

When Bad Things Happen to Good People: Job

by Patty Friesen (Oct.3/21)

My name is Job - with a long O. My story is believed to be the oldest one in the Bible. I think it is the first book written about my experience of loss and disappointment because it is so close to all of our experiences of loss and disappointment and our ancient struggle of where is God when bad things happen to good people.

I had a charmed life in the land of Uz. Wikipedia says Uz is sometimes identified with the kingdom of [Edom](#), roughly in the area of modern-day southwestern [Jordan](#). [Lamentations](#) 4:21 reads: "Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom, that dwellest in the land of Uz." Other locations for Uz include modern-day [Uzbekistan](#) from the root Uz! In 21st-century Israel, when *The Wizard of Oz* was translated to Hebrew, the translators chose to use *Land of Uz* for the book's *Land of Oz*. So in modern Hebrew - I guess I would be considered The Wizard of Uz!

I had 7000 sheep, 3000 camels, 500 oxen, 500 donkeys and lots and lots of servants and I had a large extended family of brothers and sisters. But for all my servants and extended family, my closest confidantes were my three friends Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar and my wife Sarah who bore me 7 sons and 3 daughters. We had a good life as a family. Each of my seven sons would hold a feast, one for every day of the week and invite their sisters. I worried about them like any father would and I would rise early after their feasting all night and I would burn offerings for the forgiveness of each one lest they had somehow had accidentally cursed God.

It was a charmed life until one day when my children were eating and drinking wine in the eldest brother's house, a servant came to my house and said, the oxen were

plowing fields and the donkeys were feeding beside them, and the Sabeans came and stole them all and killed the servants. I alone have escaped to tell you. And while he was still speaking, another came and said, lightning came and killed all the sheep and servants and I alone have escaped to tell you. And unbelievably while he was still speaking, another servant came in and bowed down saying the Chaldeans had made a raid on the camels and stole them and killed the servants. I alone have escaped to tell you. Finally and most horribly, my oldest servant came to bear the worst news, "your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house and suddenly a great wind came across the desert, struck the four corners of the house and it fell on the young people and they are dead along with their servants. I alone have escaped to tell you."

Devastating loss of everything I loved and owned in one day! In shock, I tore my robe in grief, shaved my head and fell on the ground and worshipped Yahweh, the one God, saying, "Naked I came from my mother's womb and naked shall I return. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord."

While I grieved hard, and had become a pauper overnight, I didn't curse God. I figured others had not even had an ounce of what I had all my life so I could learn to live as they did, without anything. "At least I have the wealth of health," I told my wife. "If you don't have your health - you don't have anything," she told me.

Then that went to pot - literally - I had leprosy, painful sores from the top of my head to the bottom of my feet and would try to scrape them off with a broken bit of clay pot. You could say, I didn't even have a pot to - well you know. I had to go live in the slums with the other lepers. But I still believed God loved me and wanted the best for

me. My wife, Sarah, said I should just curse God and die but I told her, shall we receive good at the hand of God and not also receive the bad? Who did we think we were that we would escape suffering in life?

Word got back to my friends, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar and they met up together to come and console me. But when they saw me with my potshard, scraping boils, they didn't recognize me and wailed out loud and wept and tore their robes and threw dust in the air upon their heads. They sat with me on the ground seven days and seven nights and wisely, they didn't say a word to me, for they saw my suffering was very great.

They should have kept silence because as soon as I opened up my mouth to share the pain of my soul and body, they piped up with their solutions. Eliphaz thought for sure that I must have done something to deserve this - that God in goodness wasn't the type to unjustly let people suffer. I must have done something wrong. I told him that I don't know why bad things happen - they just do. As for me, I would trust God and commit my cause to a greater One than I. I put my trust in the one who gives rain on the earth and saves the needy so the poor have hope and injustice shuts its mouth. (5:17). Just because I suffer personally, doesn't mean God doesn't care about the greater good, the bigger picture.

Sure I've had my rants with God but I figure God is big enough to handle it. My second friend Bildad thought for sure I should repent and then everything would be alright but I told him, I didn't have anything to repent of. This wasn't my fault. Some people believed that bad things came from the devil and God allowed the devil to test me. The story was written up that way but I never thought that myself. People are

always looking for something to blame when bad things happen, even the devil. My words didn't focus on the devil but on God and these words have borne the test of time, "For I know that my Redeemer lives, and that at the last Redeemer will stand upon the earth and after my skin has been destroyed, then in my flesh I shall see God (19:25-26)

Even my oldest friend Zophar had a go at me. I had hoped for better from him. Sometimes even friends say the dumbest things. We went round and round for days and days and chapters and chapters if you read my book. Finally God weighed in and defended how the world works above human understanding, saying, "where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?" God doesn't have the petty time to be picking on individuals to make them miserable. Nature takes its' own course after it is established - there are windy days as well as sunny days, drought as well as rain, illness and death as well as healing and recovery. Nature takes its' own course. There will always be things beyond our understanding.

I told God that I knew Creator made all things and I'd keep my mouth shut from now on. Then God got mad at my friends saying they had misrepresented God saying God was out to pick on me. God was so mad at them, I had to offer seven rams and seven bulls to burn as an offering and pray for them which I did and God accepted my intercession on their behalf. The dummies.

After God and I reconciled, the story ended happily ever after as ancient stories are apt to do. God restored my fortunes and I had twice as much as before with 14,000 sheep, 6000 camels, 1000 oxen and 1000 donkeys. All my brothers and sisters and all my friends who abandoned me in the tough times showed up again to share my bread of course and showed sympathy now that I was rich again. My wife and I had seven

more sons and three daughters, the most beautiful in the land of Uz and I gave them equal inheritance to their brothers. I lived to be 140 years old and saw four generations of my family and the Hebrew Scriptures say I died happy and full of days - which is a good life and a good death.

God our Redeemer watches over us in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health, in poverty and in wealth. Thanks be to God!