

Job 2 — Skin for Skin — The Second Council, the Boils, the Wife's Grief, and the Silence of Friends

Job 2: the heavenly council convenes a second time and the accuser again appears among the sons of God; God's verdict on Job's integrity stands, and the adversary is permitted to touch Job's body but not his life; struck with boils from sole to crown, Job scrapes himself with a potsherd among the ashes, answers his grieving wife, and is joined by three friends who sit with him seven days in silence. Set in the land of Uz, in the patriarchal world of the book's frame narrative.

Chapter 1 ended with a man who had lost everything — flocks, servants, and all ten of his children in a single afternoon — falling to the ground not to curse but to worship: "the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD" (Job 1:21). The narrator closed the scene with a verdict that reads like a held breath: "In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly" (Job 1:22). Round one is over. Job has held.

Hebrew Word Studies

tummah (H8538) (תָּמַחֵה) — integrity, wholeness, completeness — an undivided heart vv. 3, 9. Everything hangs on not mistranslating this word into English moralism. *Tummah* is not "moral perfection" or "sinlessness"; it comes from the root *tamam*, "to be whole, complete, finished." It is the same family as *tam* — the word rendered "perfect" in "a perfect and an upright man" (Job 1:1, 8; 2:3), which the Hebrew mind heard as *whole*, all of one piece, not fractured between an inner self and an outer performance. Job's integrity is not a spotless record; it is an undivided heart — a man whose trust in God is not partitioned off from his grief, his confusion, or his coming complaints. This matters enormously for reading the rest of the book, because Job is about to say some very raw things to God, and none of them cost him this word. Integrity survives lament. In fact the book argues that honest wrestling is a form of wholeness, and that the friends' tidy defense of God is the real fracture. When Job's wife asks in verse 9 whether he will "still retain" his *tummah*, she uses the very word God used in verse 3 — the narrative sets God's verdict and her despair on the same term, and lets the reader watch which one Job proves true. Christ names the same undivided heart as the condition of seeing: "Blessed are the pure in heart" (Matt. 5:8); and the Nephite king Benjamin calls his people to serve God "with all your heart, might, mind and strength" (Mosiah 2:11) — the whole of a person, held together, offered up.

shechin (H7822) / cheres (H2789) (שֶׁחִין / שֶׁרֶשֶׁת) — boils, inflamed sores / a potsherd, broken piece of pottery vv. 7, 8.

Two humble Hebrew nouns carry the physical horror of the chapter. *Shechin* — "boils," inflamed and ulcerating sores — is the same word used for the sixth plague on Egypt, the "boil breaking forth with blains" (Ex. 9:9–11), and for the disease Moses warns will fall on the disobedient, "the botch of Egypt... whereof thou canst not be healed" (Deut. 28:27, 35), spreading "from the sole of thy foot unto the top of thy head" — the exact span of Job 2:7. The book is quietly provocative: it drapes Job in the symptoms of covenant curse while insisting he is innocent, daring the reader (and daring the friends) to conclude that visible affliction proves hidden sin. It does not. The second word, *cheres*, is a shard of fired clay — worthless, discarded, sharp. Isaiah uses it for utter frailty: man is a potsherd striving with his Maker (Isa. 45:9), and the Psalmist cries "my strength is dried up like a potsherd" (Ps. 22:15), a verse the Gospels place on the cross. So Job scrapes a broken body with a broken thing, sitting where broken things are thrown. And yet the man on the ash heap has not broken faith — the vessel is shattered, the trust is whole. That is the paradox *tummah* was built to name.

qibbel (H6901) / ra' (H7451) (קִבֵּל / רָא) — to receive, accept, take / evil, calamity, adversity, distress v. 10. The verb Job chooses is *qibbel*, "to receive" — the same root that will later name Israel's acceptance of a decree or an obligation, the language of taking something upon yourself deliberately rather than merely having it happen to you. Job does not say we *endure* evil or we *suffer* evil; he says we *receive* it, from God's hand, the way one receives a gift or a charge. That is an active verb, a posture of the will, not the whimper of the passive. And the noun it governs, *ra'*, is the great slippery word of the Hebrew Bible: it means "evil" in the moral sense but far more often "calamity, disaster, harm, distress" — the same word rendered "sore" in "sore boils" back in verse 7, and the same word for the "evil that was come upon him" the friends hear of in verse 11. Job is not calling God the author of moral wickedness; he is refusing to pretend that the calamity came from anywhere but the hand that also gave the good. This is the honesty the friends cannot manage — they will spend the book protecting God from *ra'* by pinning it on Job's imagined sin, and God will reject their defense. Job's harder faith holds both: "I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil [*ra'*]: I the LORD do all these things" (Isa. 45:7). The Restoration gives the same truth a redemptive turn — that even the *ra'* received from God's hand is not waste: "all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good" (D&C 122:7). Job cannot yet see the "for thy good." He receives the

hand anyway.

dabar (H1696, verb) / davar (H1697, noun) (דָּבַר / דִּבָּר) — **to speak, to say / a word, a matter, a thing vv. 10, 13.** The chapter's beginning and end are stitched with the same root, and the seam is instructive. In verse 10 the narrator's verdict is that Job did not sin "with his lips" — that his *words* stayed faithful under torment. In verse 13 the friends' one act of wisdom is that "none spake [*dabar*] a word [*davar*] unto him." The verb and its cognate noun frame the human speech of the chapter: Job speaks and does not sin; the friends do not speak and do not sin. The trouble is coming, and the Hebrew has already told us where it will come from — the *davar*, the word. Because *davar* means both "word" and "thing, matter," Hebrew refuses to fully separate what is said from what is real; a wrong word about God is not a harmless abstraction but a mishandling of the thing itself. The friends will soon load their *devarim* with a false theology of suffering, and God's closing complaint against them is precisely about their speech: "ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right" (Job 42:7). The book thus draws a quiet line between two kinds of comfort: the word withheld in reverence (v. 13) and the word deployed in argument (ch. 4 onward). Scripture elsewhere praises the first: "a word fitly spoken is like apples of gold" (Prov. 25:11), and "a fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards" (Prov. 29:11). The friends kept it in for seven days. Would that they had kept it in longer.

From the Chapter's Architecture

Within that frame, the chapter falls into two panels joined by a hinge. The first panel (vv. 1–6) is heaven — the council, the wager, the bounded leave. The second panel (vv. 7–13) is earth — the boils, the potsherd, the wife, the friends. The hinge between them is the body of Job himself, "in thine hand" in verse 6 and "smitten" in verse 7: the point where the sentence passed in the throne room lands on a man in the dust. And the chapter's two great sayings sit at the ends of the earthly panel like bookends — Job's confession of faith in verse 10 ("shall we not receive evil?") and the friends' wise silence in verse 13. Between a man who says the right thing and friends who rightly say nothing, the prologue closes. It is a straight, escalating line, not a chiasm, and I won't pretend a symmetry the text doesn't carry; the artistry here is the deepening repetition, the second wave that rises higher than the first and still does not sweep him away.