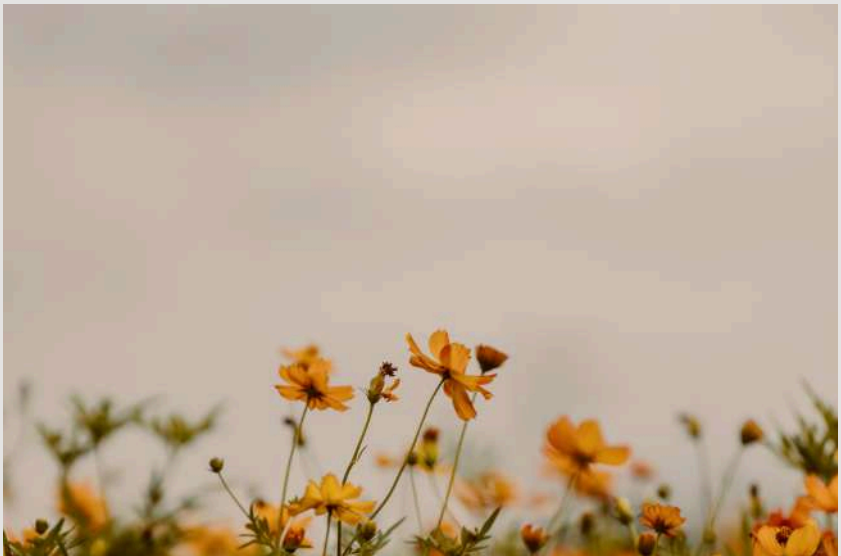
ZACHARY WILLIAMS



REDEEMED BY A REDEEMER

DIFFICULT LESSONS FROM JOB'S STORY, PART 3

As part three of this article series and the examination of difficult lessons from Job, we will now focus on Job himself. While I want to address some of the most quoted parts of Job, again I think we sometimes draw out only part of the lesson. When Job suffers and still responds well, it is far better than many of us do. So perhaps we should be more circumspect before we 'feel like Job' in our suffering. Then when Job makes a mistake and justifies himself, perhaps we should be more hesitant to claim our own innocence or righteousness in a situation. Job did a lot right, so when he did something wrong, the lesson became for us much clearer.



Through the book, we can tell that Job's initial response was at least still faithful to Adonai (Job 1:21-22, 2:9-10), even though he was in great suffering. At the end of the book, Adonai restores Job double of all that he had lost. So, what happened in between? What happened that caused Adonai to question Job (Job 40:7)? While Job's integrity was tested by his suffering, it was tested even more so when it was directly attacked by his wife and friends (Job 2:3, 2:9, 27:5, 31:6).

At first it seemed it was just a conversation, or his friends trying to make a point based on their beliefs. It eventually became a full-on argument that led to Job essentially exploding back at them. In fact, Job 25 is the shortest argument from Job's friends toward him, followed by Job's longest argument in response at Job 26-31. I believe it was because Job finally lost patience, interrupted his friend, and went on a rant to get them to shut their mouths – which they finally did (Job 32:1).



Job's friends had used their 'righteousness' to condemn Job. Job used his righteousness to defend himself. There is a big difference. Defending himself was not his mistake. Someone falsely accused has the right to defend oneself. Job's rebukes back to his friends were often more accurate than their accusations.

The mistake Job made was not defending himself against his friends, but rather justifying himself and demanding Adonai see and answer – as if somehow Adonai would not have allowed this if he had known Job's righteousness. There is a subtle shift from arguing with his friends to wanting Adonai to be present so he can make his case with Adonai. There is a shift from defending himself against false accusations to justifying himself before Adonai. He shifts from being the victim to playing the victim and demanding justice. While the change and the mistake are clear in the text, we should consider how easy it is for us to shift in the same way in difficult situations. How easy it is to be angry about a situation or our suffering and not realize that we have become angry at Adonai Himself, thinking He has been unjust toward us.

How would Job have responded differently if he had known Adonai had already vouched for Job's righteousness?

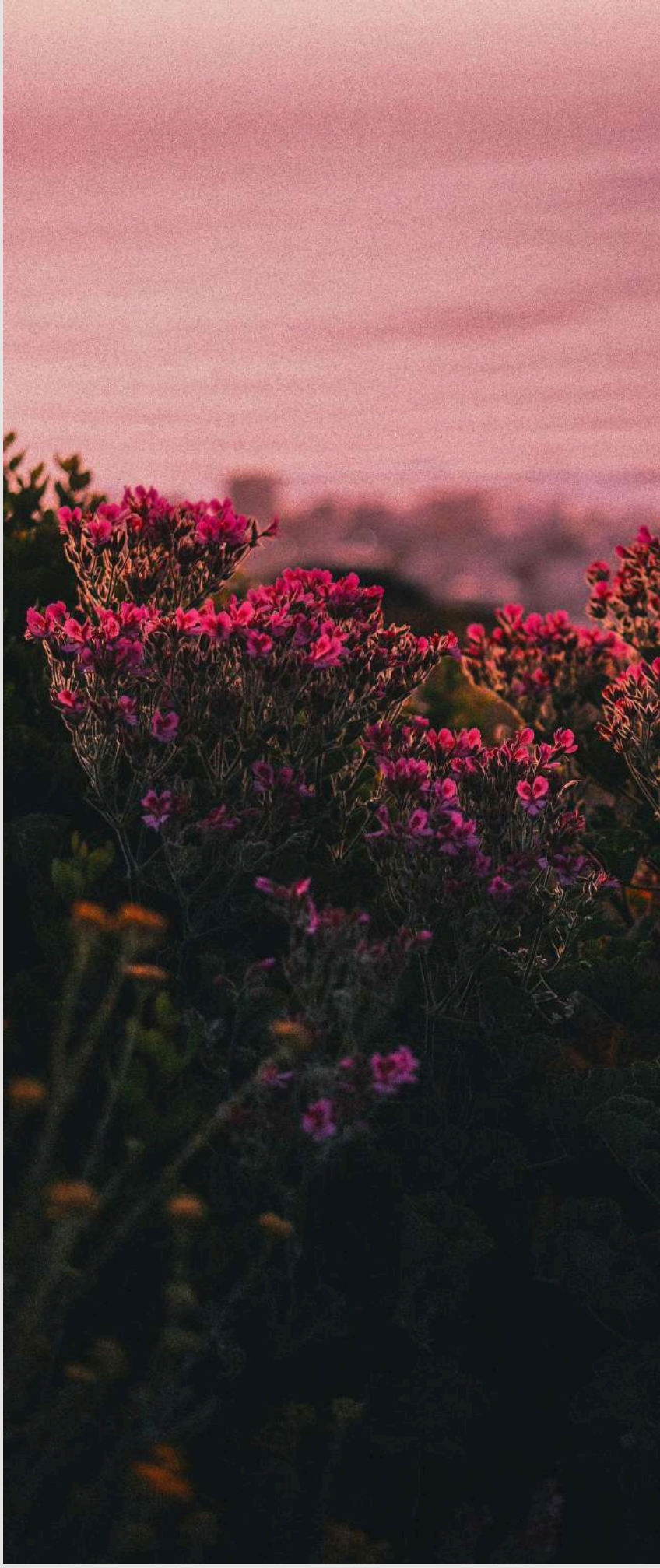
Before we get to Adonai's rebuke of Job, we need to consider a unique character that suddenly appears just before Adonai shows up. Nobody in the situation knows Adonai is coming, perhaps not even the reader the first

time you read it. This makes the statements of Elihu quite profound. He has the ‘final word' in the situation against Job; Adonai does not rebuke Elihu like he does Job, and He does not require a sacrifice of Elihu as He does of Job’s friends.

At a high level, Elihu says very similar ‘truth’ statements as Job and his friends – glorifying Adonai and acknowledging He is a God of justice. However, one key difference is that Elihu explains how Adonai responds to repentance (Job 36:5-12) – which neither Job nor his friends mentioned at all. Also, he explains to Job that he will be judged by what he is saying and doing right in front of them at that very moment (Job 34:34-37). He nails it because that is exactly what Adonai rebukes Job for just afterwards. Job and his friends, in their arguing about how and why this happened to Job, were blind to the fact that they would be judged by what they said in the argument.

The difficult lesson here is that while suffering may or may not be a judgment and consequence of our sin, we most certainly will be judged by how we respond to suffering. If Adonai showed up at the end of an argument you were in, what do you think He would say about what you said in the argument? I think most of us would be quite ashamed, even more than Job.

But Adonai does not show up at the end of most arguments, does He? I think most of the arguments are not worth His time, and He will clean up the mess on the Day of Judgment (Matthew 12:36).



He did not really have to show up at the end of this argument in Job either, so there must be a lesson in His doing so. In fact, I think it was the mercy of Adonai to show up and sort it all out. He spent a lot of time rebuking Job but essentially did not waste any time correcting Job's friends – only telling them they were wrong and needed atonement for their sins to be forgiven. When a righteous man sins and that sin becomes the focus, it can allow the wicked to hide their sins. It makes it easier for the wicked to seem justified in their accusations against the righteous even though the wicked would never stand under the same scrutiny. Job even makes that case back to his friends that if they are correct in their reasoning, then they also should be afraid (Job 19:28-29). This is another difficult lesson of Job that is similar to Yeshua's 'judge not, lest you be judged in the same way' (Matthew 7:1-2). Having the courage of our convictions means focusing on our own sins and holding ourselves more accountable than we hold others, even when we have authority to hold others accountable.

Adonai's rebuke of Job is more complete than that, though. Adonai's rebuke is not just about what Job said or did and whether it was right or wrong. Instead, His rebuke rests on who He is (the eternal one) and who Job is, a man. His rebuke is based on the idea that Job believed he had the right to make a final judgment when he was not the final judge. His rebuke shows Job that he cannot make that kind of claim without also claiming that Adonai is somehow wrong in His choices and judgments (Job 40:8).





The difficult lesson here demands that we understand the level of consequences proportional to the level of judgment we choose to make. If you do not understand the consequences or conclusions of what your judgment would mean, then do not make the judgment. Do you think Adonai is unfair, and then better understand what is fair? Do you think Adonai is no longer good because bad things have happened to you that you think you did not deserve?

While Job made that mistake, Job was not required to make a sacrifice for his own sin like what was required of Job's friends. His repentance directly to Adonai was enough in this case. Why? Well, ancient stories were often told in chiastic structures, and the answer is often not at the end, but in the middle. Job's faith was in Adonai, and Adonai was more faithful to Job than vice versa. Job knew that resurrection was in the hands of his redeemer, and he knew that he was redeemed despite his sin (Job 19:25-27). That was Job's faith, and that was why he was justified. He made a mistake, but he was also quick to repent of it once it was clearly revealed to him by Adonai Himself (Job 40:4-5). Redemption is by repentance and faith, not by righteous acts and then proving your righteousness.

The story of Job is even a powerful allegory of the entire Besorah (Gospel). A righteous man that Adonai delights in is chosen to suffer. The enemy tries to bring that man down through that suffering and temptation to sin. The man suffers loss, physical harm, and false accusations, yet does not sin as a response.

Before Adonai shows up, there is another who precedes him and teaches clear truth (Elihu is like Elijah). The righteous man is the one to obtain forgiveness for those who sinned against him and against Adonai. The hope of that righteous man lies in his resurrection (Job 19:25-27). Adonai shows up at the end and judges all men – dividing the righteous and the wicked. So in that way, Job's redemption is also our redemption.

Now I can do what I could not do in the first two articles – wrap this up nicely for you. I do not think the right lesson from Job was about how Adonai doubly restored him, and then we should expect that Adonai will restore to us in this life for all of our troubles. Instead, I think the lesson is that we have a Redeemer regardless of what happens to us in this life, and Adonai both chose to let Job suffer and chose to restore Job to prove He was that Redeemer. We should trust that He is the judge who sees and not be so quick to put ourselves in His place of judgment.

More than knowing what Adonai wants us to do, we need to know who Adonai is. Job finally understood the only way to know Adonai was directly, rather than through what others told him (Job 42:1-6). Yeshua, being the exact representation of the Father, is our redeemer and how we come to know Adonai. We are justified by faith in our Redeemer rather than our own words and deeds. And that matters far more than all the suffering we will experience in this life (Romans 8:18).



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