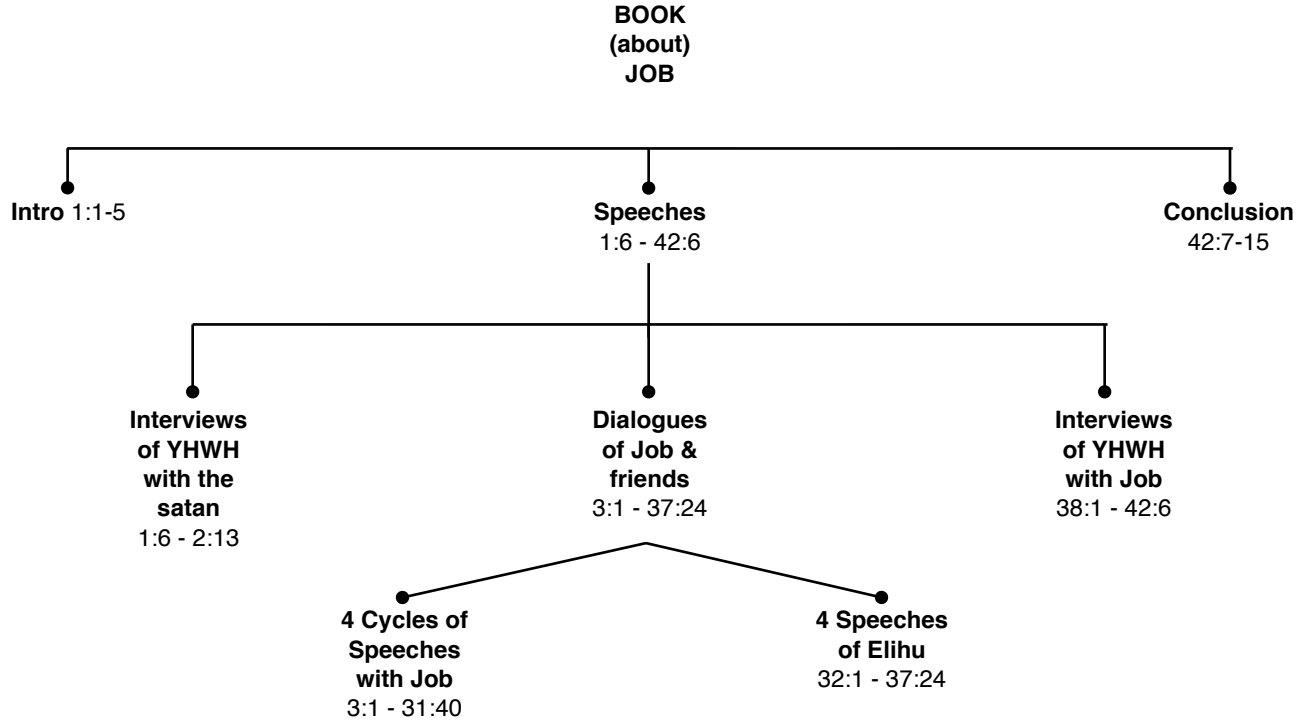


## Job - “When The Lights Go Out”

“I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you;” — Job 42:5



### “Flow Chart” for Book (About) of Job:



### I. Background Notes on Job (taken from “Getting the Big Picture” course):

#### A. “Going Backstage” — Keys to the Book of Job

1. This is a “courtroom” drama with arguments and counter-arguments.
  - a. a “criminal” case from the perspective of Job’s friends (i.e. guilt/innocence)
  - b. a “civil” case from the perspective of Job (wrongful action)
  - c. a “divine” case from the perspective of the reader
2. Understanding exactly *who* is “on trial” is crucial to this book.
  - a. It is *not* Job!
    - he is declared “blameless,” “upright” “God-fearing” and “evil-shunning” twice by God in the opening scene.
    - God describes him four times as “my servant” in the closing scene.
    - for the reader, Job is “vindicated” before the story even opens.
  - b. God is on trial and Job is merely circumstantial “evidence” in the case.
    - “Satan” is literally “*the* satan” in Hebrew (14x; “the accuser,” “the adversary” “the Prosecution”)
    - God is the one who needs to be “vindicated” in this drama

B. Getting Inside the *Audience's* Mind — The “Payback Principle”

1. **Payback Principle Illustrated:** “Remember: who that was innocent ever perished? Or where were the upright cut off? As I have seen, those who plow iniquity and sow trouble reap the same.”  
[Eliphaz the Temanite, Job 4:7-8]
2. Summarized: “The wicked suffer and the righteous prosper...*proportionally*.”
3. Not a real issue of ANE cultures because their gods were capricious and unjust.
4. A *serious* problem for Jews because of God’s sovereignty *and* His justice.
5. In the Book of Job, *everyone* subscribes to the “Payback Principle”:
  - a. **JOB** - it’s the *root* of his frustration with God and the basis of his defense.
  - b. **FRIENDS** - they are demanding that Job “repent” of his hidden sin.
  - c. **THE SATAN** - if God “blesses” the righteous with prosperity, then it’s their *greed*, not their integrity that makes them seek His blessing. They are therefore *UN*righteous!
    - If Job “confesses” sins he didn’t commit, to get his “blessings” back, Satan’s point is proved.
    - if Job curses God to His face, then *God’s* claim is false.
6. Job exonerates God by wanting exoneration for himself rather than restitution (getting his “stuff” back):
  - a. he is righteous for righteousness’ sake, *not* for the “perks”
  - b. the satan is silenced and the “sons of God” are enlightened:  
*To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things, so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.*  
Ephesians 3:8-10
7. This book *dismantles* the Payback Principle forever as an “axiom”:
  - a. the righteous sometimes suffer and the wicked sometimes prosper.
  - b. a person’s temporal circumstances do *not* validate their spiritual condition or result from it.

C. Job and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

1. From Job’s friends we learn:
    - a. God is bigger and different from even our *best* theology.
    - b. He is not axiomatic and rejects being so portrayed.
    - c. The proper initial response to the suffering of others is *silence*, not speech.
    - d. The “Payback Principle” is not mine to claim or proclaim, either for blessing or for justice.
  2. From Job we learn:
    - a. The correct question in the face of suffering is *not* “Why...?” but “Who...?”
      - is there evidence that God is wise?
      - is there evidence that God is competent?
      - is there evidence that God is benevolent?
    - b. In suffering, for the Christian the central issue is not God’s justice, but His wisdom.
  3. The “bottom line” for this book is how it all turned-out; but that is found in 42:1-6 *not* in 42:7-17!!
1. **(Q1)** It is vital to keep in mind that chapters 1-2 of Job are the “prequel” to the “Story of Job and His Friends.” The listeners to this epic tale are given inside information *that Job does not have!* Job knows nothing of these two heavenly conversations, or the satanic mastermind behind his physical misery.

2. **(Q2)** As the prequel opens *and* the tale concludes, it is *Yahweh* who declares what Job confesses—he is “blameless and upright, a man who fears Yahweh and shuns evil.” The 1:8 verse is vital because it is *Yahweh* who declares Job’s innocence *before* the story begins. In a very real sense, Job is vindicated in the minds of the hearers. That means that Job’s friends’ accusations—in fact their entire arguments—are baseless from the start.
3. **(Q4-Ps142)** We need to be reminded that a complaint poured out to God—even in bitterness—is still a prayer. A complaint poured out to others is grumbling. A complaint *not* poured out at all is a prescription for bitterness.
4. **(Q5)** The phrase, “the name of the LORD” appears 104x in our Bibles, 85 of which are in the Old Testament. Of those, nearly half are in the Psalms and the Prophets (Psalms 20x; Prophets 22x). Psalms is the cry of the heart to Yahweh, and the writings of the prophets is the cry of Yahweh to His people. In both cases, “the name of the LORD” is important; *Who He is and what He’s revealed about Himself that makes Him trustworthy.*



## “Stumbling Stones”

1. **(Q3)** We as Christians have an enormous difficulty resisting the urge or (falsely perceived) “duty” to say something “profound” to those in the midst of suffering and pain. Part of this, no doubt, is due to our obsession to have an “answer” to everything, to be able to “connect the dots” of the circumstances of our lives because we believe the meaning is found in the details. We live in a cause-and-effect world, and, having bought into that way of thinking—even without knowing it—we feel the need to “work our way *backward* from the pain to its “cause.” This is exactly what Job’s friends were doing. We do it because of our Western way of thinking. They were doing it because of the “payback principle.”

Also, even if we don’t have a clue as to the cause, we also seem to want to suggest to our suffering friend what God is “doing” in their life *through* their pain, as if we somehow knew!

2. **(Q9)** Prayer is *vital* during times of pain. We need to guard ourselves (and our group) from having a narrow understanding of prayer. Satan wants us to quit, to turn away from God in our thoughts. In short, to quit “talking” to Him altogether. This is what he was hoping Job would do (e.g. “curse you”). Satan accuses us when we talk to God angry or in despondency and fear. He seeks to convince us quite talking to God “*until you can talk to Him with respect and trust.*” Job never gave into this temptation. He never quit talking to Yahweh (i.e. praying).



## “Going Deeper”

1. **(Q4)** Have group members share their responses to this question.
2. **(Q8)** This is the “heart” of the study. It directs us to a view of suffering and pain that is counter-cultural.
3. **(Q9)** “What preventive steps can we take to build a foundation that will “hold” (better) in the face of Job-like pain?”