



LITERARY JOB

OLLI Spring Term 2016

- Tom Manteuffel

Why Job?

...the grandest book ever
written by pen.
- Carlyle

Perhaps the greatest
masterpiece of the human
mind. - Victor Hugo

...the greatest poem of
ancient and modern times.
- Tennyson

...the most sublime moment
in literature.
- de Lamartine

...the most wonderful poem
of any age and language.
- Daniel Webster

...[the] greatest Jewish work
of art.
- Stephen Mitchell

Why Job?

The Hebrew of Job has long been recognized as the most difficult in the Bible.

“An indirectness and a slipperiness attaches to the whole book... tricked out with figures of speech, and while it says one thing, it does another; just as if you close your hand to hold an eel or a little murena, the more you squeeze it, the sooner it escapes.”

- Jerome (4th C. CE)

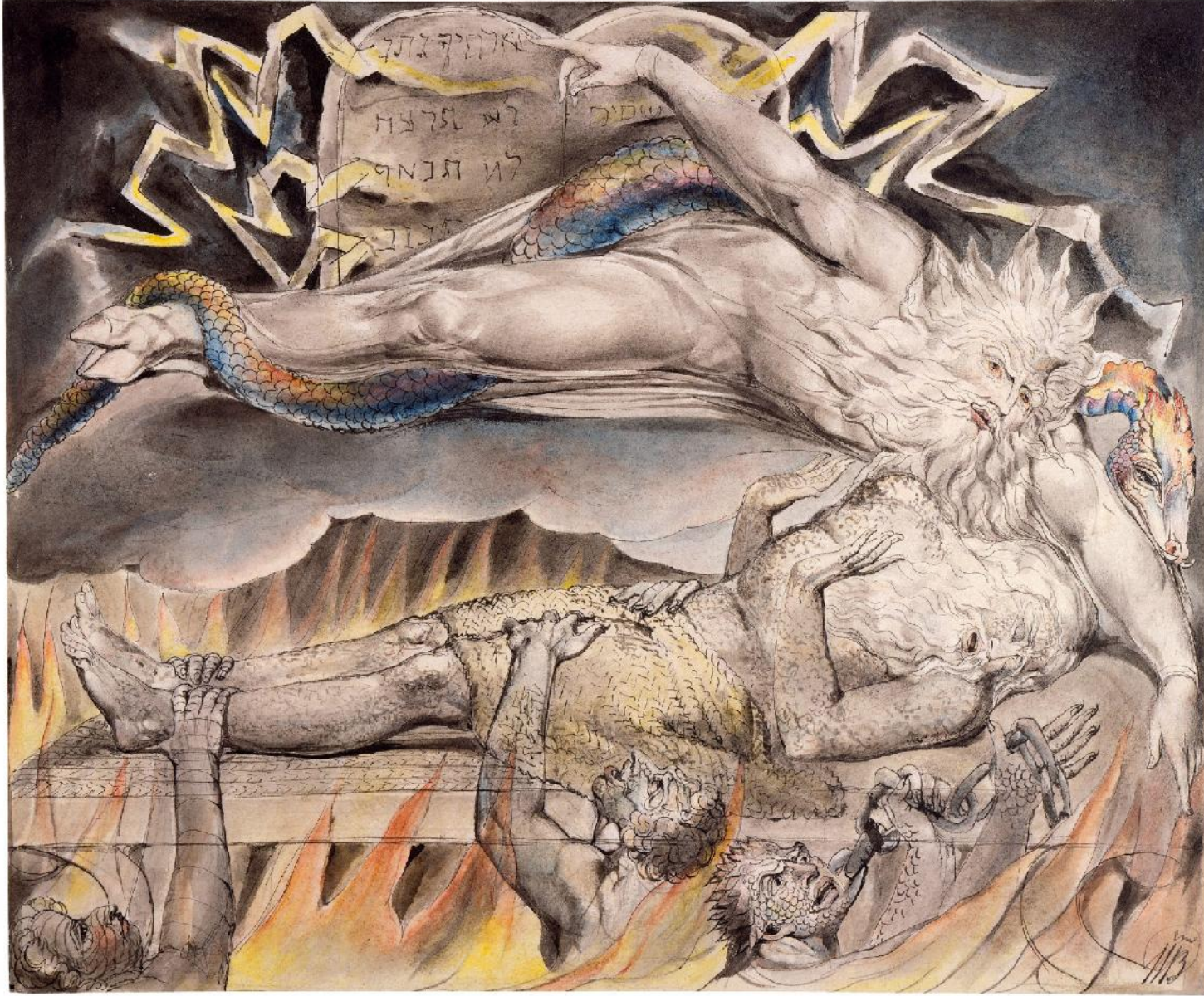
Why Job?

- There are 170 terms that are unique to Job in the biblical corpus

The 'Patience of Job'?

You have heard of the *patience of Job*, and understood the Lord's purpose, realizing that the Lord is kind and compassionate.

James 5:11



The Morgan Library and Museum



Detail, *Job's Evil Dreams*, c. 1810

William Blake

The Burial Office

I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.

(Job 19:25-26, KJV)

Job 19:25-27a

For I know that my Redeemer lives
 And that at the last he will stand upon the
 earth
 And after my skin has been thus destroyed,
 Then in my flesh I shall see God,
 Whom I shall see on my side,
 And my eyes shall behold, and not
 another.

NRSV Job 19:25-7a

But as for me, I know that my Redeemer liveth,
 And that He will witness at the last upon the
 dust;
 And when after my skin this is destroyed,
 Then without my flesh shall I see G-d;
 Whom I, even I, shall see for myself,
 And mine eyes shall behold, and not another's.

JPS (1917)

For I know that my Redeemer lives.
 though He be the last to arise upon earth!
 Deep in my skin this has been marked,
 and in my very flesh do I see God.
 I myself behold Him,
 with my own eyes I see him, not with
 another's---

Robert Gordis Job 19:25-7a

But I know my redeemer lives.
 and in the end he will stand up on earth,
 And after they flay my skin,
 from my flesh I shall behold God
 For I myself shall behold,
 my eyes will see---no stranger's

Robert Alter, The Wisdom Books Job 19:25-7a

Job 19:25-27a

Someday my witness would come;
My avenger would read these words.
He would plead with me in God's court;
He would stand up and vindicate my
name

Mitchell Job 19:25-7a
(See note p 115)

What is a 'go'el'

(Usually) nearest male relative

Among the obligations of a *go'el*:

- to redeem the relative from slavery, if the latter had been obliged to sell himself into serfdom (Leviticus 25:48-49)
- to avenge the blood of his relative if he is slain (Deuteronomy 19:1-12)
- to marry his brother's widow in order to have a son for his brother, in case the brother had not got any son to pass his name on (Deuteronomy 25:5-6)
- to receive the restitution if the injured relative had died (Numbers 5:8)
- To buy back family property sold in distress (Lev 25:25, Ruth 4:4-6)

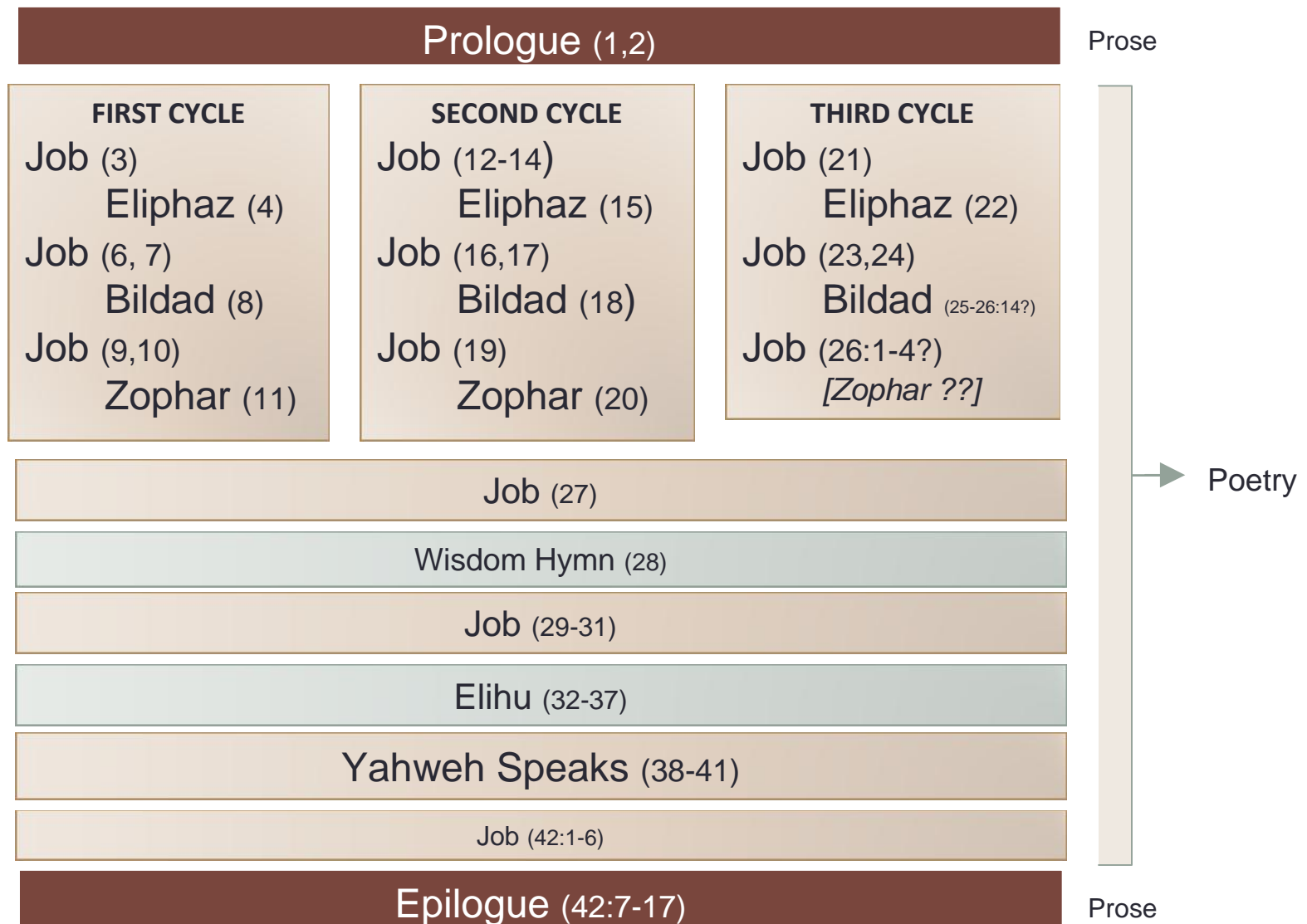
What is a 'go'el

God as *go'el*

- Redeemer from Egyptian bondage (Exodus 6:8)
- From Babylonian exile (Isaiah 43:14, 44:22-23 *etc*)
- One's personal avenger of wrong (Psalm 119:154, Proverbs 23:11)

It is God to whom Job is appealing

Structure of Job



Are these disparate elements:

- Accretions over the years by distinct sources/authors?
- Or rather intentional changes in voice and style wrought by the same author to serve a purpose?

Multiple authors?

- Style and diction clearly differ between frame and dialogues, even more so with Elihu speeches
 - **But** note, prose differs from poetry...
 - Elihu does have a point of view
- As a rule, the dialogue speakers use *el*, *eloah* or *sadday* rather than the *YHVH* of the frame (and *YHVH* speaks)
 - **But** note that the author characterizes the dialogue speakers as foreigners...

One-author view

- The author intentionally sets up a *tension* between the prose frame story and the dialogues
 - Just as the prose *style* of the frame story contrasts with that of the dialogues...
 - So the patient and pious *Job* of the frame story contrasts with the vitriolic, searing *Job* of the dialogues

In leaving behind the prose frame story, it is exactly as if the author is taking on his real enterprise, which can only take place through the medium of poetry.

Near East Parallels to Job

- 'Exemplary sufferer' texts I
- The 'Sumerian Job'
 - Tablets dated 19th C BCE
 - The sufferer is an ethical, learned person
 - Once respected, but has lost status
 - Sufferer asks to know his sin so he can confess
 - He does and is restored

Near East Parallels to Job

- ‘Exemplary sufferer’ texts II
- The Akkadian “I Will Praise the Lord of Wisdom” *Ludlul b I n meqi*
 - 7th C BCE
 - A pious noble had wealth and status, has lost all
 - Sufferer asks to know his sin so he can confess
 - He does and is restored by Marduk
 - Does not question the doctrine of retribution

Near East Parallels to Job

Ludlul b I n meqi

[He it is] who smote me
 But He was merciful.
 He cut me but he
 bandaged me

“I Will Praise the Lord of Wisdom”
 Ug. 5 RS 25.460

Job

For God injures
 but He binds.
 He smites
 but His hands heal.

Eliphaz, Job 5:18-20

Near East Parallels to Job

- ‘Exemplary sufferer’ texts III
- The ‘Babylonian Theodicy’
 - Around 1000 BCE
 - Acrostic poem of 27 stanzas, eleven lines each
 - Like Job, is in dialogue form (two parties)
 - There is no presumption of guilt on the part of the sufferer
 - No clear restitution in the end

Job however is considerably more vitriolic, has multiple dialogues and many more poetic tropes and imagery.

Is Job an “exemplary sufferer”?

Whereas in the typical ‘lament’ the sufferer is pleading with God for help in dealing with his enemies, in an important sense, in Job, *God is the enemy*.

“Indeed the sufferer in the book as it now stands in Hebrew is ominously named *‘ijjob*, “enemied one.”

- C. L. Seow, *Job 1-21*, p. 57-8

There is no parallel in any other text
to the YHVH discourses in Job

Wisdom Literature

- Conventionally, is said to include:

- The Book of Job,
- The Book of Proverbs,
- Ecclesiastes (Qohelet),
- Song of Songs,
- The Book of Wisdom,
- Sirach,
- Some Psalms, *e.g.*, 37, 49

Wisdom Literature

- Proverbs:
 - 'Wisdom' is the knowledge of how to live rightly
 - Humans fall into two categories:
 - The righteous (or wise)
 - The wicked (or foolish)
 - Which group one belongs to seems to be determined by upbringing and education

Appropriate enough in material aimed at the education of the young.

Wisdom Literature

- Proverbs:
 - Righteousness is rewarded and sin is punished: cause, effect

The righteousness of the blameless keeps their ways straight,
but the wicked fall by their own wickedness.
The righteousness of the upright saves them,
but the treacherous are taken captive by their schemes.

Proverbs 11:5-6 (NRSV)

Wisdom Literature

- Proverbs

The Book of Proverbs is, next to Deuteronomy, the most stalwart defender in the Hebrew Bible of the doctrine of retribution.

This is the very idea that Job will directly and very forcefully question.

Wisdom Literature

- Qohelet (Ecclesiastes in Septuagint)
 - Dissents from standard Wisdom thinking in a different way
 - Puts emphasis upon
 - The ephemerality of life
 - The flimsiness of human value
 - The inexorability of death
 - Hence life should not be just the accumulation of wisdom, which is 'lost' upon death anyway. Qohelet is strongly against the notion of an afterlife.
 - Unlike Job, does not search for meaning in suffering.

Ecclesiastes 3:12-13 (NIV)

¹² I know that there is nothing better for people than to be happy and to do good while they live. ¹³ That each of them may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all their toil—this is the gift of God.

Job 1:6-12 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

⁶ One day the heavenly beings came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. ⁷ The LORD said to Satan, “Where have you come from?” Satan answered the LORD, “From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it.” ⁸ The LORD said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man who fears God and turns away from evil.” ⁹ Then Satan answered the LORD, “Does Job fear God for nothing? ¹⁰ Have you not put a fence around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. ¹¹ But stretch out your hand now, and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face.” ¹² The LORD said to Satan, “Very well, all that he has is in your power; only do not stretch out your hand against him!” So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.

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⁶ One day the heavenly beings came to present themselves before the LORD, and **Satan** also came among them. ⁷ The LORD said to **Satan**, “Where have you come from?” **Satan** answered the LORD, “From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it.” ⁸ The LORD said to **Satan**, “Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man who fears God and turns away from evil.” ⁹ Then **Satan** answered the LORD, “Does Job fear God for nothing? ¹⁰ Have you not put a fence around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. ¹¹ But stretch out your hand now, and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face.” ¹² The LORD said to **Satan**, “Very well, all that he has is in your power; only do not stretch out your hand against him!” So **Satan** went out from the presence of the LORD.

hassatan

- **Not 'Satan'**
 - Hebrew is always *hassatan*
 - 'ha' = 'the'
 - The Accuser, or The Adversary, is a better translation

Herodotus mentions 'the eyes of God' as a member of the Persian high court whose role is to search out disloyalty among Persian citizens.

Note: the Septuagint translates *satan* using the Greek word for 'informer.'

'Informer' = *diabolos* in Greek.

hassatan

- **Zechariah 3:1**

- At the heavenly trial of the High Priest Joshua:

3 Then he showed me the high priest Joshua standing before the angel of the LORD, and *hassatan* standing at his right hand to accuse him.

- This is not God's Adversary (as 'Satan' suggests) but the Adversary of disloyal citizens.

Deuteronomomic Justice

Mark the blameless, and behold the upright,
For there is posterity for the peaceable.
But transgressors shall be altogether destroyed;
the posterity of the wicked shall be cut off.

- Psalm 37:37

A lad I was, and now I am old,
and I have never seen a just man forsaken
and his seed seeking bread

- Psalm 37:25

Honour thy father and thy mother, as the
LORD thy God commanded thee; that thy
days may be long, and that it may go well
with thee, upon the land which the LORD
thy God giveth thee.

- Deut 5:16

Deuteronomomic Justice

- Direct linkage between behavior and blessings (posterity, prosperity)
- Two sides: positive and negative

...if you are in need, you must have sinned

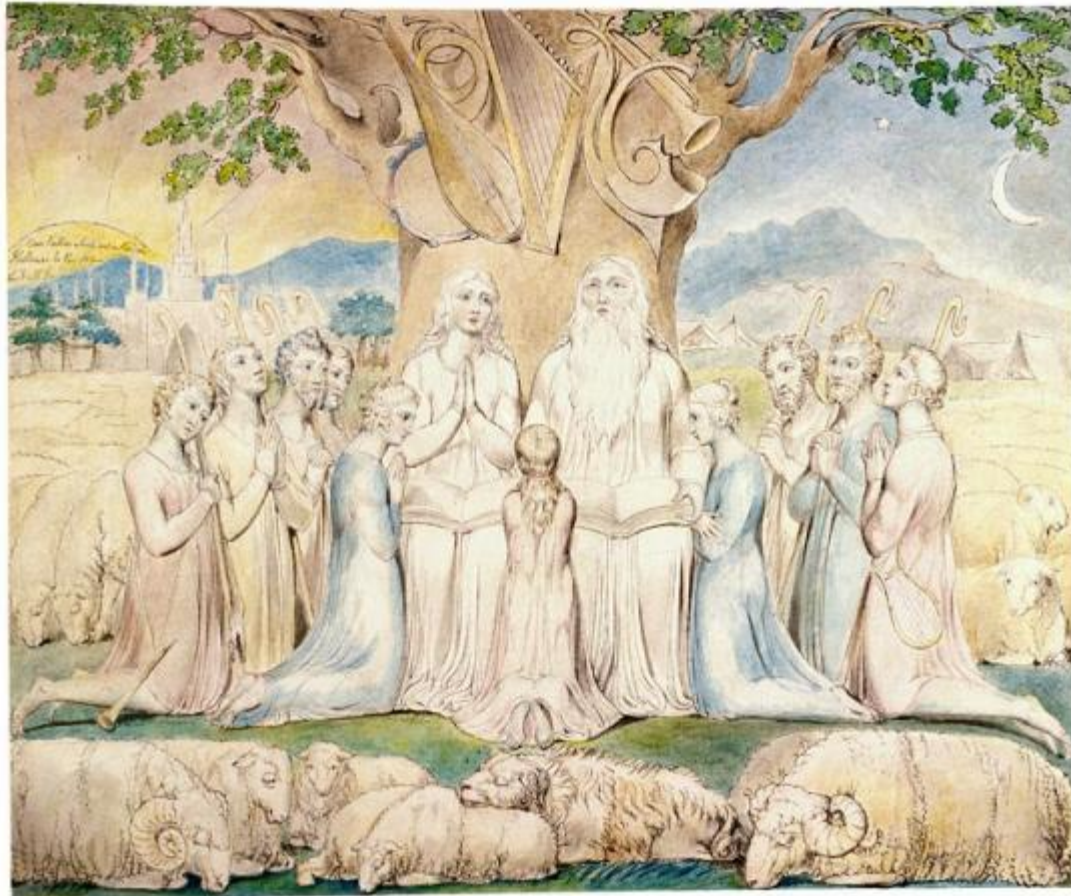
- Rewards and punishments are in this life
- Job considers only the individual level, but related is the group version: the covenant

Classic statement of reward and punishments at the national level: Deut 28 and Lev 26.



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Satan Before the Throne of God, c 1810



The Morgan Library and Museum

Job and His Family