

## 9. Introduction to the Writings & The Book of Job David Moseley, Ph.D.

This week we will be turning to the third and final section of the Hebrew Bible, the sub-section known as “The Writings” (*Ketuvim*). This forms a miscellaneous category of texts that are scattered throughout the Christian “Old Testament” but grouped together in the Jewish Scriptures after the Torah and the Prophets (which include “Former Prophets” [Historical Texts], as well as the “Latter Prophets” [Three Major and Twelve Minor Prophets]). They are made up of a mixture of genres that include Wisdom Literature, Poetry, Inspirational Texts...even some Near Eastern Erotica!

We will begin with the intimidating text of Job – perhaps one of the most ancient texts in the Hebrew Bible, which has a primordial, pre-historic, almost “legendary” feel to it. The subject-matter of Job is perhaps the most complex question in all Theology and Philosophy: *Given the Reality of Pain and Suffering in the World, (1) Why Should we Believe in God? ...and (2) Why should we Think that God is Good and Loving?* This is known as the Question of “Theodicy” – an “Eternal Question” about the Existence and Nature of God, and the Nature of Humanity. Written as a Dialogue between Job and his so-called “Friends” / “Comforters”, this is an unsettling Wisdom text that perhaps is better at raising Questions and expressing profound Struggles...rather than providing convincing Answers and Solutions.

### Assignment #9 for Class on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> October 2018

#### **Reading**

Please read through the book of Job, including the introduction to the book in your NRSV Bible. Use the annotations and notes as an aid to understanding and interpretation when you feel in need. The book of Job breaks up into easily digestible portions: (1) Introduction [chs. 1-2]; (2) Nine Dialogues between Job and his “Friends” [3-37], which can be read as self-contained units; and (3) the Divine Response [38-42]. [If you are looking for essential “Greatest Hits”, focus on 1-11, 29-31, and 38-42.]

#### **Thinking & Responding**

For this week’s Response Paper, I would like you to focus specifically on the issues concerning “Theodicy” that emerge in the book of Job. I would like you to concentrate on the following two points:

- (1) *Try to Summarize Job’s Argument with / against God, referring to examples in the text.*
- (2) *How Satisfying do you find God’s Response to Job and his Friends, regarding the Problem of Why the Righteous Suffer (Job 38-42)? Are you Convinced? Why...or Why Not?*

Please write your Response in approximately 450-500 words (12-point font, double-spaced, one-inch margin, with your name at the top of the paper). Type up and print your Reflections, and be ready to share and discuss your Insights in class. I will collect them in to review and grade at the end of the class.