

Job 38 — Out of the Whirlwind — The LORD Answers Job Not with a Why but with a Who

Job 38: after thirty-five chapters of debate, the LORD Himself answers Job out of the whirlwind — not explaining the suffering, but summoning Job on a tour of the creation he never witnessed and cannot command: the founding of the earth while the morning stars sang and the sons of God shouted for joy, the sea shut behind doors, the dawn commanded, the springs of the sea and the gates of death, the treasures of the snow, the constellations bound and loosed, and provision even for the ravens' young. The oldest wrestling-match in scripture with the suffering of the righteous, from the patriarchal age.

For thirty-five chapters the book of Job has been a courtroom. Job has been suing heaven — respectfully, honestly, but relentlessly — for a single answer to a single question: *why?* Why does a blameless man lose his children, his health, and his good name in a single week? His three friends have offered the cheap answer over and over: you must have sinned, this is what sin earns. Job has refused it, because it is a lie, and he is right to refuse it — God says as much in the last chapter (42:7). Job has demanded his day in court. He wants God to take the stand and explain Himself.

Hebrew Word Studies

se'arah (H5591) (סַעֲרָה) — **whirlwind, tempest, storm-wind v. 1.** The place God chooses to speak from is itself part of the sermon. *Se'arah* is the raging storm-wind — the same word for the chariot of wind and fire that carried Elijah to heaven ("Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven," 2 Kgs. 2:11), and the storm the psalmist praises God for stilling ("he maketh the storm a calm," Ps. 107:29). God does not answer Job from a clear blue sky, as if suffering could be addressed only from a safe distance. He answers *out of* the whirlwind — from within the very element that had swept away Job's world (a "great wind" felled the house on his children, 1:19). Here is a first quiet answer folded inside the harder ones: the God who permitted the storm is not aloof from it; He is *in* it, speaking. Ezekiel's vision of the divine glory likewise comes "out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself" (Ezek. 1:4), and the Restoration's answer to Job — Liberty Jail — comes to a suffering prophet in a pit, not a palace: "peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment" (D&C 121:7). The voice that heals reaches Job from inside the weather that hurt him.

bene ha-'elohim (H1121 / H430) (בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים) — **sons of God — the members of the heavenly assembly v. 7.** The phrase is the same one that opened the whole book: "there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD" (1:6; 2:1), the heavenly council where Job's testing was permitted. Here in 38:7 that same assembly is pushed back before creation itself — present, and *shouting for joy*, when the foundations were laid. *Ben* (H1121, "son") joined to *'elohim* (H430, "God") makes a phrase Hebrew uses for those who belong to the divine family and share the divine court. Scripture keeps this council in view: "God standeth in the congregation of the mighty" (Ps. 82:1); the heavenly host praising God at the nativity is its New Testament echo (Lk. 2:13). For Latter-day Saints the doctrine is plain and thrilling — these are premortal spirits, "the noble and great ones" Abraham saw "organized before the world was" (Abr. 3:22–23), the council that heard and cheered the plan. That we are called God's *children* is not flattery but ancestry: "the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Rom. 8:16). Job 38:7 lets us hear our own voices, once, singing at the dawn.

pinnaḥ (H6438) (פִּנָּח) — **corner, cornerstone — the governing stone of a building v. 6.** "Who laid the corner stone thereof?" The *pinnaḥ* is the cornerstone, the first stone set, the one that fixes the line and level of everything built after it — so in Hebrew it becomes a word for the one who governs, the chief, the leader on whom a whole structure depends ("out of him came forth the corner," Zech. 10:4). God asks who set the earth's cornerstone; the question has only one possible answer, and it is not Job. But the image reaches forward through all of scripture to its fulfillment. Isaiah heard God promise "a precious corner stone, a sure foundation" (Isa. 28:16); the psalmist sang that "the stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner" (Ps. 118:22); and the New Testament names Him: "Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone" (Eph. 2:20; cf. 1 Pet. 2:6). The One who laid the earth's cornerstone at the shout of the morning stars is the same Lord by whom the worlds were made — "the worlds were framed by the word of God" (Heb. 11:3), for "all things were made by him" (Jn. 1:3). Latter-day scripture is emphatic that this Creator is the Son: "by him, and through him, and of him, the worlds are and were created" (D&C 76:24; cf. Moses 1:33). The cornerstone Job cannot lay is a Person, and He is the answer standing behind every question in this chapter.

'ad-poh (H5704) / lo' yosiph (H3254) (עַד־כִּי / לֹא־יִסְּף) — **hitherto / no further — the boundary set on chaos v. 11.**

Two small words carry the load. *'Ad* (H5704, "unto, as far as") joined to *poh* ("here") draws the line — *this far*; and *yasaph*

(H3254, "to add, to do again"), negated, forbids the crossing — *and no more*. Together they are God's decree over the deep, and they are the most reassuring sentence in the chapter. The ancient world feared the sea as chaos unchained; Genesis answers by making God gather and bound the waters (Gen. 1:9), and the psalmist praises Him for it: "Thou hast set a bound that they may not pass over" (Ps. 104:9); "he stilleth the noise of the seas... and the tumult of the people" (Ps. 65:7). The same boundary-drawing hand governs the adversary in Job's own story — the accuser afflicts only "unto" the limit God fixes and "no further" (1:12; 2:6). This is the answer folded into the tour: chaos is real but leashed, suffering is permitted but bounded. When the disciples cried out in their own storm, the incarnate LORD of Job 38 spoke to the sea in person — "Peace, be still" — and "the wind ceased, and there was a great calm" (Mk. 4:39). The One who set the bars in Job's day walked the water in Galilee's.

kimah (H3598) / kesil (H4189) (לִי־סָכַל / הַמִּי־כִסֵּי) — Pleiades / (the bands of) Orion — the named constellations v. 31. God names the stars to a man who cannot reach them. *Kimah* is the Pleiades, the tight cluster whose "sweet influences" the King James renders as their springtime binding; *kesil* is Orion, the mighty hunter whose "bands" or belt God dares Job to loose. These same two constellations recur together as a signature of the Creator: "Seek him that maketh the seven stars and Orion" (Amos 5:8); "which maketh Arcturus, Orion, and Pleiades, and the chambers of the south" (Job 9:9). The point is not astronomy but authorship — the God speaking to Job set those lights and steers them still. And the same stars are the choir of verse 7: "the morning stars sang together" when the earth was founded. So the chapter frames Job's whole ordeal between two star-scenes — the stars that *sang* at creation, and the stars Job *cannot bind* now — and both say the same thing: the cosmos is sung and governed by a wisdom not Job's own. It is the God who "calleth them all by names" (Ps. 147:4) and, in the same breath of that psalm, "healeth the broken in heart." The One who guides Arcturus with his sons is not indifferent to a father who has buried his.

'orev (H6158) / kun (H3559) (וְיָרֵם / בִּרְעָה) — raven / to provide, prepare, establish v. 41. The whirlwind's tour of the cosmos ends not with a galaxy but with a nestling. 'Orev is the raven — unclean by the law (Lev. 11:15), a scavenger, the last creature one would expect God to trouble over — and yet *kun* (H3559), "to establish, prepare, provide," is what God does for it: "Who provideth for the raven his food?" The verb is a settled, deliberate providing, the same root behind a heart "fixed, trusting in the LORD" (Ps. 112:7) and a throne "established" in mercy (Prov. 20:28). Scripture loves this bird precisely because it is unlovely: God fed Elijah by ravens at Cherith (1 Kgs. 17:4–6), and Jesus points to it as the proof that providence reaches the overlooked — "Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap... and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls?" (Lk. 12:24). The young ravens "cry unto God" and He answers; the psalmist knew it too — "he giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry" (Ps. 147:9). After Pleiades and Orion, after the sea and the storehouses of snow, God's closing argument to a suffering man is a hungry chick in a nest, fed. If He hears *that* cry, He hears Job's.

From the Chapter's Architecture

There is no chiasm to force here, and I will not pretend one onto the text; the structure is a crescendo, not a mirror. But there is a frame worth naming. The chapter opens with the morning stars singing at creation (v. 7) and turns, near its end, to those same stars — Pleiades, Orion, Arcturus — which Job can neither bind nor guide (vv. 31–32). Between those two star-scenes the whole cosmos is unrolled, and both scenes make one point: the heavens Job cannot command are the heavens that rejoiced when God laid the earth's cornerstone. The stars that sang are the stars that rule. And the closing image — a raven's chick crying and fed — quietly answers the opening challenge. Job asked why God seemed absent from his suffering; the chapter ends by showing God present at the humblest cry in creation. The architecture itself preaches: the God vast enough to be beyond Job's questioning is the God near enough to hear a nestling's hunger.