

In Outline Job looks like this:

- I. Prologue: Job's Misfortunes 1-2
- II. Debate: The Ways of God 3:1--42:6
- III. Epilogue: Job's Vindication 42:7-17

This admits of the following structure with a bit more detail and careful analysis:

- I. Introduction 1:1-5
- II. The speeches 1:6-42:6
  - A. The Lord and Satan 1:6-2:13
  - B. Job and His Friends 3-37
    - 1. Four rounds with Job 3-31
    - 2. Four speeches by Elihu 32-37
  - C. The Lord and Job 38:1-42:6
- III. Conclusion 42:7-17

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In the History of Redemption the emphasis of Job is not a protest against the theology of this central figure and his friends (that the wicked perish and the righteous prosper), and it is not an examination into the question of why the righteous suffer. The book is instead a study of the nature and person of God --a protest against the idea that God can be fully understood, and therefore, his actions predicted. Job seeks an answer to the question, "Why has God not acted as theory and (previous) experience tell me that he should?" Then, in the course of the dialogue, Job looks for a mediator to plead his case (9:32-35) and to represent him before God in court. Job does not predict or prophesy such a mediator. He only expresses his need of and hope for such a mediator.

Job also expresses a firm belief in and hope for a future life in fellowship with God (14:13; 19:23-27). This was a personal hope, not one for the community or nation; it disproves the theory of some that the Hebrews had neither belief in judgment after death nor in a life after death, except occasionally on some communal level.

The burden of the book, therefore, is that human problems and suffering pale into insignificance when put into perspective against the Lord's omniscience and omnipotence. Job desires to meet God that he might defend himself but does not know where to find him (23:1-12). When the Lord reveals himself it is not with an answer to Job's questions but with a revelation of his power and might which satisfies Job fully (42:1-6).

Some important questions include the following: Is Job a theoretical book--a theological "novel" --or a book of history? Why did Job's wife tell him to curse God and die (2:9)? Were Elihu's conclusions more correct than those of Job and his friends? Was he in any sense a spokesman for God? Does the end of Job's life (42:7-17) imply blessing after disaster? Why is Job mentioned in Ezekiel 14:14?

Archaeology and Job. Although we do not know where or when the events recorded in the book of Job took place, we have learned about it as a type of literature.

One of the major arguments for a late exilic or post-exilic date for the book was the assertion that wisdom literature was a later development in ancient Near Eastern thought. It was also believed there was no concept of an afterlife nor any concern for the individual (the major concern --as centered on the society