by now: Love goes very far beyond the physical person of the beloved. It finds its deepest meaning in his spiritual being, his inner self. Whether or not he is actually present, whether or not he is still alive at all, ceases somehow to be of importance.[126]

An active and creative life, and a life filled with people to love can certainly provide people with a sense of purpose in their lives. However, these aspects of life are not always available to all people. When this is a case, a person must look inside herself to raise herself above her outward fate. Therefore, logotherapy asserts that the final way in which meaning can be discovered in life is in the attitude that one adopts when confronted with a hopeless situation or unavoidable suffering.

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[126] Frankl, Man's Search for Meaning, 49-50.

Logotherapy professes that a person's main goal in life is not the attainment of pleasure or the avoidance of pain, but rather the discovery of meaning. Logotherapy also suggests that sometimes suffering can stop feeling like suffering if meaning can be attached to it. For example, there is meaning to be found in the courage with which one bears pain and in the dignity with which one faces an unalterable fate. Frankl writes:

> If there is a meaning in life at all, then there must be a meaning in suffering. . . . The way in which a man accepts his fate and all the suffering it entails . . . gives him ample opportunity – even under the most difficult circumstances – to add a deeper meaning to his life. It may remain brave, dignified and unselfish. Or in the bitter fight for self-preservation he may forget his human dignity and become no more than an animal. Here lies the chance for a man either to make use of or to forgo the opportunities of attaining the moral values that a difficult situation may afford him. And this decides whether he is worthy of his sufferings or not.[127]

Frankl does not deny that, when confronted with suffering, only a precious few are able to maintain their spiritual freedom and dignity, and actualize the values that their suffering affords them. However, he assets that even one such example is ample proof that human beings do have the inner strength and power to rise above their physical, environmental, and even psychic limitations.

Frankl writes that when "we are no longer able to change a situation . . . we are challenged to change ourselves."[128] In order to change oneself, one must change the way one views the predicaments in which one finds oneself. It is easy to lose hope and to look at life as meaningless when faced with

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[127] Ibid., 76.

[128] Ibid., 116.

something like a terminal illness or the loss of loved ones. However, it is precisely within these moments that individuals need to remember that the potential for meaning exists within every aspect, detail, and minute of life – even in suffering. Suffering makes possible the realization of attitudinal values that otherwise would not be attainable. It also allows for the possibility of an inner growth that will yield a meaning greater than power, pleasure, or success. The endurance of suffering, while painful, does present an opportunity for positive change. The sufferer has an opportunity to transform her pain into a tool that will help her strengthen her spiritual nature, encourage her sympathy, and enhance her courage and her active determination.[129] Frankl writes: "In accepting this challenge to suffer bravely, life has a meaning up to the last moment, and it retains this meaning literally to the end. In other words, life's meaning is an unconditional one, for it even includes the potential meaning of unavoidable suffering."[130]

Logotherapy and Religion

By now it should be clear that Frankl does not believe that people can achieve a sense of complete healing unless they are able to discover some sort of meaning in their lives and respond to that call to meaning. He also maintains that, just as people are unique, the meanings that they discover in their lives are unique. These meanings will also change over time as people continue to

[129] Grollman, "Logotherapy of Viktor E. Frankl," 31.

[130] Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, 118.

develop and grow. However, "psychotherapy is incomplete without a philosophy to relate man's isolation to a more ultimate meaning for human life."[131] Frankl acknowledges that beyond all of these smaller, individual meanings there lies a grander, ultimate meaning. According to Frankl, this ultimate meaning is a meaning which goes beyond the limited intellectual capacities of human beings. In logotherapy, this ultimate meaning is referred to as a *super-meaning*. Frankl concludes that reaching out in the direction of this super-meaning entails the belief in a Supra-Being. For most people this Supra-Being is understood to be God.

Alleging that religion is a personal, individual endeavor logotherapy does not endorse one religion over another. However, it cannot be denied that logotherapy places a great deal of value on the therapeutic benefits of religious belief and God-centered beliefs. Logotherapy asserts that a person's search for meaning is enhanced when that person is able to maintain his faith in God. Frankl describes God as an anchor, as a source of stability that people can use as a guide by which to measure themselves. Religion is important to Frankl because, for him, religion constitutes a response to an Absolute, and this response has the power of elevating people above the degradation that is so often experienced on earth. He was made aware of the power of religion in the camps where, in spite of physical and mental hardships, Frankl witnessed the spiritual lives of religiously faithful actually deepen. People who had strong inner lives were able to retreat from their surroundings or transcend them.

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[131] Grollman, "Logotherapy of Viktor E. Frankl," 34.

Responding to God, to an entity so much greater than oneself, makes people aware of the responsibilities that they have to life. Responding to God also entails the actualization of "God-centered" values, which can be seen as commandments from God. These values constitute the meanings in people's lives. Frankl insists that while psychologists can use secular and psychological methods to help patients adjust to society, only religious values and experiences can provide people with the sense that ultimately they are not alone. He urges psychiatrists and logotherapists not to dismiss religion and God so readily.

Techniques in Logotherapy

Logotherapy uses a technique, advanced by Frankl, called *dereflection*. In this procedure the patient is taught to "ignore" her neurosis by focusing her attention away from it, from herself, and from her "impulsive inclination to self-observation."[132] This refocusing is only possible when the patient is reoriented toward a goal which can be found in the unique meaning of her life.

For Frankl, neuroses occur in the psychic dimension of an individual. Meaning, however, can only be discovered by experiencing, encountering, and reacting in the world. It cannot be found solely within a person's psyche. Frankl calls this fundamental characteristic of logotherapy the *self-transcendence of human existence*. By this Frankl means that behaving as a human being always entails reaching out from one's self toward something else or someone else. Frankl explains:

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[132] Grossman, "The Rabbi and the Doctor of the Soul," 11

> The more one forgets himself – by giving himself to a cause to serve or another person to love – the more human he is and the more he actualizes himself. What is called self-actualization is not an attainable aim at all, for the simple reason that the more one would strive for it, the more he would miss it. In other words, self-actualization is possible only as a side-effect of self-transcendence.[133]

Another logotherapeutic technique developed by Frankl is called the *paradoxical intention*. Here, the patient is asked to visualize or imagine the situation or event that he fears most. Frankl bases this technique on two observations. First, fear of something tends to bring about that very thing of which one is afraid. Second, a *hyper-intention* (a forced intention) sometimes makes it impossible to attain the object or to actualize event that one desires. Frankl explains that "this procedure consists of a reversal of the patient's attitude, inasmuch as his fear is replaced by a paradoxical wish. By this treatment, the wind is taken out of the sails of the anxiety."[134] Paradoxical intention helps the patient to confront his fears in a non-threatening way.

Logotherapists have observed that an important aspect of the paradoxical intention technique is the utilization of humor. For example, in logotherapy, a person "who fears that he may perspire is enjoined to show his audience what perspiration is really like, to perspire in gushes of drenching torrents of sweat which will moisturize everything within touching distance."[135] Humor, which Frankl notes is an exclusively human characteristic, is a form of self-detachment. Self-detachment, also an intrinsically human phenomenon, is the process that

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[133] Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, 115.

[134] Ibid., 127.

[135] Frankl, *Unheard Cry*, 137.

allows a person to step away from himself, to joke about himself, and to laugh at his own fears.

Frankl believes that having and maintaining a sense of humor is vital for survival. Humor, more than any other human characteristic, allows a person to rise above any situation in which she finds herself. Frankl notes that humor even existed in the concentration camps. As he so eloquently writes, "Humor was another of the soul's weapons in the fight for self-preservation."[136] In the camps or in any tragic situation, humor is a way of fighting back against forces that seem too overwhelming to control.

Becoming Responsible

For Frankl, becoming responsible was an integral aspect of survival in the camps. Reflecting on that time he writes:

> What was really needed was a fundamental change in our attitude toward life. . . . *It did not really matter what we expected from life, but rather what life expected from us.* We needed to stop asking about the meaning of life, and instead to think of ourselves as those who were being questioned by life -- daily and hourly. Our answer must consist, not in talk and meditation, but in right action and in right conduct. Life ultimately means taking the responsibility to find the right answer to its problems and to fulfill the task which it constantly sets for each individual.[137]

The theories and techniques developed by Frankl and other logotherapists are all designed to help individuals become responsible for their own lives. Becoming responsible entails a search for meaning and an

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[136] Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, 54.

[137] Ibid., 85.

uncovering of goals that one wishes to fulfill. It also demands that one hear the call to meaning that exists within every moment of life, and respond to it. Finally, becoming responsible means maintaining one's dignity and integrity in the face of unavoidable suffering.

CHAPTER FOUR

A PSYCHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF JOB'S ATTITUDES TOWARD SUFFERING AND SURVIVING

Throughout his ordeal Job is able to maintain a strong sense of faith in himself and in his ability to survive. Although Job's confidence in himself vacillates throughout the book, Job never relinquishes his belief in his own innocence. He retains this conviction and his integrity throughout the entire tragedy. By tracing Job's attitudes toward himself, his friends, his suffering, and God within the dialogues we can achieve a better understanding of how Job is able to survive his ordeal.

JOB'S RESPONSE TO SUFFERING

The dialogues begin with a lament by Job. (Chapter 3) Here, Job's suffering is so great and his pain so immense that he sees death as the only possible escape from his anguish. He unrealistically longs for the destruction of the day of his birth and the night of his conception. (3:3-10) He wishes that he had been a stillborn, yearns for the grave, and describes Sheol in almost idyllic terms. (3:11-19) Yet, through all of his agony and lamenting, Job never once mentions the idea of taking his own life. There may be a number of reasons as to why Job never brings up the topic of suicide. First, the idea of ending his own life might be so completely repulsive to him that he never allows the thought of suicide to enter his mind. Second, perhaps Job does have suicidal thoughts, but

is too ashamed to admit to them. Finally, Job's desire to live, despite his suffering, might be stronger than his desire for death.

At the end of his lament Job exclaims, " What I feared has overtaken me. What I dreaded has come upon me. I had no repose, no quiet, no rest -- yet trouble came." (3:25-26) Job took every measure possible to prevent something like this tragedy from destroying his life and the lives of his loved ones. His actions were informed by his worldview and his belief in Divine retribution. Yet, tragedy came to Job, regardless of his upright actions. His entire belief system seems to have been shattered. This realization leaves Job feeling abandoned by God, lost and alone.

Job begins his next set of speeches (Chapters 6 and 7) saying, "If my anguish were weighed, my full calamity laid on the scales, it would be heavier than the sand of the sea." (6:2-3) Sounding almost apologetic, he explains to his friends that the reason for his previous outburst and lament is his unfathomable anguish. However, his contrition quickly turns to sarcasm when he asks his friends, "Does a wild ass bray when he has grass? Does a bull bellow over his fodder?" (6:5) Would I have complained so bitterly had I not been suffering so? Then, just as quickly as contrition turned to sarcasm, sarcasm turns to despair.

In verses 6:8-13 Job still prays that God will "crush him" -- will bring his life, and therefore his suffering, to an end. He complains that he is weak (6:12) and that he does not know how long he will be forced to endure his pain. (6:11) Frankl, in his personal account of life in the concentration camps, observes that the most depressing factor of camp life was that prisoners had no idea how long

their terms of imprisonment (and therefore their sufferings) would last.[138] This seems to hold true for Job as well. Job's experiences of hopelessness and depression are devastating. Job also feels completely depleted of resources. (6:13) At this point it seems that Job has already gone through an initial process of primary and secondary appraisal and has determined that he does not possess the necessary resources to withstand his ordeal. These initial appraisals contribute significantly to Job's depression. And yet, even within these despondent verses, Job's sense of integrity and innocence can be detected. Job has always observed God's laws, and has always tried to teach them to his family and his community. By reminding God that he has not "not concealed the words of the Holy One" (6:10b), Job "reaffirms his innocence and uses this affirmation as the basis of his prayer. Job's motivation for this petition is to know that God accepts him as a faithful servant, not to get rid of his pain at any cost." [139]

Job's feelings of misery seem to subside as he begins to express his anger toward his friends in 6:14-30. The more he speaks of their fickleness and their lack of empathy, the more indignant he begins to sound. Job possesses enough self-awareness to realize that he has done nothing wrong and does not deserve the kind of treatment he is receiving (either from his friends or from God). As he continues to ponder their attitudes toward him, he begins to feel betrayed and insulted by their thoughtless words. Although he is weak and in an

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[138] Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, 78.

[139] Hartley, *The New International Commentary*, 134.

extreme amount of physical pain, his hurt feelings are powerful enough to lead Job to confront his friends directly. (6:24-28)[140] Finally, despite overwhelming feelings of grief and solitude, Job is still able to trust himself and his judgment. His sense of convictional knowing is strong (6:29-30), and remains so throughout the dialogues.

In Chapter 7 Job begins by bemoaning the fate of all human beings, whose time on earth is short and filled with sorrow (7:1-3); he sees his own life similarly a few verses later. (7:6-7) He also bewails his illnesses (7:4-5) and makes his "controversial" statement regarding the resurrection of the dead. (7:8-10) All of these thoughts and complaints lead Job to conclude that he has very little to lose by speaking his mind and giving voice to the "bitterness of [his] soul." (7:11) Job is exhausted by God's constant scrutiny. Rather than being grateful for God's watchful presence, Job pleads with God to leave him alone so that he might experience at least a few moments of peace. Job also demands to know why God has caused him to suffer so. If Job has sinned, why does God refuse to reveal the reason to Job or to pardon him? (7:20-21) It is at this point in the dialogues that Job consciously begins to discover some sense of purpose in his life. He longs to understand the reason behind his ordeal. From this moment on, he longs for this knowledge more than he longs for death.

Job's confrontations with his friends seem to give him the confidence he needs to begin thinking about confronting God. When Job begins speaking

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[140] Frankl notes that there are times when indignation can shake a person out of a state of apathy or despair. This indignation, he explains, does not arise from the actual cruelty or pain, but from the insult connected with it. See *Man's Search for Meaning*, 37-38.

again in Chapter 9, he explores the idea of challenging God in a court of law. Perhaps the concept of a trial is less threatening to Job than the idea of confronting God directly. After all, in a trial there are rules, guidelines, and a judge. Or, perhaps Job is attracted to the idea of a trial because of its public nature. In a trial Job will be able to prove to the entire world not only that he is innocent, but also that innocent people do suffer. Though he frames the idea of challenging God in court with denials of it ever coming to fruition (9:2, 9:20), Job does begin to allow himself to imagine what it would be like to stand up to God. It is interesting to note that, in general, the more Job allows himself to imagine this, the more confident and optimistic he becomes.[141] This optimism and confidence allow Job to begin to explore other approaches to theodicy. His friends want Job to admit that he has sinned and repent. Because of their belief in Divine retribution, they are certain that once Job does this, God will restore him to his former state of prosperity. However, for Job, this theory no longer fits into his "master narrative." He cannot trust it or believe in it because it failed him. He adhered to its tenets, and yet tragedy befell him. Therefore, how can he be confident that repentance will bring about restoration? (9:27-28) Job asserts that God is omnipotent and can destroy the innocent along with the guilty. (9:22) He realizes that he must begin searching for other ways of understanding theodicy.

In Chapter 10, Job's confidence gives way to moments of torment. Job is angry with God, accusing God of pursuing him, even though God knows he is innocent. (10:7-8) Again Job wonders why God allowed him to be born into this

[141] For further elaboration on this theme refer to the section entitled "Imaginative Thinking."

misery, and again he pleads for God to leave him alone. (10:20-21) Job's speech ends with another description of Sheol. This time, however, the description is not so enchanting. Although he is depressed, burdened, and overwhelmed Job does realize that there is meaning in his life. He has discovered a goal (i.e., the trial), and he would like to see it through.

In Chapters 12 and 13, Job's confidence returns. He has faith in his ability to deduce and reason. Job also feels that he is better able to understand the conflicts, tensions, and struggles of suffering because he, unlike his friends, has personally experienced them. (12:2-3) From his own experience and from what he observes in nature and in the lives of human beings, Job concludes that the world is unjust and that God is the perpetrator of numerous injustices. (12:7-25) This knowledge, however, does not cause him to despair. Instead, his confidence grows even stronger. Job's sense of convictional knowing tells him that, despite pressure from his friends and his own longing to continue to believe in Divine retribution, he has done nothing wrong. He becomes convinced that he must speak what he knows to be true, regardless of the consequences. In 13:13-16 Job declares to his friends: "Be silent before me that I might speak -- then come upon me what may. I take my flesh in my teeth, my throat in my hand. Though [God] slays me, I will not quaver. I will defend my conduct to his face. This might even be my salvation, for no impious man would face him." Commenting on these verses, Pope writes:

> At the risk of death . . . Job will defend, argue, plead his innocence before God. His concern is not with his life, to be delivered from his suffering or restored to prosperity, but to maintain his integrity and be vindicated before God and [humanity]. . . . Job [also] takes

> hope for a moment in the thought that his very boldness in confronting God might be the means of salvation for him. God would surely know that no hypocrite would have the courage to face him.[142]

However, it seems that the more Job thinks about confronting God, the more apprehensive he becomes. In Chapter 14 Job again contemplates the brevity of life. (14:1-6) He questions his decision to challenge God, and wistfully wonders whether it would be better for God to hide Job in Sheol until God's anger has passed. (14:13) But, this cannot be; he fears he will die without experiencing justification. (14:19-22)

Job rides an emotional roller coaster throughout the next two chapters. (Chapters 16 and 17) At the beginning of Chapter 16 Job seems lost. He is weary, and does not know whether or not it is worth his energy to try to discuss his plight with his friends. (16:6) He tells them all of the terrible things that God has done to him, and as he continues to speak, he begins to sound less tired and more indignant. This indignation seems to gird him with strength and courage once more. His desire to maintain his integrity returns as he cries out: "Earth, do not cover my blood! Let there be no tomb for my complaint! Even now my witness is in heaven, my guarantor on high." (16:18-19) Job's courage generates a sense of hope that some heavenly intermediary will take up Job's case and plead for Job before God. Unfortunately, hope turns to hopelessness in Chapter 17. Job feels that death is imminent, and he is afraid that he will not live to realize his goal of confronting God.

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[142] Pope, *The Anchor Bible*, 100.

Bildad's words in Chapter 18 shake Job out of his melancholy mood. In Chapter 19, Job is again able to express his anger, both at his friends and at God. This venting of feelings somehow fosters Job's self-confidence and self-reliance, and from this point on Job never loses faith that he will confront God and prevail. Although he continues to complain about his friends, becomes indignant over the apparent lack of justice in the world, bemoans his former days of prosperity, and bewails his present condition, Job retains his integrity and never doubts that he will survive his ordeal. (See 19:23-29, 23:6-7, 24:25, 27:5-6.)

In his final speeches (Chapters 29-31) Job begins by remembering better times: when his children were alive (29:5, 18), when he was prosperous and well respected (29:7-11), when he was able to make a difference in the world (29:12, 15-17). Reminiscing this way reminds Job that he is an upright, worthy human being. Regardless of the suffering that Job is now experiencing, he had created a good life for himself, his family, and the people of his community. No one, not even God, can take that away from him. As Frankl explains: "Not only our experiences, but all we have done, whatever great thoughts we may have had, and all we have suffered, all this is not lost, thought it is past; we have brought it into being. Having been is also a kind of being, and perhaps the surest kind."[143]

After girding himself with memories of his past, Job feels able to face his present misery. In Chapter 30 Job bemoans the way he is now treated by his community (30:1, 9-14), the physical pain that tortures his body (30:17-18, 27,

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[143] Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, 90.

30), and his mistreatment at the hands of God (30:20-24). After facing both his past and his present Job knows what he must do. In Chapter 31 Job takes control of his own fate by making a series of oaths. (31:7-10, 21-22, 38-40) Job believes these oaths will ensure him a confrontation with God in which his innocence will be vindicated.

JOB'S ABILITY TO COPE

It is obvious from this investigation that Job has a strong sense of who he is. He has faith in himself and in his ability to determine right from wrong. His sense of convictional knowing overrides his faith in the theory of Divine retribution. This does not mean that Job loses faith in God. Job is angry with God, but he still desires to feel a connection with God. Job also desires to maintain his integrity. It can be argued that Job is able to realize both of these goals by employing numerous coping techniques. These techniques include the preservation of relationships, lamenting, catharsis, imagining, the activity of meaning-making, and protest.

Faith Through Relationships

In the prose prologue, the Satan kills all of Job's children, destroys his property, and covers his body with festering, vile sores. Job's emotional and physical pains are so overwhelming that he cannot bring himself to speak for seven days. Studies have shown that pain, in any form, is ultimately an individual, private experience. As one author explains, "The actual experience of

pain is utterly lonely, without words of its own to describe it."[144] Job cannot speak at this point, in part, because words are not capable of conveying the depth of his suffering and sorrow. No matter what he says, his friends will never fully understand his despair. And yet, if he does not attempt to reach out to them, he risks becoming engulfed by loneliness. Therefore, after Job has had sufficient time to grieve his losses silently and privately, he erupts in Chapter 3 with a mournful lament. His outpouring of emotion re-establishes a connection with his friends, and this connection plays an important role in Job's healing.

Job is able to maintain his faith in himself, in part, because he is able to maintain his connections with others. Although there is much that the friends do and say that can be criticized, their presence does aid in Job's coping process. Upon hearing of the tragedy that has befallen their friend, they each leave their house and journey a great distance with the sole purpose of consoling and comforting Job.[145] Job's illnesses have so badly disfigured his body that, at first, his friends do not even recognize him. They burst into tears, tear their robes, cover themselves with dust and ashes, and sit with Job in silence for seven full days.

Although nothing more is written about it, this week of silent companionship is incredibly important to Job's healing process. At this point in the narrative, Job's friends serve as his "locus of hope." Higgins uses the term locus of hope to describe the few positive relationships that abused individuals

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[144] David Bakan, *Disease, Pain, and Sacrifice: Toward a Psychology of Suffering* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968), 64.

[145] Cf. 2:11 and Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, 5:386-387.

experience as children. These relationships, while sporadic and brief, serve to ground these children during the darker periods of their lives. The loci of hope were people who provided these children with love, support, positive attention, and understanding. They taught the abused children with whom they came into contact that they were worthwhile human beings who deserved to be cared for and loved.[146] While Job is not a child, he does feel that he has been treated unjustly (perhaps even abused) and abandoned by God. The mere presence of Job's friends provides Job with a sense of respectful attention and support. They are willing to sit with him, uncomfortable and covered with dust, until he is ready to speak. Their silence is especially beneficial. In contrast to the harsh and bitter words of his wife, Job probably interprets the silence of his friends as empathy and understanding. This understanding provides Job with an enormous sense of comfort, for it helps him to feel that he is neither physically or spiritually alone.

Unfortunately, once the friends begin to speak, their words are rarely understanding, sensitive or supportive. In a grandiose attempt to defend their theology and their perception of the world, they abandon their roles as comforters. Job's ordeal tests their theology, as well as his. Pinpointing their motives exactly, Job proclaims that in the thought of the complacent there is disdain for tragedy. (Cf. 12:5) They simply cannot begin to fathom the world in which their theology no longer holds true. Therefore, they bully and persecute Job, trying to get him to admit his wrongdoings and repent.

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[146] Higgins, *Resilient Adults*, 65-124.

Although their words are hurtful to Job, and although he would rather they remain silent, their presence is still beneficial to him. The friends provide Job with a sounding board for his anger and frustrations. Before Job musters the courage to speak to God directly, he voices his complaints against God to them. He seems to have a subconscious understanding that he needs his friends near him. No matter how badly they try his patience, he never once asks them to leave. Job continues to address his friends directly throughout all three cycles of speeches. (6:14-15, 12:2-5, 13:1-13, 16:2-3, 19:2-6, 19:28-29, 21:2-5, 26:2-4) The friends' physical presence also serves to remind Job that he has not been completely abandoned, and this reassurance helps him to preserve his faith.

Job's faith is also sustained by his continuing relationship with God. Although Job is angry with God, and accuses God of acting unjustly, Job does not renounce his belief in God. Using his imagination, Job pictures bringing God to trial. Imagining what he will say and how God will respond inspires Job to believe that God has not abandoned him. Job's accusations against God are actually a way for him to maintain his connection with God. His desire to confront God is derived, at least in part, from his desire to be in relationship with God. In fact, this desire is so strong that Job ends up risking his life by swearing an oath in a final effort to meet with God. (Chapter 31) Even during the moments when Job seems to be begging for solitude from God (7:16, 10:20), he does not really want to be abandoned. Saadiah affirms this theory with his translation of 7:16. He does not translate *chadal mi-meni* (7:16) as "let me alone," the way that most translators do. Rather, he interprets these words to

mean "ease me of this." In explaining his interpretation Saadiah writes: "And I rendered *leave me be* as 'ease me of this.' I do not say 'have done with me,' because it is God who is addressed here, and Job does not want [God] to have done with him, but only to put an end to his sufferings."[147] Long before God ever speaks to Job from the whirlwind, Job discovers a way to preserve the integrity and special quality of their relationship. Just as Frankl did not need to be in the physical presence of his wife in order to benefit from their relationship,[148] Job does not need to be in the presence of God in order to be in relation with God.

Lament

Lament, an important genre within the Book of Psalms, was a common form of prayer in ancient Israel. There are similarities, as well as differences, between Job's laments and the laments found in the Book of Psalms. Psalm laments typically include five key elements: petition, personal lament, address, affirmation of trust, and vow of praise.[149] Hartley notes that Job's speeches incorporate three out of these five elements. First, there are a number of petitions within Job's speeches. Job asks his friends to teach him, to listen to him more carefully, and to treat him with more compassion. (6:24-29, 19:21-22) Job also asks God to ease his suffering and to help him understand the reason for his misfortunes. (10:20-22, 13:21-24)

[147] Saadiah, *The Book of Theodicy*, as found in Goodman, *Saadiah on Job*, 210.

[148] Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, 48-50.

[149] Westermann, *Structure of Job*, 89.

Second, Job's responses contain a large amount of personal lament. These personal laments are intense, deeply emotional, and filled with powerful images and symbols. Personal laments are generally made up of three subjects: the self, the enemy, and God. Although Job's laments contain all three subjects, he does not utilize them in the traditional manner. For example, Job does not speak of just one enemy. His enemy alternates between his friends and God. At times he reprimands his friends for their lack of support, their biting accusations, and their meaningless advice. (6:14-21, 12:2-4, 13:1-6) At other times he accuses God of being his enemy for treating him in such a cruel and unrelenting way. (16:9-14, 19:6-13)

Finally, Job addresses God throughout his speeches. However, he does not do so as is common in the psalm laments. Job does not address God directly in either his first speech or in the beginning of his second speech. When he finally does address God (7:8), he does so without any sort of introduction. In fact, Job only introduces his words to God one time in the entire book. (10:2) Otherwise, readers are made aware of the times when Job is addressing God only by Job's use of the second person, masculine, single pronoun. It is also interesting to note that Job's addresses to God never appeal to God's greatness or power. They also do not include any allusions to past deeds performed by God on Job's behalf. In psalm laments, a lamenter would usually weave these two elements into his lament in order to demonstrate his respect before God, to try to secure God's favor, or to place his present, desperate situation within the

framework of a larger, more positive relationship.[150] It seems safe to assume (from the prologue and from references like 29:2-6) that Job did share a relatively intimate relationship with God. However, Job's sense of integrity is so strong that he does not wish to exploit his past relationship with God in order to win God's favor. Job wants to be vindicated by God based on his own merits and innocence.

Hartley claims that, in contrast to the psalmists, Job makes no affirmation of trust in God.[151] This is true if one looks only at the poetic dialogues. However, in the prose prologue, after Job has been informed of the loss of his livestock, his possessions, and his children, he utters: "Naked I came out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there. The Lord has given, the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." (1:21) Job's words and actions during the prologue seem to imply that Job, at least at this point, still trusts in God to redeem him from his suffering and his pain. Perhaps Job is only experiencing what Viktor Frankl refers to as "delusions of reprieve." In *Man's Search for Meaning*, Frankl notes that condemned individuals often have the illusion that they will receive a reprieve before any further harm can come to them.[152] Or perhaps, based on his past relationship with God, Job feels that he has every reason to trust that God will somehow make this situation right. In any

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[150] John E. Hartley, "From Lament to Oath: A Study of Progression in the Speeches of Job," in *The Book of Job*, ed. W.A.M. Beuken (Leuven: University Press, 1994), 89-91.

[151] Ibid., 90.

[152] Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, 23.

case, Job's words and actions in the prologue certainly can be interpreted as affirmations of trust in God.

While Job's laments contain elements of petition, personal lament, address, and affirmations of trust, they do not contain any form of a vow. Scholars describe a vow as a voluntary promise, usually consisting of a declaration of praise or an assurance that a sacrifice will be made once God has fulfilled a certain request. Westermann explains that a vow is much more than just a bargain. He notes that the purpose of a vow is to multiply the value of the petition by appealing to God's desire for public praise.[153] However, Job does not use this method in his attempts to attract God's attention. Instead, Job uses an oath. (31:5-10, 16-22, 38-40)

In the ancient world, an oath was the boldest approach one had to assert one's innocence. An oath could actually be regarded as proof of one's innocence. In a legal context, if a court lacked sufficient evidence to render a decision, it could ask a defendant to take an oath of innocence. This oath was so highly regarded that the court was under no further obligation to return a judgment.[154] Confronting God with an oath takes audacity and courage. However, for Job, it is the only option that made any sense. An oath compels God to judge him based on the truth as he understands it. Also, regardless of the judgment, an oath allows Job to maintain his integrity.

Finally, in comparing Job's laments to the psalm laments, it is interesting

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[153] Westermann, *Structure of Job*, 78.

[154] Hartley, "From Lament to Oath," 88.

to note that Job's laments lack any sort of assurances of being heard. Claims of assurance are often present within many of the psalm laments. Usually, after issuing numerous complaints, the petitioner will stop and begin to make assertions that God has heard her lament and will respond to her plea. Of course, Job never makes any such claims. Hartley writes that this absence "is quite surprising both in light of the significance it has in psalms of lament and in light of the opportunity that Job has for doing so given the large number of his speeches to express such confidence."[155] However, upon closer examination, it does not seem that making these kinds of statements of assurance would be consistent with Job's character. After his ordeal, Job knows that he must rely upon his own experiences and his own sense of what is just. His recent experiences have caused him to feel as if God has abandoned him. Although Job maintains his faith in God, he can no longer be certain of the fact that God will respond to him. Although he hopes that God will respond to him and prays that God will respond to him and perhaps even believes that God will respond to him, he will not claim that God will respond to him until God does just that. After comparing Job's laments to the psalm laments, Hartley concludes that the author of Job purposefully altered the traditional lament form in order to suit his specific purposes. And what purposes did Job's author have? Hartley writes: "These contrasts between psalms of lament and Job's laments reveal that Job grounds his search for a resolution to his anguish in his own innocence more than in God's mercy. Thus as he pursues the avenue of lamenting, he constructs his

[155] Ibid., 90.

laments in a way that guards his integrity."[156]

Catharsis Through Lament

Job's laments allow him to give voice to his pain and his anger, his bitterness, his sorrow, and his fear. One can sense the emotional release as Job begins to speak, after seven days of silence, in Chapter 3.

v. 3 Perish the day on which I was born,
and the night which said, "A man has been conceived."

v.4 Let that day be darkness,
let God above have no concern for it,
let light not shine upon it.

v.5 Let darkness and deep gloom claim it,
let a pall dwell over it,
let what darkens the day cast terror on it.

v.6 That night, let blackness seize it,
let it not join with the days of the year,
let it not come into the number of months.

v.7 That night, let it be desolate,
let no sound of joy come into it.

v.8 Let the doomers of day curse it,
those destined to undo Leviathan.

v.9 Let its twilight stars stay dark,
let it hope for light and have none,
let it see not the eyelids of dawn.

v.10 For not blocking her belly's doors,
to hide suffering from my eyes.

v.11 Why did I not die from the womb,
out from the belly expire?

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[156] Ibid., 91.

v.12 Why were there knees to receive me,
or breasts for me to suck?

v.13 For now would I lie, be at peace,
I would sleep and find rest,

v.14 With kings and counselors of the earth,
who build ruins for themselves.

v.15 Or with nobles who have gold,
who fill their houses with silver.

v.16 Or like a buried stillborn, I would be not,
like infants who never saw light.

v.17 There the wicked cease to trouble,
there the exhausted rest.

v.18 Prisoners are utterly tranquil,
no longer hear the taskmaster's voice.

v.19 Small and great are there,
the slave free of his master.

v.20 Why does [God] give to the sufferer light,
and life to the bitter soul?

v.21 Who wait for death and it comes not,
who dig for it more than for treasure.

v.22 Who rejoice to exultation,
and are glad to find a grave.

v.23 To a man whose way is hidden,
whom God has hedged about?

v.24 In place of my bread my groaning comes,
my roars pour out like water.

v.25 For I feared a fear – it befell me,
and that which I dreaded came on me.

v.26 I was not quiet, was not at peace,
did not rest, and trouble came.

After seven days of silence, Job opens his mouth and it is as if floodgates have been released. No longer patient, words come flowing forth which reveal Job's true thoughts and feelings. In fact, Westermann characterizes this lament as a "primordial individual lament" – a lament too fierce and untamed to be incorporated into the Psalms for use in structured, public worship.[157] Job, himself, expresses this same idea in 3:24b when he cries out, "My roaring pours forth as water." However, this does not mean that Job's lament should be interpreted only as a mere outpouring of emotion. Robert Alter, in his book *The Art of Biblical Poetry*, asserts that Job's author actually used a system of well thought out poetic intensifications in Chapter 3 to elucidate the depth of Job's suffering and pain.[158]

Alter notes that the first section of this poem is made up of numerous comparisons between darkness and light. This theme is not uncommon in Biblical narrative and poetry. For example, in the Creation story God's first action is to call forth light to illuminate the darkness that had been covering the earth. (Gen. 1:3) A few days later God creates two great lights in the sky – one to shine by day and the other to shine at night. According to God's laws of creation, even the night cannot exist in total darkness. (Gen. 1:16) However, in Job's first poem, he reverses these rules of creation. In the first section of this initial lament (3:3-10), Job wishes for darkness to obscure every aspect of the day on which he was born and the night on which he was conceived. It is

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[157] Westermann, *Structure of Job*, 80.

[158] Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry*, (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1985), 76.

important to note, however, that Job is not simply piling up random images of darkness encompassing light. Instead, the images in each section of each verse build upon one another, leading to an intense, concentrated portrait of Job's pain. Verse 5 provides an example of this kind of intensification. At the beginning of the verse, Job longs for darkness to simply claim the day of his birth. However, by the end of the verse, Job imagines this darkness casting terror over the day on which he was born. Alter claims that this sort of intensification helps to emphasize Job's suffering, as well as his inevitable self-centeredness. He writes:

> The poem of Chapter 3 . . . advanced through a process of focusing in and in – or, to shift metaphors, a relentless drilling inward toward the unbearable core of Job's suffering, which he imagined could be blotted out by extinction alone. The external world – dawn and sunlight and starry night – exists in these lines only to be canceled. Job's first poem is a powerful, evocative, authentic expression of man's essential, virtually ineluctable egotism: the anguished speaker has seen, so he feels, all too much, and he wants now to see nothing at all, to be enveloped in the blackness of the womb/tomb, enclosed by dark doors that will remain forever shut.[159]

This egocentric interpretation of Job's lament is certainly valid. Not once, in this first speech, does Job address the loss of his property or, more importantly, the loss of his children. His focus is only on himself and on the pain he so desperately longs to escape. In most laments, the petitioner pleads for a restoration to some former state of health or safety. Job's suffering is so excruciating, however, that he can only dream of death. He has the audacity to hope for the suspension of the laws of time, space, and nature, just so that he will be able to transport himself back into non-existence. He even has the gall to

[159] Ibid., 96.

call for the release of the Leviathan, which had been tamed at Creation, to help him achieve this goal.[160] In fact, Job bemoans his fate to such an extent that many of the Sages felt compelled to accuse him of blasphemy.

Looked at through a different lens, however, Job's lament does not have to be interpreted as blasphemous or even self-centered. Rather, this lament can be seen as crucial to Job's health and well-being. Through his lament Job is able to vent much of his frustration, anger, bitterness, sorrow, and fear. By verbalizing these feelings Job is actualizing them, or concretizing them. They are no longer just thoughts running around inside his head. Once these emotions have been verbalized and concretized, Job is free to deal with them as he sees fit.

For example, it seems likely that during his seven days of silent mourning, Job was troubled by thoughts of suicide. Perhaps his wife put this idea in his head when she told him to "Curse God and die." (2:9) Or perhaps he came to this way of thinking on his own. After all, given the situation, this type of reaction would not be at all unusual. Thoughts of suicide occur when feelings of hopelessness and helplessness abound. In the early stages of Job's ordeal, he is beset by grief and wracked with pain. His life seems to hold little meaning or value, and he is overwhelmed by feelings of hopelessness and helplessness. Death seems like the only way to escape his suffering. However, thoughts of suicide, or even just the desire to die, might cause Job to feel guilty. He knows that up until this point, he had been blessed with a remarkable life. It is Job,

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[160] Hartley, "From Lament to Oath," 82.

himself, who proclaims: "Shall we accept only good from God and not accept evil?" (2:10) And yet hopes of death still haunt him. These feelings and desires, if kept bottled up inside of him, would eventually eat away at him. His energy would have been consumed just dealing with his guilt. Therefore, by expressing his longing for death in his first lament in such an exhaustive manner Job allows himself to begin wrestling with this demon head-on. As the dialogues progress and he uncovers his true fears and desires, Job's yearnings for death actually do decrease.

This process of verbalization, known as catharsis, provides numerous benefits for people who experience trauma. Job seems to have an innate understanding of this when he declares, "On my part, I will not speak with restraint. I will give voice to the anguish of my spirit. I will complain in the bitterness of my soul." (7:11) Elihu, as well, extols the value of catharsis when he says, "Now I also would have my say. I too would like to hold forth, for I am full of words. The wind in my belly presses me. . . . Let me speak, then, and get relief." (32:17-20) Elaborating further on the advantages of catharsis Israel J. Gerber, a rabbi and doctor of psychology, writes:

> Catharsis can lead to understanding and reassurance. It not only frees the person from "conscious fears and guilt feelings . . . but . . . it can bring to light more deeply buried attitudes which also exert their influence on behavior." It advances the individual's understanding of himself and his problems, the defense mechanisms he has been using, and his behavior patterns. It encourages facing one's true self without need to rationalize or to speculate, and promotes the adoption of new behavior patterns. It facilitates acquiring new insights and greater self-awareness.[161]

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[161] Israel J. Gerber, *Job on Trial*, (Gastonia, NC: E.P. Press, Inc., 1982), 47-48.

From this description it is clear that the process of catharsis helps Job to feel that he has some sense of control over his current situation. Furthermore, catharsis can lead to the release physical tension and bring about feelings of comfort. This is true of Job. As Job continues to verbalize his feelings and convictions, complaints of his physical illness decrease. During the first cycle of speeches he speaks of continuous pain (3:24-25 and 6:10), sleepless nights (7:3-4), infestations of maggots and cracked skin (7:5), torturous nightmares (7:14), wounds (9:17), and shortness of breath (9:18). In the second cycle of speeches Job refers to a general sense of pain (16:6), wrinkles (16:8), gauntness (16:8 and 19:20), and his terrible stench (19:17). Finally, during the third cycle of speeches, Job mentions only three instances of pain: weary bones and sinews (30:17), a general sense of fatigue (30:18), and burned and flaking skin (30:30).

A number of scholars have come to appreciate the important role of catharsis through lament in Biblical theology.[162] They view lament as a powerful liberating force within the Hebrew Bible, as the act of lamenting calls into question social norms and beliefs. The expression of lament also encourages the development of faith, courage, and justice. Praising the value of lament, Hartley notes that "when [these kind of] virtues flourish in a community, the well-being of all its members is promised."[163]

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[162] See the works of Brueggeman, Gutierrez, and Hartley.

[163] Hartley, "From Lament to Oath," 100.

Imaginative Thinking

In trying to cope with this tragedy, Job employs the use of imaginative thinking. By allowing him to freely examine a wide range of feelings and desires, this type of thinking aids Job in identifying the specific goals and meanings that he wishes to fulfill. Imaginative thinking then helps him to explore a variety of roads he can take to attain those goals. These roads are not restricted by the limits of rationality or logic. Instead, the process of imaginative thinking is more like a boundless brainstorming session. By engaging in this process Job becomes aware of his broad scope of choices and options, and this awareness provides him with some sense of control over his anxiety. Job uses imaginative thinking when trying to deal with his feelings regarding death and his desire to confront God.

First, through his use of imaginative thinking, Job is able to confront and cope with his feelings regarding death. As noted above, Job begins his first speech with a strong desire for death. Within this lament he pictures a variety of routes through which he might cease to exist. First, he imagines the destruction of the day of his birth and the night of his conception. (3:3-10) He also ponders what it would have been like to have been stillborn. (3:11-13) Job imagines Sheol as a wonderful, liberating place in which he will finally experience the peace and rest from his sufferings that he so desires. (3:14-19) This sort of imagining helps Job to transcend the reality of his suffering, at least for a time. When this happens Job's anxiety levels decrease, he is permitted to experience some sense of rest, and he is given an opportunity to gather his strength.

As Job progresses through the dialogues, his longing for death begins to abate. In 14:7-14, Job speculates as to whether human beings, like a tree, can be restored to life after being cut down. He then wonders if God might be able to hide him in Sheol for a set amount of time until God's anger passes. However, he no longer wishes to remain in Sheol indefinitely as he did in Chapter 3. Finally, in 17:13-15, Job states: "If I must look forward to Sheol as my home, and make my bed in the dark place – say to the Pit 'You are my father,' to the maggots, 'Mother,' 'Sister' – where then is my hope?" Job no longer imagines Sheol as a desirable abode. He acknowledges that if he were to go down to Sheol, he would lose all hope, and he has come too far to do that. As Job's longing for death decreases, his passion for life is on the rise.

This passion for life is enhanced as Job uses imaginative thinking to explore the possibility of holding God accountable for the tragedy that has befallen him. Job eventually seeks to do this within the legal framework of a trial. The idea of bringing God to trial seems to arise from out of nowhere at the beginning of Job's speech in Chapter 9. Here Job pronounces, "Man cannot win a suit against God. If he insisted on a trial with God, God would not answer one charge in a thousand. Wise of heart and mighty in power – who ever challenged God and came out whole?" (9:2-4) While Job seems to reject this notion even as he utters it, it is important to note that it is not a complete rejection. Job does not say that God will never answer any charges brought forth by human beings. He simply acknowledges that the chances of God responding to his charges will be extremely slim. While pondering God's unfathomable powers (9:5-21) it

seems as if Job will abandon his idea of a trial. Yet, within this apparent rejection there are glimmers of hope. Job remains convinced of his innocence. (9:15, 21) Also, in 9:16, Job pictures God responding to his accusations. Although this response is not favorable, at least Job has advanced to the point where he can imagine God answering him. Here Job's imaginative thinking helps him to retain his faith that God has not completely abandoned him.

In his next set of speeches (Chapters 12-14), Job finally decides to pursue his case against God regardless of the obstacles. (13:3, 13-22) Hartley believes that the bridge between Job's tentative thoughts of Chapter 9 and his firm resolution of Chapter 13 is Job's lament in Chapter 10. He writes:

> In that lament, which is full of legal metaphors, Job searches for some meaning to his plight. He even comes to believe that God knows that he in innocent (10:7). This awareness . . . arouses Job's anger to such an intensity that he wills to expose God's arbitrary and unjust treatment of a vessel he has made. His anger prods him to decide to enter into litigation with God (13:18-22), and he never departs form this decision.[164]

As Job continues to contemplate this idea of a trial with God, his confidence in his ability to succeed continues to expand. Here Job seems to be engaging in Frankl's technique of paradoxical intention. As Job continues to expose himself (through the use of his imagination) to the idea of a trial with God, his fears and apprehensions regarding the trial slowly begin to fade As his concerns and anxieties are abated, his self-assurance begins to rise. Therefore, it is understandable that Job, in 23:6-7, confidently announces, "Would God contend with me overbearingly? Surely God would not accuse me. There the

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Ibid., 93-94.

upright would be cleared by God, and I would escape forever from my judge." Unfortunately, this confidence is assuaged a bit when Job cannot find God in order to begin the trial. (23:3, 8-9) Finally, in a last attempt at confrontation, Job makes an oath (31:1-40) to try to attract God's attention. In this courageous and daring move, Job actively takes matters into his own hands. He believes that by making this oath God will be forced to respond to him.

Through his use of imaginative thinking, Job is able to lift himself out of his own despondency. His imagination enhances his sense of integrity and encourages him to maintain his convictions. Finally, his use of imaginative thinking allows him to exert control over his tragic situation. By the end of the dialogues, Job seems to have turned the table on his friends and on God. Instead of allowing himself to be bullied by his friends into the position of a defendant, he becomes God's accuser. Instead of waiting for a response from God, Job's oath forces a response from God. Regardless of the outcome, Job has proven himself to be victorious.

Job's Search for Meaning

As noted above, Job's experience of suffering is essentially a lonely one. Reaching out to his friends and to God helps ease these feelings of loneliness. However, no one can fully understand the pain Job is forced to endure or the complex thoughts and emotions that his pain elicits. Job's extreme pain and his profound solitude force the question of meaning. Dr. Mitchell T. Smolkin, author of *Understanding Pain: Interpretation and Philosophy*, explains:

> Separated from humanity and even often from God, the sufferer floats unanchored by previous roles, aspirations, and social reinforcements. Metaphysics may become the tool that the sufferer uses in the quest to re-orient himself to the whole, to re-anchor himself. If he is successful, he ends up replacing a world view that no longer works with one that does.[165]

Job's suffering does prompt this kind of search for meaning, understanding, and truth. Logotherapy asserts that a person's search for meaning will be unique and is subject to change as that individual changes and grows. This assertion seems to hold true for Job as well. At first, Job seeks an understanding of why tragedy has come to him. Early in the dialogues Job asks God to explain to him the reasons for his suffering. He knows that these sufferings cannot be punishments because he knows that he has committed no sin (at least no sin that would merit the severity of the ordeal). Therefore, Job demands to know what he has done and why God refuses to forgive him or grant him a reprieve. (7:20-21) Job's struggle for understanding is one to which most people can relate. A number of commentators and scholars, including Maimonides, praise this kind of struggle. Many also believe that "wrestling with God" in order to understand God's ways can imbue one's life with meaning. As one Holocaust survivor notes:

> I find I want very much to keep after [God] and try to the best of my ability to overcome the obscurity of [God's] ways and I can't escape [God], however much [God] may have wished to escape us. I will do this to my last breath. I know it. More than this, I believe this is precisely what a Jew must do, to keep after [God] for answers. And it brings me a measure of repose and comfort to conduct these conferences to be God's interlocutor, to keep after [God] by creating and inventing, like the traditional Jew of the past in history, new arguments *against* [God], and new justifications *for* [God]. For me it

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[165] Dr. Mitchell T. Smolkin *Understanding Pain: Interpretation and Philosophy* (Malabar, FL: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Company, 1989), 7-8.

is the entire Torah.[166]

However, as the dialogues continue, Job becomes less interested in why this is happening to him. As his demands to understand the reasons for his pain subside, Job discovers that there is meaning to be found within his suffering. Job knows that he is an innocent sufferer. He knows that he has done nothing to warrant this kind of retribution. Of course, it would be understandable if Job were to give into the pressure of his friends and admit to some wrongdoing in hopes of ending his pain. But Job refuses to do this. Throughout his ordeal he stands by his convictions and maintains his innocence and his integrity. Job is willing to go to almost any length to obtain vindication and prove that innocent suffering does exist. In adopting this stance Job discovers that meaning -- even in the face of undeserved suffering -- still exists in his life. This understanding girds him with the courage and the strength he needs to both suffer and survive.

Meaning Through Protest

Job shows us that one of the most meaningful ways for us to maintain our dignity and integrity is by challenging and confronting God through protest. Job reminds us that it is possible for us to maintain our faith in God and still feel outraged at God and hurt by God. Most importantly, Job teaches us that we can act on these feelings. We can cry out against God's seeming injustice and indifference. We can protest what we know to be undeserved suffering.

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[166] Reeve Robert Brenner, *The Faith and Doubt of Holocaust Survivors* (New York: Collier MacMillan Publishers, 1980), 98.

Although our liturgies, as a whole, do not reflect it, the Jewish people do have a long history of standing up to God. From Abraham, Moses, and Jeremiah to certain Rabbinic aggadot;[167] from the protest piyyutim of the Middle Ages to the Hasidic custom of challenging God to a *din Torah*, a Jewish legal dispute, confrontation and protest are valid aspects of Jewish tradition. Protest is a valid form of being in relation to God.

Protest seeks to deepen the relationship we have with God, and is an important way for us to affirm God. In protesting we are not renouncing our connection with God. We are not allowing ourselves to be abandoned. However, at the same time, we are not allowing our own convictions to be compromised. We are not admitting to sins we have not committed; nor are we taking responsibility for events over which we have no control. We are not hiding our anger, our frustrations, or our pain. Instead, by crying out to God we allow ourselves to connect with God in an honest and real way. We give voice to our pain and our suffering. Only then can we begin to heal.

The need for protest does not exist only for those who have witnessed and experienced undeserved suffering first-hand. Simply knowing the depths to which humanity can sink gives many of us reason to pause before singing out God's praises and God's glory. Many of us who live in this post-Holocaust generation find it difficult to fully accept God as perfectly just, merciful, and all-knowing. We are plagued by doubt and mistrust. These feelings are only exacerbated when we are forced to endure our own personal sufferings.

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[167] For example, see Taanit 23a, which recounts the bold challenges and protests of Choni, the circle-drawer.

Whether we experience the unexpected or tragic death of a loved one, are struck with a debilitating disease, or suffer some form of abuse we need a way to express our pain, our anger, our outrage, and our doubt. Job shows us how to do this. He shows us how to be true to ourselves, express these emotions, and remain faithful to God.

In expressing these kinds of emotions we must be careful, for it is a fine line between protest and blasphemy. This is evident from our survey of Rabbinic attitudes toward Job. While some of the Rabbis accused Job of blasphemy, others excused his behavior based on the severe nature of his sufferings. However, our understanding of the Book of Job points to at least one important distinction between the two stances. In protest one defies God; in blasphemy one denies God. In defying God, one gains confidence and strength. In denying God, one is left broken and bereft. In *Night*, Akiba Drumer is one of Elie Wiesel's knights of faith. However, once he abandons God, he loses a sense of purpose in his life, and can no longer survive.

> ". . . I know. Man is too small, too humble and inconsiderable to seek to understand the mysterious ways of God. but what can I do? I'm not a sage, one of the elect, nor a saint. I'm just an ordinary creature of flesh and blood. I've got eyes, too, and I can see what they're doing here. Where is the divine Mercy? Where is God? How can I believe, how could anyone believe, in this merciful God?"
>
> Poor Akiba Drumer, if he could have gone on believing in God, if he could have seen a proof of God in this Calvary, he would not have been taken by the selection. But as soon as he felt the first cracks forming in his faith, he had lost his reason for struggling and had begun to die.[168]

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[168] Elie Wiesel, *Night*, translated by Stella Rodway (New York: Bantam Books, 1960), 73.

Unlike Akiba Drumer, Job never denies God's power or existence. He never abandons his faith In God. However, Job does question God's morality and God's justice. In 13:1-2a, Job says, "My eye has seen all this; my ear has heard and understood it. What you know, I know too." Although he is addressing his friends in these verses, he could be addressing God as well. Job knows what justice is, and he knows when justice is not being served. He feels compelled to speak out against this injustice and against its perpetrator. By accusing God of injustice, Job relinquishes his role as a helpless victim. By holding God responsible, Job becomes empowered.

Job is an example for us of how to live in this world with honesty and integrity. He reminds us to speak out against injustice, wherever we might find it. He shows us how to believe in God without compromising our own realities and experiences. And he reminds us that affirming God, whether through protest or praise, gives meaning to our lives. During times of hopelessness, tragedy, and despair we can turn to Job. His plight is our plight, his words are our words, and his courage in the face of adversity girds us with strength.

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