

Jewish Thought • Єврейська думка

MICHAEL WOGMAN Moses, Author of Job:
Moscow State University Defending the Biblical God
aleiaracan@yahoo.com in the Roman East

...пожалуй, ...perhaps
Не понимая, что в молчании — Not understanding that Your silence
Твоём — живёт не слабость: жалость. Was not weakness, but — witness.
Ася Завельская Asya Zavel'skaya

The Roman period of the East-Mediterranean world witnessed a renewed interest in theodicy. This new interest was pessimistic in its worldview; it represented the violent emotional struggle of Late Antique man against the cosmological injustice, the sudden feeling of which inundated mass conscience in the first centuries CE.¹ The Hellenistic mindset, with its promise of a philosophical ratio behind the world order, collapsed, and the new religious elite now denounced it, moving towards an irrational paradigm of existential helplessness in the face of unpredictable cosmic forces. Some absolute Good still could be sought of too inexplicable and too large a world, but it was mostly disrobed of logic, and thought to be unattainable — too distanced or too capricious. Spread of the use of magical incantations (though Hellenistic in origin) and mystical Gnosis, draped in almost nonsense-like myths, or Christian *credo quia absurdum est* — all represent different forms of a general process of so-called derationalization of the Godhead. New religious movements promulgated, to be sure, new hopes — but these hopes were irrational, and grounded in the experience of existential vulnerability.

Rabbinic Judaism figured among the main protagonists in the East-Mediterranean marketplace of hope. Not only was it engaged in polemics between different religious communities of the Eastern cities (or rhetorically imitated polemical situations in order to encourage adepts), but was also attacked (though sometimes just nominally, in line with Paul) by rival religious movements. Gnostic dualism, as evidenced in patristic writings, was anti-Judaic in its market position. As a characteristic example of Late

* Biblical quotations are given in NRSV English translation with minor changes. Talmudic translations make use of the Soncino English edition.

¹ Sergei Averintsev, *Poetika rannevizantiiskoi literatury* (Moscow: Nauka, 1977), 62ff. Jonathan W. Schofer, *Confronting Vulnerability: the Body and the Divine in Rabbinic Ethics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 19–51.

Antique religious pessimism, several Gnostic movements declared – reversing Plato’s arguments in *Timaeus* – the world was an oeuvre of a blind, ignorant or even evil creator. Biblical anthropomorphisms were one of the major proofs the “Gnostics” used in dialogue with their counterparts. Thus, the biblical God, often depicted as jealous, passionate, mutational and self-contradicting, became polemically equated with the evil usurper of the world power, not with the immutable and unimaginable Oneness.

The problem of providence and recompense was among the focal points of the struggle the Jews lead against the outer cultural world.² Not only was it a critical moment in defending the goodness, perfectness and omnipotence of the biblical God against adversaries, but also a vital existential enigma. The suffering of the righteous (צדיק ורע לו) was a question that vexed the Rabbis and their audience, no less than their Greek-speaking contemporaries (or even more, if one considers the situation of the destruction of the Temple and further persecutions). Hence, the book of Job, constituting part of the Canon, is likely to have been among the main texts for discussion in this period.

Whether *par hasard* or not, some of the main questions that seem to underlie Gnostic speculation are very similar to those articulated by biblical Job. Why do the righteous suffer and the wicked prosper? Should not God be responsible for this situation? Should God be considered omnipotent but unjust, or limited in His potency? Although we do not have explicit evidence of use of Job in Gnostic writings, the authors of the latter look bothered by the same problems addressed in Job. The Joban statement that “the Earth is given into the hands of the wicked, and He [God? – *M. W.*] covers the eyes of the judges” (Job 9:14) would fit, for instance, the “Gnostic” worldview. To interpret Job “*comme il faut*” means then, to provide a powerful response to Gnostic attacks.

Thus, a midrash quoted in the name of Rava in TB Baba Bathra 15a creates a link between Job, the tree of life, knowledge of good and evil, and the failed mission of Israelite spies in Num. 13. The midrash proposes that the problem of Job was indeed the problem of life as a whole. Reading Job was as dangerous as the ascent to Paradise, while an incorrect understanding of the book would be as fatal as the fall of Adam or the failure of the spies.

But what message could one draw from that ambiguous and controversial book? Were not Job’s questions too harsh, and Lord’s answers too abstract? Any positive justification of God would have been reminiscent of the rejected opinions of Job’s friends and thus unsatisfactory, while abstention from any explicit answer would seem quite feeble a position in the dispute. In the context of the Gnostic challenge, the book of Job was very dangerous for the communal creed. It had to be reinterpreted *ad majorem Dei gloriam* to reassure the skeptical Late Antique reader.

² For a broader context see classic Arthur Marmorstein, *The Doctrine of Merits in Old Rabbinic Literature* (London: Oxford University Press, 1920), and recent Yakov Elman, “The Suffering of the Righteous in Palestinian and Babylonian Sources,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 80, no. 3/4 (1990): 315–339; Yakov Elman, “Righteousness as Its Own Reward,” *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 57 (1990–1991): 35–67.

Biblical science has no means to grasp with certainty what could have been the original intentions of the author of Job.³ Existentialist encounters with an immoral and absurd world or Levinasian dialogue beyond discourse fit well with the biblical text; however, both remain too much 20th-century-based answers to be fully credited. Biblical scholars must acknowledge that we cannot disclose the book's meaning just as we cannot (and possibly should not) understand God's ways or explain suffering as such. My main purpose here is to demonstrate strategic issues concerning the problem of useless suffering that appear to be implied by the rabbinic attribution of Job to Moses.

So, I will try to reinvestigate rabbinic ideas on Job in Late Antique context, focusing on the book's attribution to Moses. As we shall see, this attribution and its outcomes are of significance for our understanding of the rabbinic worldview and the problem of theodicy in the ancient world.

I. Moses, author of Job

Several texts belonging to the Ketuvim corpus are traditionally considered pseudo-graphic (which may reflect an understanding of the very *name* of the corpus as *literary works of biblical individuals*). Some of them (notably some Psalms and the Song of Songs) are superscripted in the M text, more are so in the LXX, while others derive their attribution from post-biblical traditions (often shared by Jews and Christians, and thus pointing to pre-Origenic, if not pre-Christian, origins). Nor is Mosaic attribution unique – Job shares it with Psalm 90 according to the M, and with additional Psalms according to unwritten tradition (needless to say, Mosaic authorship of the Torah is extra-biblical as well).

In some cases, we may suggest that such superscriptions served to preserve the authority of the books, thus giving them the opportunity to escape concealment or marginalization and, in consequence, forgetting. Still, Ecclesiastes or Song of Songs, despite their attributed Solomonic origins, appears to remain under the danger of de-canonization as late as in Yavheh times. Job, strangely enough, is, in our documents, never subject to dispute, although its highly controversial character is openly admitted to by the Jews and by some of the Church Fathers (esp. Theodore Mopsuensis, cf. PG 66, col. 697–698). It is possible that it was Mosaic attribution of Job that, being very authoritative and equating Job with the most fundamental books of the canon, saved it from accusation. In any case, Mosaic attribution of Job seems to be a firm and rarely challenged tradition, and its final fixation in TB B. B. 15a does not present explicit counterarguments to it (though some texts, esp. use of Job 11:9 in Erub. 21a may presuppose an idea of Joban authorship).

Rabbinic use of other Ketuvim shows that the Rabbis (though fully occupied with the collective oeuvre of Oral Torah). Were however well acquainted with the idea of individual authorship and made excellent use of the idea. Introductions to midrashic

³ See Alan Cooper, "The Sense of the Book of Job," *Prooftexts* 17, no. 3 (1997): 227–244.

collections on Song of Songs and others try to construct some biographical framework, within which a biblical author could create it. For instance, Solomon's writing of the books attributed to him is associated with his educational labor in expounding the Torah to the people (Song of Sol. R. 1:7; 1:8). Individual authorship is shown to be secondary to collective oral study, but, simultaneously, such midrashic reasoning implies a philological interest in personal circumstances behind individual books (i.e., the search for connection between a biblical hero's life and the works ascribed to his authority). The same mechanism is used in midrashic exposition of Psalms, where archaic hyperbolae are ironically presented as phantasmagoric life-events of David (that should possibly be understood as a sarcastic stance towards overly high styled poetry).

Having taken all this into consideration, we must look for a biographical reason for attributing Job to Moses as well. There are, of course, several possible causes for such an ascription, including the longevity of Job (presupposing patriarchal antiquity), allusions to Genesis' ethnogenealogy in naming the protagonists (especially Eliphaz ha-Teimani, cf. Gen. 36:11),⁴ etc. But all that is still not sufficient as biographical data connecting Moses with the book of Job. Therefore, I argue that the main point of connection between Job and Moses was found in their intimate contact with the Godhead, as expressed in Job's final admonition:

I had only heard of Thee, but now my eye sees Thee (42:5).

Who but Moses, the only one of the prophets who had spoken to God "face to face" and "mouth to mouth" (Exod. 33:11, Deut. 34:10 and Num. 12:8) could have written such words? And even more — is not the opposition between mediated and intimate knowledge of God the same in both cases? Moses' intimate knowledge opposes the distance of the prophets and Job's knowledge — [before] versus *now*?

Subsequently, I will try to underscore this connection by rabbinic and pre-rabbinic testimonies, which will finally allow me to summarize its general implications for rabbinic thought.

2. "Job midrash" in TB Baba Bathra

Let us first analyze the proceeding of the discussion of Mosaic authorship and the whole section on Job (forthwith "Job midrash") in TB B. B. 14b–16b, which is consistent with a parallel passage in TJ Sot. 25a–26b and, to a lesser degree, with Gen. R. 49. This collection of *dicta* is our main source on official rabbinic answers to the book. Besides, we have mention of Job in the *midrashim* — and some later material as well, collected by Werheimer into a hypothetic "Midrash Iyov".⁵ Most of those texts represent

⁴ Annette Y. Reed, "Job as Jobab: The Interpretation of Job in LXX Job 42:17b–e," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 120, no. 1 (2001): 41–42.

⁵ On "Midrash Iyov" see Jason Kalman, "With Friends Like These: Turning Points in the Jewish Exegesis of the Biblical Book of Job" (PhD diss., McGill University, 2005), 46–121; Jason Kalman, "Righteousness Restored: The Place of Midrash Iyov in the History of the Jewish Exegesis of the Biblical Book of Job," *Old Testament Essays* 19/1 (2006): 77–100.

no innovation for scholarship;⁶ however, I feel it necessary to provide an overview of them in a glance, in order to re-systematize them *sub specie* within mosaic authorship and theodicy.

The Talmudic passage dealing with the dating of “historical” Job is constructed as follows:

- (a) Moses wrote Job
- I. When did Job live?
 - (b) Job lived in the times of Moses, comp. “efo” in Job 19:23 to “efo” in Exod. 33:16 (cf. Deut. 33:21)
 - (b1) why not Abraham, Isaac or Joseph? (discussion on “efo” in Gen. 27:33, 43:11, 37:16)
 - (c) Rabbah: Job lived in the time of the Spies (comp. Job 1:1 to Num. 13:20; discussion)
 - (d) Job never lived and is just a parable (discussion)
 - (e) R. Johanan and R. Eleazar: Job lived at the end of Babylonian exile
 - (e1) why not during the Egyptian exile (discussion on a *baraita*)
 - (e2.1) was Job not a heathen prophet? (*baraita* and its refutation)
 - (e2.2.) Job was a heathen prophet and did not uphold his integrity when tested (one additional *baraita*)
 - (e2.2a–e2.2e) five different *baraitot*, dating Job to pre-Davidic, Persian, Solomonic, Babylonian and Patriarchal epochs
 - (f) R. Johanan: Job lived in the epoch of lewdness
 - (g) R. Johanan: Job lived in the epoch of judging the judges
- II. Overview of the book.
 - (h) Exegetical midrash on Job by Rava
 - (h1) on 1:6–7; 9–10; 13–14, presenting Job as an exceedingly simply as a heathen, and a contemporary with (and rival to) Abraham
 - (h1.2) R. Johanan: Job was superior to Abraham
 - (h2) midrashic expansion on 2:10 (using 9:24; 10:7); 7:9; 9:17 (using God’s speech in 34ff), presenting Job as a blasphemer
 - (h3) on 40:13 (Job’s daughters)

In this structure, the late dating of “historical” Job in (e) follows the denial of historicity in (d) and so does not necessary contradict Mosaic authorship. The main purpose of (e), it seems then, is to provide an answer to the implicit question “what could be the moral of such a parable?”

— Job is a parable =>

⁶ For previous investigation and bibliography see Kaufman Kohler, “The Testament of Job: An Essene Midrash on the Book of Job, Reedited and Translated with Introductory and Exegetical Notes,” in *Semitic Studies in Memory of A. Kohut*, ed. George A. Kohut (Berlin: S. Calvary & co., 1897), 264–338; Anthony T. Hansom, “Job in Early Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism,” *Church Quarterly* 2 (1969): 147–151; Judith R. Baskin, *The Pharaoh’s Counselors: Job, Jethro and Balaam in Rabbinic and Patristic Tradition*. Brown Judaic Studies 47 (Chico, California: Scholars Press, 1983); Kalman, *Friends*, 1–23, 24–31.

- Job's restitution points at national restitution in Persian times
- It points as well at national restitution in the time of Exodus =>
- [so Job as parable represents Jewish people and its calamities]

Still, *Job-was-a-parable* is, of course, not the only opinion, since at least (b), (c) and (h) suggest that Job really existed. Thus, the structure of *Job midrash* interweaves different conceptions about Job (with variants of dating from Patriarchal to Persian period). Such a spectrum of conceptions and dates should possibly lead us to the following understanding of the whole of the passage:

- [Job is a parable relevant for any epoch, since it presents the moral problem of useless suffering].⁷

It seems probable too, that (f) and (g) point (more or less directly) to the present situation of its presumable authors (namely III CE).

We see, then, that the *Job midrash* in Baba Bathra is a heterogeneous composition including different types of reaction to the book. These reactions are presented without explicit logical order (but follow the general plot of the book: Origins of Job – Satan and Job – Job's suffering – Job's blasphemy – God's response – Job's daughters). Let us determine each of the reactions to the book and trace their ideological meanings and consequences.

- i. Job was a heathen prophet in ancestral times (e2.1–e.2.2; h2).
 - (a) So he suffered just because he was not Jewish
 - (b) Or: So he proved himself not stable in his integrity (so his chastisement discovered his true nature)
 - (c) Or: Job's sufferings were in fact well deserved

Understanding Job as a heathen (probably implied by the author of biblical book) is renowned as one of the most characteristic of rabbinic views⁸ and finds further support elsewhere. An amoraic *midrash* (quoted in TB Sanh. 106a, Sot. 11a) even portrays him as one of the counselors of Pharaoh in his anti-Jewish campaign.⁹ Such an interpretation thoroughly justifies God, not Job, in the eyes of the readers: Job was fairly paid for his deeds – at least, for his acting not in favor of the Jews.

In B. B. 15a, the same connection between Job's origin and fate is drawn even further: Job suffers *because* he is heathen (opinion 1A), as implied by the commentary on Job 1:6–7 in the (h1) section. An anonymous *darshan* expands Satan's words to "I have traversed the whole world [*and found none so faithful as Thy servant Abraham*]." God's recommendation to take notice of Job in response, then, suggests sacrificing Job for the sake of Abraham.

Rabbinic exegesis here and elsewhere does feature Job and Abraham as rivals in righteousness (pro-Joban *dicta* amplify well this concurrence):

⁷ It is even more evident in the PT, where chronological order is stricter.

⁸ Noticed as early as in Kohler, "Testament," 270–271.

⁹ Baskin, *Counselors*, 15ff.

Said R. Johanan: Greater praise is accorded to Job than to Abraham. For of Abraham it is written, **for now I know that thou fearest God** (Gen. 22:12), whereas of Job it is written, **that man was perfect and upright and one that feared God and eschewed evil** (Job 1:1) (B. B. 15b);

Rav said: ... Job refrained from looking at other men's wives. Abraham did not even look at his own! (B. B. 16a) [bold face mine. — *M. W.*]

It seems also to be suggested in M. Sot. 5:5, ARN (version A) 7,¹⁰ and, especially, in TB Sanh. 89b, where Satan addresses Abraham with the words of Eliphaz from Job 4:2–6.¹¹ In many cases the requirements Job ought to fulfill seem to be intentionally made unbearable in order to stress God's (and the darshan's) unmotivated personal disfavor of Job.

The same rivalry is expressed in a counter-story in the name of R. Lewy (15b), who suggests the opposite: Satan feared God would abandon Abraham for the sake of Job, so he tried to tempt the latter in order to disqualify him. Both stories, R. Lewy's and the anonymous one, derive from similar exegetical responses to Job 1:6, seeking explanation of Satan's purpose in "visiting the whole earth." The same problem is to be found behind a *dictum* by John Chrysostom, according to which Satan noticed Job from the very beginning, but did not mention him out of jealousy (sic!) of his righteousness (Commentary in Job 2:1). What is a competition between the evil spirit and humanity in John turns in the *midrash* to be a struggle between Israel and the Heathen. Job's suffering is, then, justified not by some misdeed, but by historical necessity and the primeval chosen status of Jewish people. For those who held this point the rules were different for Jews and the *nations*. The supreme justice of God existed indeed, though mostly not in moral recompense of individuals, but in an intimate relation to Israel. Whether fair or not, God preferred Abraham to everyone else, and this would be the most profound historical justice. R. Lewy's version highlights the subjective character of divine election, rhetorically suggesting God could indeed fall in love with Job despite His own plans.

National revanchism of this position is in other versions supplied with ethical reasons (opinions 1B, Job did not keep faithfulness when tried and 1C *Job was fairly punished for his deeds*). For example, a baraita cited at (e2.2) unifies both opinions:

There was a certain pious man among the heathen named Job, but he [thought, he. — *Soncino*] came into this world only to receive his reward, and when the Holy One, blessed be He, brought chastisements upon him, he began to curse and blaspheme, so the Holy One, blessed be He, doubled his reward in this world so as to expel him from the world to come.¹²

¹⁰ Further examples in Kalman, "Righteousness," 87–91.

¹¹ See esp. Kohler, "Testament," 274–275; Joanna Weinberg, "Job Versus Abraham: The Quest for the Perfect God-Fearer in Rabbinic Tradition," in *The Book of Job: Proceedings of the 42nd Colloquium Biblicum Lovaniense*, ed. Wim Beuken (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1994), 29. Especially important is the link between Job and Gen. 18:23ff in Gen. Rabbah 49:9 (cf. Elman, "Suffering," 329).

¹² See Kohler, "Testament," 271.

On one side, Job is presented here as a false pietist, whose faith was only theoretical, if not hypocritical (also in Tanh. Vayishlah 8:8 and elsewhere¹³). It is noteworthy that Ambrose of Milan, speaking of Job, uses almost the same wording for the opposite purpose: “just man blesses God when he suffers, the sinner only when he is abounding in riches” (PL. 15, col. 1397).

Moreover, within the same baraita Job is also depicted as a true heir of Esau in holding the idea of immediate worldly recompense (cf. Rava’s dictum in TB Shab. 61b). Surprising as it seems, this reading fits the biblical text as well as the opposite one. If most Christian authors used their zeal to embellish Job and provide a pious interpretation of his words and deeds, numerous rabbinic teachers did their best to denigrate him.¹⁴ According to them, Job either erroneously competed in righteousness with Abraham, or accomplished charity by means of violence (TB B. B. 16a), or boasted etc.¹⁵ Even the verse “in all that he did not sin with his lips” (2:10), crucial for the patient Job tradition, was reinterpreted as “by his lips he did not, but in his heart he did” (B. B. 16a). Such a reading allowed this rabbi to solve the general problem of Job: God was indeed upright in both choosing Abraham (who was exceeding in piety) and in torturing Job (who was a hypocrite, a boaster or a prideful man). Such a radical defense of God eliminated all biblical pathos: the story of Job was taken to be about a false holy man and his fair punishment (and, finally, Job’s repentance and divine pardon). God was depicted as ultimately upright, while man as ultimately faulty and personally responsible for all the calamities that befall him. Within this position there was no useless suffering at all.

Both accusations (*Job couldn’t bear the temptation* and *Job was not perfect at all*) derive from the speeches of Jobs’ friends (e.g., 4:2–5). The rabbis, then, took (despite 42:7) the side of the friends against Job! Still, this does not necessarily mean they attached to Job some concrete teaching, which they would deny. On the contrary, Job’s speeches are possibly taken as expressions of despair (“without *da’at*,” knowledge, denoting as well “out of [his] mind,” B. B. 16a). Job was not a heretic – he was rather too weak a man to sustain the trial. His reaction proved he was not the perfect sage he pretended to be, and it is thus that he merited his punishment.

It looks quite plausible, as recently argued by Seow, that this group of interpretations was a riposte to Christian appropriation of Job.¹⁶ Most Church Fathers customarily underscored the pagan origins of Job as a symbol of non-Jewish piety; they praised Job as their precursor in a perfect life outside bodily Israel. So the *Job was a heathen*

¹³ Kalman, “Righteousness,” 91.

¹⁴ Hansom, “Job,” 150–151; Judith R. Baskin, “Job as Moral Exemplar in Ambrose,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 35, no. 3 (1981): 116–117.

¹⁵ See Kalman, “Righteousness,” 91.

¹⁶ Choon L. Seow, “Reflections on the History of Consequences: the case of Job,” in *Method Matters. Essays on the Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in honor of David L. Petersen*, eds. Joel M. LeMon, Kent H. Richards (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 575–577; Baskin, *Counselors*, 21–25; Kalman, *Friends*, 130–150 accentuates direct contact with Eastern Christianity in Babylonia.

sage and was found not integral in his righteousness motif could be an excellent response to Christian pretensions. There were some pious Christians, implied the Rabbis, but in the case of a trial they would show themselves unworthy. God's election of Israel in this opinion was justly based on Israel's extraordinary patience, while Christian claims were thoroughly false. God was just, but the Christians were not.

The anti-Christian context behind this imagery of the impatient Job and his upright friends finds further support in the fact that Christian interpreters identified Job's friends with Jews (typologically linking it to the priests' condemnation of Jesus).¹⁷ The Christian model is, then, consistently reversed: Jewish commentators seem to accept identification with the friends in order to show Job's fault (thus identifying Job with Christ/Christians in line with patristic interpretation). In fact, the Rabbis (or at least some of them) were not of necessity at ease with Job's friends' behavior (e.g. "one must not speak to [his neighbor] as Job's companions spoke to him..." TB B. M. 58b on Job 4:6);¹⁸ but in the midst of controversy with the Christians it was quite convenient for them to recall that Job was not a prince of a man, too.

Moreover, this attempt to denigrate Job in order to justify Divine order is discrepant with what Y. Elman shows to be the theological innovation of the Babylonian amora'im; namely, the doubt as to linear connection between sin and suffering. Furthermore, it seems, the anti-Joban tendency is adhered to here (with the notable exception of R. Johanan ben Zaqai in M. Sot. 5:5) at the same editorial layer and even possibly under the same authority that brought suspicion of any direct worldly reward.¹⁹ If, then, Elman's reconstruction is mainly true, the *Job did not keep steadfast* motif was mainly rhetorical, and was intended to refute religious opponents rather than to address more fundamentally the problem of human suffering.

A polemical tendency of the same kind behind the rabbinic emphasis on Job's denial of resurrection (TB B. B. 16a, Rava's commentary on Job 7:9 (h2), cf. (e2.2)) seemed probable to Kohler, but subsequently doubted by Hansom.²⁰ Still, one should keep in mind that Job was exceedingly important as a scriptural basis for Hellenistic and Christian doctrines of resurrection, and probably none other than 19:25–27 gave birth both to resurrected Job in LXX Job 42:17ff and the *Testament of Job*. In other words, it was often seen in Hellenistic Jewish and Christian milieus as *the* very passage (and, thus, possibly, the very book) about resurrection.²¹ Job's friends, on the contrary, never make similar statements either in MT or in LXX (and thus resembled once more the Jews of Christian polemics, cf. Gregory the Great, *Moralia*, Praefatio 14). Since the

¹⁷ Michael Parmentier, "Job the Rebel: From the Rabbis to Church Fathers," in *Saints and Role Models in Judaism and Christianity*, eds. Marcel J. H. M. Poorthuis and Joshua J. Schwartz (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 237–241; Seow, "Reflections," 575.

¹⁸ See also Hansom, "Job," 150.

¹⁹ Elman, "Righteousness" (note dubious tannaitic dating of "Job the wicked" motif on p. 316).

²⁰ Kohler, "Testament," 271; Hansom, "Job," 150; reconsideration in Kalman, *Friends*, 132–135.

²¹ Cf. James K. Zink, "Impatient Job: An Interpretation of Job 19:25–27," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 84, no. 2 (1965): 147–148.

belief in resurrection was a shared one for Jews and Christians, the goal of the rabbis, then, ought to refuse the rival of any right to what he pretended to be his own: the life to come. The *Job denied resurrection* motif expresses thus not only the notion that the Christians based their hopes on as thoroughly non-authoritative and vain as a source, but furthermore it implies polemically that there was no life to come for Job's presumed adepts.

The analysis of the polemics in Talmudic *dicta* concerning *Job the heathen* and *Job the hypocrite* motifs demonstrates to us that they were hardly intended to explore fully the meaning of the book or the problem of suffering. They rather restrained from discussing overtly such ideologically complex and actual question face Christian challenges. The problem of suffering could indeed be of interest for them, as shown by Y. Elman (and as evident from the opinion (1A)),²² – yet, it was neither the problem of the righteous heathen, nor a theme to discuss with them.

2. Job was indeed righteous

- (a) [but felt in despair while tried] => 1(c)
- (b) And is a just symbol of Jewish people
- (c) And his sufferings were undeserved
- (d) And he represents a general model of the suffering of the righteous

Job, of course, had rabbinic advocates, too. The (e) baraita ascribed to R. Johanan and R. Eliezer openly states that Job was a Jew (and even a rabbi),²³ while at least (c) and (h1) have no doubt about his extreme piety. Not all the proponents of the *righteous Job* motif concretize their view of his origins or historicity, so that both the *Job is a parable* and the *Job was a heathen in the time of Abraham* conceptions could be applied to most of the versions. What all the versions of the motif seem to imply is the understanding of Job as a paradigmatic innocent sufferer, representing the tragic character of existence. Identifying himself with an extremely righteous, but extremely suffering biblical man, the antique reader felt some relief, perhaps acknowledging his own sins, or looking forward for an ultimate answer and salvation on the part of his God, or just empathically experiencing the tremendous unjustness of the universe.

In some cases, certainly, the very righteousness of Job was marginalized in favor of his suffering. Even if fair, the trial was hard. This position is evident, for example, in the analogy of Job's fate with historical calamities of Jewish people (suggested above on the base of (d) – (g)): the lament over the destruction of the Temple was not diminished by the fact it was due to sin. The depth of the tragedy overwhelmed its potential deservedness. Thus, in 4 Ezra the seer exclaims “Are the deeds of Babylon better than those of Zion? Or has another nation known thee besides Israel? Or what tribes have so believed

²² Yet, this trend in reading Job does to some extent demonstrate that amoraic openness to the problem of suffering could be lesser or less consistent, than Elman supposes.

²³ What could be, another kind of answer to Christian appropriation, Baskin, *Counselors*, 22–25, – but could also be some kind of identity with the sufferer.

thy covenants as these tribes of Jacob? Yet their reward has not appeared and their labor has borne no fruit” (2 Ezra 3:31–33, trans. Charlesworth) in full accord with Job (see further Joban rhetorics 2 Ezra 4:5–10, 4:23–26). Personal association with Job is also clear from numerous allusions to the book in Qumran hymns.²⁴

In Baba Bathra it is R. Johanan who advocates for Job, though some others support him, of course, as shown by M. Sot. 5:5 (and TB *ad loc.*, whether Job served God of fear or of love) and, probably, by the material assembled in Werheimer’s Midrash Iyov. Rabbinic presentation of R. Johanan is marked here and elsewhere by a tragic worldview:

... **although thou movedst me against him to destroy him without cause (Job 2:3)**. Said R. Johanan: Were it not expressly stated in the Scripture, we would not dare to say it. [God is made to appear] like a man who allows himself to be persuaded against his better judgment.

A harsher version of these *logia* (and thus probably a less censured one) appears in TB Hag. 5a:

R. Johanan, when he came to the [following] verse, wept: **although thou move me against him to destroy him without cause**. A slave whose Master, when they incite him, yields, is there any help for him?

Still, even the censured version presupposes that since it is indeed written in Scripture, we can dare to doubt the reasonability of human suffering!

It is clear then that R. Johanan drew a parallel between contemporary injustice, exhibited in the rule of Rome and persecution (or at least submission) of the Jews and the story of Job. This position envisages that the tragedy of the nation was a cosmic catastrophe, not fair judgment. Life was indeed full of bitter and innocent suffering – this time due to the extreme greatness of God. The Sovereign of the Universe had the full right to tempt and punish, mortify and revive His subjects without any reason, just at His caprice, as a master had the right over a slave. One could only do his work, mourn and pray, hoping for some grace to come one day, or in the future world. R. Johanan and the other rabbis who adopted this view read Job as the biblical indication of the tragic and woeful essence of being – and some legitimization of it. Every man was subject to suffering and each one could identify himself with Job. In the case of R. Johanan, this analogy is underscored, since the latter was said to have lost ten children. Some rabbis held there were no sufferings without sin, but the opposite view existed, too (cf. TB Shab. 55a–b).

The identification of the sufferer with Job is prominent in Christian literature. Thus, Ambrose, being besieged with his congregation in his church in Milan in 386 and waiting for a massacre, preached: “In each of you Job lives again, in each the patience and valor of that saint has shone forth again.”²⁵ But if Ambrose and his coreligionists

²⁴ Heidi M. Szpek, “On the Influence of Job on Jewish Hellenistic Literature,” in *Seeking out the Wisdom of the Ancients*, eds. Ronald L. Troxel et al. (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 360–362.

²⁵ Baskin, “Job,” 228.

generally appreciated suffering as way to holiness, R. Johanan went further.²⁶ We read that he denied the death of [his] children representing the “purification of sins” or “suffering from [God’s] love” (TB Shab. 5b) and, in a famous *aggadah*, refused “suffering and its recompense” (ibid.; comp. ARN A 14). It suggests that he considered suffering unjust as such (though inevitable), as adumbrated powerfully by Emmanuel Levinas.²⁷

It is possible that position two (Job was indeed righteous) represents a *tannaitic* reading; still, its inclusion here supports the assumption that it persisted (and then found its way into the hypothetical “Midrash Iyov” and Gaonic literature).

3. The question is complex
 - (a) Some say Job was righteous
 - (b) Some say he was not
 - (c) There is no way to know it for sure about anybody except oneself

The structure of the *midrashic* exposition of the book in (h1–h3) may support the *Job did not keep his integrity* motif, since all the positive estimations of Job are concentrated in (h1), i.e. the period before the trial, thus compositionally implying Job’s fall when tempted. The only rabbinic references to Job’s exceeding patience or charity-works during his torment are found in Wertheimer and Addition B to ARN (version A) and thus may well go back to some versions of the Hellenistic *Testament of Job*, and not to a rabbinic *midrash*.²⁸

Still, the fact that Talmudic redactors preserved the opposite position too, and the rather chaotic incorporation of the two in Baba Bathra, may also suggest the editor’s inclination to keep some ambiguity about the reading of Job. It should probably lead the reader to the conclusion that there was no way to decide definitely whether Job had been upright or not; in the end, only the sufferer himself can know it for sure.

This idea of the impossibility of any external judgment seems, for example, to underlie the discussion in TB Ber. 5a that precedes R. Johanan’s refusal of suffering:

Rava (some say, R. Hisda) says: If a man sees that painful sufferings visit him, let him examine his conduct. ... If he examines and finds nothing, let him attribute it to the neglect of the study of the Torah. ... If he did attribute it, and still did not find, let him be sure that these are chastenings of love.

Only the man himself – not his friends, nor the readers – have the opportunity to decide what the real reason or what his real misfortune is. Still, as shown next by R. Johanan’s precedent, he has also the right not to find any reason for his suffering or to de-

²⁶ The soteriological notion of [Job’s] suffering was by no means unknown to the Rabbis. See TB Kidd. 40b on Job 8:7: “the Holy One, blessed be He, brings suffering upon the righteous in this world, in order that they may inherit the future world”; comp. various dicta on Job 8:7 in TJ Sot. 25a–b.

²⁷ See philosophical discussion in Emmanuel Levinas, “Souffrance Inutile,” in idem, *Entre-nous. Essais sur le penser-à-l’autre* (Paris: Grasset, 1991), 67ff.

²⁸ Kalman, “Righteousness,” 93 points at similar cases of possible Hellenistic background.

clare in unjust. Ultimately, even if God could be right in punishing Job, it did not completely explain the actual experience of the Talmudic readers.

So some ambiguity was still preserved and the reader was left on his own to decide whether to acknowledge his sins or just bow the head facing the inscrutable ways of God.

3. Moses and Useless Suffering

What, then, about the Mosaic authorship of Job? None of those three types of position allows any direct connection with Moses. It is probable, then, that the Mosaic ascription reflected some other strategy of reading Job, which was known to the rabbis, but remained implicitly between the lines. In order to grasp its supposed implications, I shall return to the analysis of the attributing passages (a–b) first, and then continue by examining Job-motifs in the rabbinic presentation of Moses (to be followed by demonstrating earlier allusions to similar concepts).

The verse Ex. 33:16, quoted to prove Mosaic authorship, connects Job with Moses by a word play on Job 19:23–23, but is hardly incidental:

O then (efo) that my words were written down!
O that they were inscribed in a book!
O that with an iron pen and with lead
they were engraved on a rock forever!

is juxtaposed to

For how shall it be known then (efo) that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people, unless Thou go with us?

The biblical situation it alludes to is important for us at two major points. First, it follows (or makes part of) the scene of Moses' argument with God (Ex. 32:11–14, 33:12ff) providing some distant but sensible parallel to the story of Job;²⁹ second, it precedes (or makes part of) the most explicit theophanic passage of the Torah (Ex. 33:19 – 34:30).³⁰ In what precedes, Moses refuses to accept divine punishment and risks his life to defend the people; in what follows he seeks for understanding God's way and seeing God's glory. The *now* ("efo") of the quoted verse, then, marks the precise moment when salvation seems to be granted, but not effectuated yet, and still needs direct divine intervention to be proved and realized.

The verses 33:13 and 33:18, surrounding the quoted one, are of specific relevance here:

Now if I have found favor in Your sight, show me Your ways, so that I may know you and find favor in Your sight.

... Show me Your glory, I pray.

²⁹ Cf. the case of Abraham (Gen.18:23).

³⁰ Comp. Job 19:25–27.

Rabbinic authors take it to denote (once more with a Johananic attribution) that Moses was disturbed by the tragic character of existence and asked for its justification:

R. Johanan further said in the name of R. Jossi: Three things did Moses ask of the Holy One, blessed be He, and they were granted to him. ... He asked that He should show him the ways of the Holy One, blessed be He, and it was granted to him. For it is said: **Show me now Thy ways** (Ex. 33:13). [It means that] Moses said before Him:

– Lord of the Universe, why is it that some righteous men prosper and others are in adversity, some wicked men prosper and others are in adversity?
(TB Ber. 7a)

Here and in many parallel texts, the inquiry of Moses, as we can see, was understood by (at least some) rabbis to be the same as Job's; viz. a highly emotional demand for redemption in a world full of injustice.

Moreover, the same ambiguity we have remarked in the final structure of Baba Bathra is to be found in God's answer to Moses. The rabbis portray God first presenting the idea of hereditary sin, then of personal responsibility for one's fate; rabbinic discussion that shows the unsatisfactory character of both responses is finally followed by a denial of God's answer at all:

R. Meir said: only two [of the three requests] were granted to Moses, and one was not granted to him. For it is said: **And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious** (Ex. 33:19), – i.e. even he may not deserve it, – **And I will show mercy on whom I will show mercy** (*ibid.*), – i.e. even he may not deserve it.

This structure implies that a discursive answer to the problem of suffering could not be given even by God and even to Moses.

The only result that Moses achieved in such an interpretation of Ex. 33, was his personal meeting with the Godhead (if any), as the text runs:

And He said, Thou canst not see My face (Ex. 33:20). A Tanna taught in the name of r. Joshua b. Korhah:

The Holy One, said thus to Moses: When I wanted, you did not want now that you want, I do not want.

This is in opposition to r. Samuel b. Nahmani in the name of r. Jonathan. For r. Samuel b. Nahmani said in the name of r. Jonathan: As a reward of three [pious acts] Moses was privileged to obtain three [favours]. ... In reward of "To look upon God," he obtained "The similitude of the Lord doth he behold."

And I will take away My hand, and thou shalt see My back (Ex. 33:23). – R. Hama b. Bizana said in the name of r. Shimon the Pious: This teaches us that the Holy One, blessed be He, showed Moses the knot of the tefillin.³¹

It probably supposes some connection between theodicy and theophany (quite naturally stemming from pre-rabbinic esoteric traditions), within which only a meeting with God and/as initiation into divine mysteries could give some unutterable consola-

³¹ Note the role of the tefillin in the *Testament of Job* and, possibly, Addition B to ARN (version A) – see Kohler, "Testament," 289.

tion for Moses' (and Job's!) striving for cosmic justice. Let us notice, nevertheless, that even the theophany (though rather explicit in Ex. 33–34) is here subject to the same ambiguity (expressed by means of conflicting *dicta*) as justification of Job in Baba Bathra or God's answer about His "ways" above.

The inalterability and subjectivity of supreme meta-historic Plan of God is the only answer to Moses' quest for cosmic sense in a wider range of Talmudic *midrashim*. Thus, a very popular one accounts for a parallel situation, this time obviously relating the problem of suffering to historical experience:

R. Judah said in the name of Rav: When Moses ascended on high he found the Holy One, blessed be He, engaged in affixing coronets to the letters. Said Moses:

– "Lord of the Universe, Who stays Thy hand?" – He answered,

– "There will arise a man, at the end of many generations, Akiva b. Joseph by name, who will expound upon each coronet heaps and heaps of laws." ... Moses said,

– "Lord of the Universe, Thou hast such a man and Thou givest the Torah by me!"

– He replied: – "Keep silence, for so it came up in My mind." – Then said Moses:

– "Lord of the Universe, Thou hast shown me his Torah, show me his reward."

– "Turn thee round," – said He; and Moses turned round and saw them tearing

[r. Aqiva's] flesh with iron hooks.

– "Lord of the Universe," – cried Moses, – "such Torah, and such a reward!" –

He replied:

– "Keep silence, for so did it come up in My mind!"

(TB Men. 29b)

It is evident from those *aggadot*, that there indeed existed a firm connection between Moses and Useless Suffering, which could likely hint at an association with the book of Job (as the very book about suffering), too. Feeling deeply the cosmic injustice, the Jews depicted their greatest prophet disturbed by it, – implying that even Moses was unable to understand or express "God's ways" fully. Within this worldview no positive theodicy was possible and no human model of God's will could be achieved. God's justice was beyond words, superior to human thought; what was to be sought were not the reasons of His decisions, but a mystical relation and a life according to the Torah.

The connection of Job with the Torah, on the next level, is also implied in our passage (b): Moses' words were indeed "inscribed in a book" and even "engraved on a rock." The Torah, being the ultimate revelation of God's will, became thus associated with Job as both the fixation of Moses' argument with God and the only accessible response to the complaints of God's inscrutable ways. The association is reinforced by the image of inaccessible wisdom in Job 28, stably associated with the Torah. It is enacted in a *midrash* on the giving of the Torah in TB Shab. 89a. Older esoteric material about Moses' ascension is totally reused for a new purpose; Joban's apophatic poem is used to demonstrate the ethical as opposed to ontological character of the Torah:

R. Joshua b. Levi also said: When Moses descended from before the Holy One, blessed be He.

Satan came and asked Him:

Michael Wogman

- “Sovereign of the Universe! Where is the Torah?”
– “I have given it to the earth,” – answered He to him. Went to the earth and said to her,
– “Where is the Torah?”
– “God **understands the way thereof**, etc.” (Job 28:23) she replied. – He went to the sea and it told him.
– “It is not with me.” – He went to the deep and it said to him.
– “It is not in me,” – for it is said: “**The deep says, it is not in me.**”
“**And the sea says, it is not with me.**”
“**Destruction and Death say, we have heard a rumor thereof with our ears**” (Job 28:22).³²
Satan went back and declared before Him:
– “Sovereign of the Universe! I have searched throughout all the earth but have not found it!”
– “Go to the son of Amram.” – Answered He.

The appearance of Satan in this passage is strikingly reminiscent of the prologue of Job: Satan visited whole earth, but this time did not find the Torah. Another version, possibly dependent on TB Shab., connects the same haggadic structure to the death of Moses (cf. Jud. 1:9 and related literature). Being read and interpreted by Jewish community, Torah’s presence on earth is deeply human and out of reach of the angels and Satan. It presupposes some fundamental implications: learning and fulfilling of the Torah is meant to be a victory over Satan. For the rabbis the secret wisdom of Job was indeed secret, but somehow revealed in the teaching of the Pentateuch and Jewish practice. Satan (and the angels in the previous episode of TB Shab.³³) symbolizes the rational sense that has to yield to an irrational God and his commandments. Philosophically speaking, this presumes a priority of ethics over logic; it suggests a God contacted through morality, not through reason.

All this material seems to envisage a common problem (viz. the problem of suffering) that underlies both the rabbinic attribution of the book and the rabbinic depiction of Moses. It looks true, then, that according to (at least some) rabbinic authorities, the book of Job was about an irrational revelation, which imposed a connection between the inscrutable ways of God and an intimate religious experience. Within such a position God was indeed inexplicable and unreachable, but some chance to acquire His grace was still available through Judaism. *Moses, author of Job* motif presupposed, in this case, the Jewish response to the challenge of being: Judaism pretended to have some mystical ways not to get rid of suffering at all, but to please the irrational and hardly just Creator. Paradoxically enough, the *halakhah*, senseless as it is, is pictured as the only way to get beyond the senselessness of the world.

³² Cf. Job 42:5

³³ See Arkady B. Kovelman, *Between Alexandria and Jerusalem: The Dynamic of Jewish and Hellenistic Culture* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 54–55.

In such a view, Moses as author of Job was a suffering seer who argued with God about the unjustness of the world. His words were indeed inscribed and engraved in the Torah, while his own feelings as a seer and sufferer became unofficially recorded in Job, where his moral disturbance found a way to be expressed. One can imagine on the margins that such a *midrashic* Moses was not satisfied by the Torah's exposition of his life, and he decided to publish a minor version, which would encompass his personal emotions as a man of sorrows.

4. Job the Seer

The reading of Job as a theophany, which emerges from the discussion above, has deep roots in apocalyptic literature and probably stems from it. It was suggested earlier by Kohler, but seems to have since been rather neglected.³⁴ Later on, Hansom noted in passing the possibility of such reading of Job behind its use in James 5:11 and related Christological texts.³⁵ Still, some of Kohler's ideas deserve reconsideration.

The Hellenistic *Testament of Job* provides one of the most crucial evidences for a mystical tradition on Job. As an attempt to join separate exegetical traditions in a consequential narrative, TJ is acquainted with a tradition of Job the mystic: Job masters finally some magic objects that do not only heal and restore him, but also transfer mystical potencies to his daughters (TJ 11:21–29). Still, from the very beginning of his trial Job is presented already as bearer of heavenly truths:

12 And he (Bildad) said:

– “Upon what dost thou set thy hope?” – And I said:

– “Upon the living God.” – 13 And he said to me:

– “Who deprived thee of all thou didst possess and who inflicted thee with these plagues?” – And I said:

– “God.” – 14 And he said:

– “If thou still placest thy hope upon God, how can He do wrong in judgment, having brought upon thee these plagues and misfortunes, and having taken from thee all thy possessions 15 And since He has taken these, it is clear that He has given thee nothing. No king will disgrace his soldier who has served him well as body-guard!”

– 16 **“Who understands the depths of the Lord and of His wisdom to be able to accuse God of injustice!”** [sic! – *M.W.*]

– 17 “Answer me, o Job, to this. ... 18 Why do we see the sun rise in the East and set in the West and again when rising in the morning we find him rise in the East!” –

19 Then said I:

– “Why shall I betray the mighty mysteries of God and should my mouth stumble in revealing things belonging to the Master?! Never! 20 Who are we that we should pry into matters concerning the upper world while we are only of flesh, nay, earth and ashes! 21 In order that you know that my heart is sound, hear what I ask you: 22 Through

³⁴ Kohler, “Testament,” 266–268.

³⁵ Hansom, “Job,” 149.

the stomach cometh food, and water you drink through the mouth, and then it flows through the same throat, and when the two go down to become excrement, they again part; who effects this separation?!" – 23 And Bildad said:

– "I do not know." – And I rejoined and said to him:

– "If thou dost not understand even the exits of the body, how canst thou understand the celestial circuits!"

(TJ 8:12–23, transl. M. R. James)

It makes very probable that there existed a strong tradition of a mystical reading of Job, according to which Job became through God's questions initiated in the mysteries of the universe. It can be evidenced by the use of Job in the apocalyptic tradition.

On the one hand, many of the images from God's response to Job were reused to concretize heavenly realities. For instance, the list of objects enumerated in the Ethiopic Enoch's vision is highly reminiscent of God's questions to Job. The closeness of the two lists, as shown by Bautch,³⁶ makes a direct influence of Job on Enoch likely. Moreover, the connection between Behemoth and Leviathan, which seems to be present in both Hellenistic and Rabbinic representations of the divine mysteries of deeps, can be traced back to Job 40–41.³⁷ It suggests that the apocalyptic writer took seriously at least God's speeches.

Indeed, the problem of the origins of evil (and, then, of useless suffering as its phenomenological evidence) underlies most of the Apocalypses: 1 Enoch seems to connect Enoch's ascent to the fall of the angels, while Abraham or Baruch of the pseudopigrapha associated with their names do explicitly demand a justification of God's plan, if not immediate redemption. Still, the response they receive looks each time much more like a theophany than a consistent answer. It probably suggests that the apocalyptic writers intended to present some kind of mystical knowledge as the only satisfactory answer to the challenges of existence. In their view, private suffering had to be overcome by the general knowledge of cosmic rules. There was indeed some sense behind the tragedy of life, and unique heroes such as Enoch, Abraham, Moses or Ezra could grasp its essence through visionary meeting with the Godhead. The apocalyptic seer, engaged in the contemplation of Leviathan, God's throne, and Paradise became initiated into cosmological mysteries, so that he went beyond suffering. In a similar way, life in accord with (and in knowledge of) the universal Law made the Stoic sage indifferent. The idea of universality was, then, a Jewish version of the Stoic response to suffering: to be acquainted with the divine idea of the whole (synchronic or historic or both) granted salvation as superiority over any worldly challenge.

³⁶ Kelley C. Bautch, *A Study of the Geography of 1 Enoch 17–19: "No One Has Seen What I Have Seen"* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 223–227; Michael A. Knibb, *Essays on the Book of Enoch and Other Early Jewish Texts and Traditions* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 116–119.

³⁷ For the most recent investigation see Andrei A. Orlov "What is Above and what is Below: Mysteries of Leviathan in the Apocalypse of Abraham," in *Hekhalot Literature in Context: From Byzantium to Babylonia*, eds. Raanan Boustan and Martha Himmelfarb (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013).

On the other side, the apocalyptic literature seems to have made use of Joban rhetoric, too. Thus, not only does 4 Ezra recall Joban questions, but the whole discussion bears some Joban marks:³⁸

5 And he said to me,

– “Go, weigh for me the weight of fire, or measure for me a measure of wind, or call back for me the day that is past.” – 6 And I answered and said,

– “Who of those that have been born can do this, that you ask me concerning these things?” – 7 And he said to me,

– “If I had asked you, ‘How many dwellings are in the heart of the sea, or how many streams are at the source of the deep, or how many streams are above the firmament, or which are the exits of hell, or which are the entrances of paradise?’ 8 Perhaps you would have said to me, ‘I never went down into the deep, nor as yet into hell, neither did I ever ascend into heaven.’ 9 But now I have asked you only about fire and wind and the day, things through which you have passed and without which you cannot exist, and you have given me no answer about them!”...

Then I answered and said,

– “I beseech you, my lord, why have I been endowed with the power of understanding? 23 For I did not wish to inquire about the ways above, but about those things which we daily experience: why Israel has been given over to the Gentiles as a reproach; why the people whom you loved has been given over to godless tribes, and the law of our fathers has been made of no effect and the written covenants no longer exist; 24 and why we pass from the world like locusts, and our life is like a mist, and we are not worthy to obtain mercy.”

(2 Ezra 4:3–9, 22–24, transl. Charlesworth)

(cynical opposition between heavenly and earthly riddles recalls the TJ passage quoted above).

The Apocalypse of Abraham (explicitly alluding to Job) and, *grosso modo*, most of the other books of the genre, are structured as theophanic responses to the hero’s quest for universal justice. For all of them, then, contemplation of divine cosmic realities constitutes an actual answer to the challenges of history in the same way God’s questions about those realities had persuaded biblical Job. It must be supposed that Job was employed by the apocalyptic writers as a model of theophanic theodicy based on the revelation of some supreme order of the universe. The use of both Joban realities and Joban rhetoric implies that apocalyptic writers understood Job as a story of revelation of heavenly secrets. Job’s suffering, in their view, finally led him to a meeting with God and an initiation into the cosmic Law – it made him a perfect Sage and friend of God.

If this reconstruction is correct, it would be no surprise that Moses, prophet and seer, as the central personage of rabbinic Judaism, came to be associated with Job.

Some additional support for the *Job the seer* conception can be found in the connection of Job with the fall of Satan. In TJ the redemption of the sufferer is already understood as a triumph over Satan, performed first by the latter’s surrender, and then by

³⁸ See Knibb, *Essays*, 116 for the same in 1 Enoch.

the condemnation of Elihu, “who was found to be not a man but a beast” in a hymn, reminiscent of some theurgic dethronement (TJ 10:12ff).

This motif has to be understood as exegetical response to Satan’s inconsistent presence in the book of Job: if Satan (as evident from the prologue) was to blame for Job’s trial, why, then, he is never mentioned in Job’s or God’s speeches, or in the epilogue? Would it not be natural to decide that Satan was displaced and thrown to the depths of Hell during the development of the book? This motif emerges explicitly in Addition *B* to ARN (version A); still, allusions to it in the Hellenistic *Testament of Job* make unlikely its Christian origin, as has been supposed by Kalman.³⁹ Quite the opposite – the *Job overcame Satan* motif fits well with the Hellenistic imagery of ascension (cf. Apoc. Abr. 13:3–5),⁴⁰ so that there is almost no doubt left that it reflects some ancient exegesis. It is quite probable, then, that this motif is also hinted at in Baba Bathra’s treatment of Job 2:6 (Satan compared to a slave sent to a labor that could not be fulfilled).

With all of the above-made assumptions taken into account, the *Moses, author of Job* motif finds its context in the Second Temple traditions of reading Job as a revelation story. Constructing Moses as the supreme authority in both ethical and mystic lore, the Rabbis transferred to him and his Law the main traits of apocalyptic knowledge. If Job was once understood as a book about heavenly mysteries, it would closely fit the image of Moses. At the same time, such a reading linked the problem of suffering to the Torah: on the one hand Moses did actually write in it all one had to know about God and His will; on the other hand, it was a mystical experience of God’s glory that lays behind the holy writ.

Midrashic Moses is figured as feeling uneasy with existence, as biblical Job did. God’s response calmed Moses (and Job), since it gave divine dimension to personal troubles. Ascribing Job to Moses implied that the same divine dimension is revealed in the Law as well. In such a conceptual frame, the Torah of Moses was presented as the only actual response to cosmic tragedy, while the book of Job turned into a text seen as something like Moses’ personal account of the same theophany and revelation that gave birth to the Pentateuch (Ex. 33–34).

Although the rabbinic notion of *Moses, author of Job* seems, then, to be rooted in Hellenistic apocalyptic traditions, there is also a fundamental difference between the apocryphal and the Talmudic uses of it. Both should agree that theophany was the only theodicy and no words could expose God’s ways. Still, Enochic traditions do presuppose some universal order, cosmic and divine, that was to be sought and ultimately could relieve the problem of suffering in favor of a larger and more general sense. On the opposite side, the rabbinic worldview, forged in the time of persecution, was much more pessimistic. Stoic utopia of a positive universal Law giving sense to every moment of the life of the sage lost its force. The experience of a seer (whether Job or Moses)

³⁹ Kalman, “Righteousness,” 86. Comp. Jude 1:9 and Apoc. Abr. for the same use of Zech. 3:2 (see next note). On Elihu as Satan cf. Kohler, “Testament,” 285.

⁴⁰ On the theurgic aspects of ascension, esp. Apoc. Abr., see Andrei A. Orlov, “The Eschatological Yom Kippur in the Apocalypse of Abraham,” *Scrinium* 5 (2009): 79–11.

could no more legitimize the suffering, and no cosmic order could satisfy their thirst for sense. The truth was placed beyond experience, so that one could doubt even Moses' capacity to grasp it. "Keep silence, such is My decision" was the only defense of God the Rabbis would accept. The Torah, being at the same time the supreme revelation of God's will and a practical legal code, was declared the only knowledge of God and the only way to obey Him. Fulfilling the Torah one would enact the laws of the universe, since the Torah was, according to the *midrashim*, the plan of the Creation. Still, no verbal understanding of this plan could be found; personal relation with God, Who is beyond words, was the only thing to be sought (and even reached, as suggested by the book of Job).

There is, perhaps, even some *midrashic* irony in the idea that Moses, who lost only his nephews (not sons), who was (according to the *midrashim*) rich and authoritative, depicted his experience of suffering in much more tragic colors than his real circumstances reflected. Such irony would well fit the general rabbinic picture of Moses. A well known *midrash*, for instance, pictures Moses as unwilling to die, while others multiply his personal arguments with God. But what seems at any rate doubtless is that the *Moses, author of Job* motif conveyed the idea of personal and irrational Godhead, too great to argue with and in exigent need of defense. It implied both a reading of Job as a story of theophany – and a connection of God's will to the Torah, which took the place of the conceivable (though utopian) universal Law of Hellenistic Judaism. As a philosopher would say, the focus of theodicy was moved by the Rabbis from the sphere of cosmic wholeness to the openness of ethical challenge.

Preserving the notion of mosaic authorship, the Rabbis identified their answer to Job with the Torah and thus reinforced the idea of the inscrutable ways of God, and Judaism as the only way to salvation. So, rabbinic response to Gnosticism insisted that God was beyond any defense at all. His decisions were undisputable and unconceivable not because He was too feeble, but because He, as the supreme Master of all, transcended both cosmic order and human rationality. It seems remarkable that such experience of complete absence of any kataphatic sense seems to underlie not only this type of reading Job, but also all the three types discussed above.