

**On Sitting With Suffering: Who Are Job's Friends**  
Midwest Jewish Chaplains' Group – Yom Iyun

**Job 1:21**

וַיֹּאמֶר עָרִים יָצֵאתִי [נִצָּאתִי] מִבֶּטֶן אִמִּי וְעָרִים אָשׁוּב שָׁמָּה יְהוָה נָתַן וַיְהוָה לָקַח  
יְהִי שֵׁם יְהוָה מְבֹרָךְ:

And [Job] said, "naked I came from my mother's womb and naked shall I return there. God gave and God took away. Blessed shall be God's name forever.

**Job 1:22**

בְּכָל־זֹאת לֹא־חָטָא אִיּוֹב וְלֹא־נָתַן תּוֹפָלָה לְאֱלֹהִים:

In all this/despite everything, Job did not sin and did not ascribe blame to God.

**Job 2:9-12**

וַתֹּאמֶר לוֹ אִשְׁתּוֹ עֲדָךְ מִחֲזִיק בְּתַמְתְּךָ בְּרַךְ אֱלֹהִים וּמַת:

His wife said to him, "Are you still holding on to your integrity? Curse/Bless God and die!"

וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיָה כְּדֹבַר אַחַת הִנְבָּלוֹת תִּדְבְּרִי גַם אֶת־הַטּוֹב נִקְבַּל מֵאֵת הָאֱלֹהִים  
וְאֶת־הָרָע לֹא נִקְבַּל בְּכָל־זֹאת לֹא־חָטָא אִיּוֹב בְּשִׁפְתָיו:

He replied, "You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not evil?" In all this, Job did not sin with his lips.

וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ שְׁלֹשֶׁת רֵעֵי אִיּוֹב אֶת כָּל־הָרָעָה הַזֹּאת הַבָּאָה עָלָיו וַיָּבֹאוּ אִישׁ מִמְּקוֹמוֹ  
אֵלָיו הַתִּימְנִי וּבְלִדָּד הַשׁוּחִי וְצוֹפָר הַנַּעֲמָתִי וַיּוֹעֲדוּ יַחְדָּו לָבוֹא לְנוֹד־לוֹ וּלְנַחֲמוֹ:  
וַיִּשְׂאוּ אֶת־עֵינֵיהֶם מֵרְחוֹק וְלֹא הִכִּירוּהוּ וַיִּשְׂאוּ קוֹלָם וַיִּבְכּוּ וַיִּקְרְעוּ אִישׁ מְעָלוֹ  
וַיִּזְרְקוּ עָפָר עַל־רֹאשֵׁיהֶם הַשָּׁמַיְמָה: יג וַיִּשְׁבּוּ אֹתוֹ לָאָרֶץ שְׁבַעַת יָמִים וְשִׁבְעַת  
לַיְלֹת וַאֲיֹן־דִּבֶּר אֵלָיו דְּבַר כִּי רָאוּ כִּי־גָדַל הַכָּאֵב מְאֹד:

**Job's Three Friends**

When Job's three friends, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite, heard about all this evil that had come upon him, they set out each from his place (מִמְּקוֹמוֹ) and met together by agreement to go and sympathize with him and comfort him. When they saw him from a distance, they could hardly recognize him; they raised up their voices, began to weep

aloud (וַיִּשְׂאוּ קוֹלָם וַיִּבְכּוּ), and they tore their robes and sprinkled dust on their heads. Then they sat on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights. No one said a word to him, because they saw how great his suffering was.

### **QUESTIONS:**

1. What surprises you about this description of the visit from Job's friends?
2. What do you notice about it?

### **Chapter 3: Job Speaks of His Pain**

**Job 3:1**

אַחֲרֵי־כֵן פָּתַח אִיּוֹב אֶת־פִּיהוּ וַיִּקְלַל אֶת־יוֹמוֹ:

After this, Job opened his mouth and cursed his day [the day of his birth].

### **Chapters 4-42: Dialogue about the nature of suffering with the three friends:**

**Job 4:1-2**

וַיַּעַן אֱלִיפָז הַתֵּימָנִי וַיֹּאמֶר: הַנִּסָּה דַבֵּר אֵלַיךָ תִּלְאַה וְעֶצֶר בְּמַלְיוֹן מִי יוֹכֵל:

Then Eliphaz the Temanite replied: "If someone ventures a word with you, will you be impatient / are you too weary? But who can keep from speaking?"

### **QUESTIONS:**

1. What do we learn about suffering from
  - a. Job?
  - b. Job's Wife?
  - c. The 3 Friends?
2. What does/would it mean to **listen** to Job?
3. What does **listening** bring up in the friends and in his wife?

And now, a word from you...

## **A PASTORAL REPLY FROM A (NEW) FRIEND OF JOB**

### **Part Two:**

Anthony the Englishman spoke next. He said:  
Job, my friend, we have sat together  
These seven days and nights.  
My heart is full of anguish  
And I have fought to hold back my tears.

No man or woman in God's universe  
Should have to suffer the blows  
That have rained like rocks on you -  
Surely no person deserves it less.

I also remember with such sorrow  
Your beautiful sons and daughters,  
And for them too do I grieve;  
Oh my dear good friend – my heart breaks.

Now I hear you curse  
The day you were born;  
Your misery is so great  
You wish your life had never been.

I understand, I understand, my friend,  
But still my heart rebels  
Against such words,  
Your wish to rub out your whole, good, life.

God only knows  
That I, a weaker man than you,  
Would also regret a life that had been so horribly And repeatedly assailed.

It is a mystery to us all  
That God gives us life,  
And seems to sit idly by  
While that life is devastated.

It would be forgivable indeed  
If a man so deserving of good  
Yet so receiving of bad,  
Did raise his fist to Heaven.

Everything we have been taught  
Of god and evil  
And the ways of God  
Now seems written in the sand.

With pain I do wonder  
If God sleeps while men do cry.  
Forgive me if I offend you, friend,  
With my words of blasphemy.

Now one thing I am convinced of for sure, Observing these sad times I have no  
more doubt:  
The events that befall us  
Have naught to do with our good deeds or bad.

Enough of my anger  
Enough of dry philosophy;  
The comforting of my loving heart  
Is the best solace I can bring.

And yet, and yet, my friend  
Of God still I would talk.  
One day the time may be ripe  
To tell you of my own faith.

But now I hold my peace  
I sit with you in love and pain  
Till you, in time, do bid me:  
Anthony, now speak again.