

1. Introduction

The book of Job is a shining example of a man who suffered unjustly, but who ultimately was blessed. Job's experience is so overwhelmingly great that some people think it cannot have happened, and that the story is a just myth to learn from. The facts that the writer of the book and the time in which Job lived are unknown play a role in this. On the other hand, there are so many references to people and places, to animals and conditions, that the story must have been seen as true at the time of writing. In addition, Job is quoted by the prophet Ezekiel and the apostle James in the context of other people who have really lived, such as Noah and Elijah.

In this study we will try to figure out who Job may have been.

2. Some facts

Some specific entries in the book of Job are:

- 1) Job lived in the land of Uz, not far from the desert
- 2) His friends were Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite and Elihu the Buzite, while the Chaldeans and Sabeans were enemies
- 3) After his illness Job lived another 140 years
- 4) His occupation was farmer; keeping camels, donkeys, goats and sheep
- 5) His lifestyle was nomadic or semi-nomadic
- 6) Job had a monotheistic faith
- 7) He was not an Israelite, yet he was particularly blessed

This information helps to answer the following questions: When did Job live? Where did he live? From whom was he descended?

3. When did Job live?

a. Jobs attained age

According to Job 42:16, Job still lived 140 years after his illness and suffering. This age puts Job in the period from Noah to the patriarchs.

At that time men didn't become father until they were thirty. The generations from Arphaxad to Nahor had their first son between their 29th and 35th.¹ In the case of Abraham's descendants, we even find that Isaac got his sons on his 60th, Esau after his 40th and Jacob after his 70th. So probably Job also got his first son around the age of thirty.

Before Job's suffering began he had grown children, who organized parties. This suggests that at the time of the disaster Job must have been already 50 or 60 years old.² This brings his age to at least 190 years.

Although there's no mention of how long exactly Job was ill, several things may be derived from the book of Job. He himself says that months of emptiness were allotted to him (Job 7: 3),

suggesting that he had already been sick for months. After he recovered, all his brothers and all his sisters and all who had known him before, came to visit him (Job 42:11). The word "before" indicates a longer period, so that Job was possibly sick for years, rather than months. Some commentators believe that Job suffered for 7 years.

Also, God blessed the latter part of Job's life more than the first (Job 42:12). He even had double the amount of each type of animal than he owned before. Therefore many commentators conclude that God gave Job also gave him a life that was twice as long, and that he lived a total of 210 years. Since Job became least 190 and because it fits with the character of God to bless Job in this way, it is likely that he reached the age of 210 indeed.

This means Job equaled Abraham's father Terah, who became 205. The fact that the long life of Job is mentioned specifically, indicates that it was seen as a special blessing. Up until the time of Abraham, this was a normal age to reach, so Job must have lived in the period after Abraham.

b. Job's friends

Of four friends the names are specifically given. From these we can learn the following:

i. Eliphaz the Temanite (Job 2:11):

Esau had a son named Eliphaz and a grandson named Teman (Genesis 36:11, 1 Chronicles 1:36). In 1 Chronicles 1:45, the "land of the Temanites" is mentioned. Most likely Eliphaz was also from that area and thus a descendant of Esau.

It is also possible that Eliphaz the son of Esau and father of Teman is intended. Several generations later Teman was seen as the chief of Edom (1 Chronicles 1: 51-54). It is common that a tribe is named after its chief. So it was with the sons of Jacob who all became tribal chiefs in Israel. Later a town in Edom was named after Teman, a phenomenon that also occurred in Israel, such as with Dan. So perhaps Eliphaz was later named after the city that his son had founded.³ It is also possible that Eliphaz himself named the city Teman, after his son. Other examples of this are Cain, who called his city after his son Enoch (Genesis 4:17), and Hamor, who named a city Shechem, after his son (Genesis 33: 18-19).

ii. Bildad the Shuhite (Job 2:11):

Probably Bildad was a descendant of Shuah, a son of Abraham and Keturah (Genesis 25:2). This indicates that he lived in the days after the patriarchs.

iii. Zophar the Naamathite (Job 2:11):

Some think that Zophar from Naamah came from Judah (Joshua 15:41). Others believe that Zophar is the same as Esau's grandson Zepho (Genesis 36:11).⁴ According to the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, Zophar was the king of the Minaean kingdom in the south of the Arabian peninsula.⁵ Others suggest that Zophar came from the area on the Arabian border with Syria⁶ or Mount Na'ameh in northwest Arabia.⁷ Smith is probably right when he concludes that the place name Naamah is too common to be able to determine where exactly it was.⁸

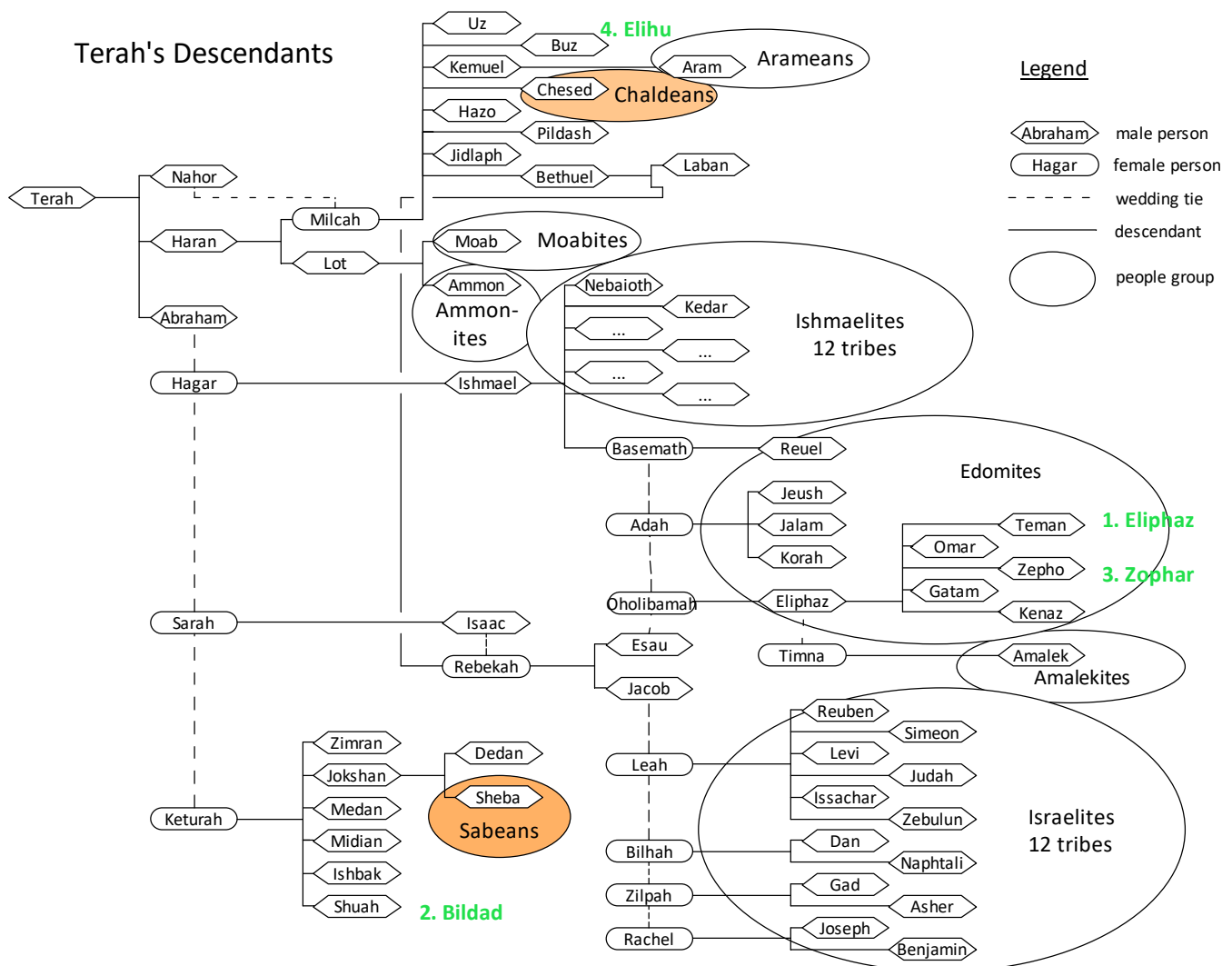
In any case Zophar may very well have lived in the time of the patriarchs.

Who was Job?

iv. Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the family of Ram (Job 32: 2)
Nothing is known about Barachel and Ram, but Buz is the second son of Abraham's brother Nahor (Genesis 22:21).

The names of Job's friends suggest, therefore, that they were all descendants of Abraham.⁹
That not only means that they and Job lived in the time after Abraham, but also that their monotheistic faith came from him.

The family tree below clearly shows the ancestry of Job's friends and also the enemies, who are considered now.



c. Job's enemies

In the book of Job two groups of robbers are named:

i. The Sabeans (Job 1:15):

In the Bible, three men are mentioned, whose which their descendants bore this name.

- 1) Sheba the son of Raamah, grandson of Cush and a descendant of Ham (Genesis 10:7)
- 2) Sheba the son of Joktan and a descendant of Shem (Genesis 10:28).
- 3) Sheba the son of Jokshan, grandson of Abraham and Keturah (Genesis 25:3)

The first probably lived in central Arabia or south of Egypt. The second is seen as the ancestor of the famous Queen of Sheba who visited Solomon. Her kingdom lay in the south of the Arabian Peninsula, and corresponds to present-day Yemen. Jokshan was sent east by his father, the area where Job became known as "the greatest of all people" (Job 1:3).

That means that, of all three the third lived closest to Job.

ii. The Chaldeans (Job 1:17):

Of this nation is believed descended from Chesed, the fourth son of Abraham's brother Nahor (Genesis 22:20,22).¹⁰ They lived in the area of the Euphrates River.

Of both groups, it is likely that they became known as tribe during or shortly after the period of the patriarchs. This also puts Job in this time period.

d. Other time indicators in the Book of Job

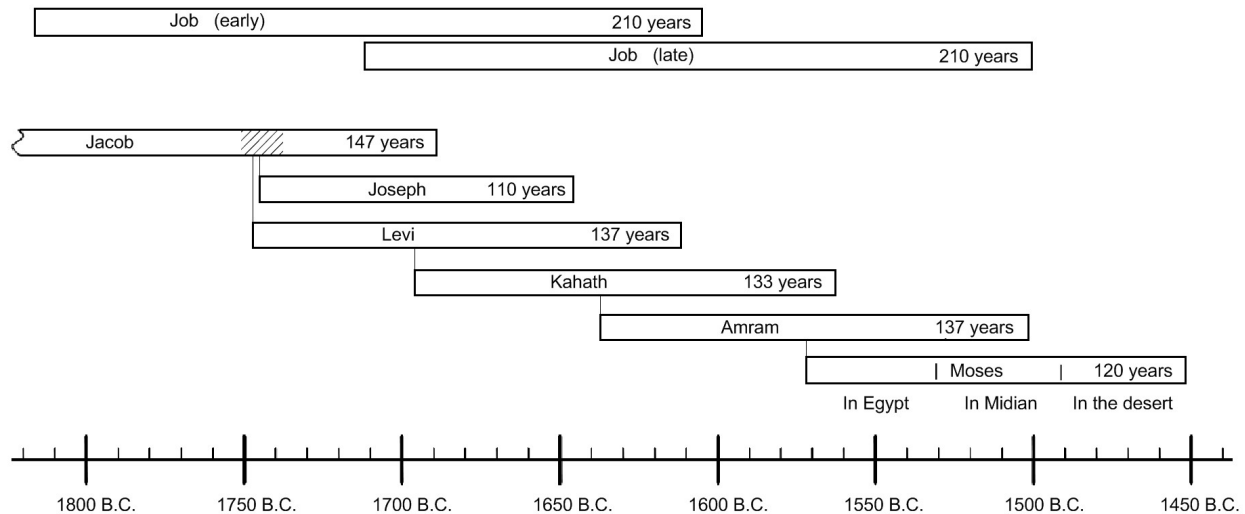
- i. Bildad refers to the unjust who is punished with sulfur (Job 18:14-15). This idea must have come from the destruction of Sodom, because no previous situation is known where God had punished this way. That puts Job in the period after the destruction of Sodom.
- ii. Job is described as a perfect and upright man, with none on earth like him (Job 1:8). That means he was not a contemporary of righteous Noah and not likely of Abraham either. He may have been a contemporary of Isaac and Jacob, to whom that description applies to a lesser degree.
- iii. Job's family and friends gave him a piece of money when they came to see him after his illness (Job 42:11). The Hebrew word *Qesitah* is used here. This payment is mentioned only two other times in the Bible, namely in Genesis 33:19 and Joshua 24:32, where it speaks about when Jacob bought a piece of land of the Hivites. This places the story of Job close to the time of Jacob's life.
- iv. Job offered sacrifices for his sons (Job 1: 5). This may well have come from Abraham who sacrificed a ram instead of his son Isaac (Genesis 22:13). The other patriarchs also offered sacrifices as heads of their family. This is very different from the later sacrifices that were to be offered by the priests.
- v. The phrase to describe Job's death corresponds exactly to that of Abraham and Isaac; compare Job 40:17 "an old man and full of days" with Genesis 25:8 and 35:29.

- vi. The name "(God) Almighty" (Hebrew *Shaddai*) appears a total of 31 times in the book of Job and 6 times in Genesis. In contrast, in the rest of the Bible the name appears only 10 times in 7 Bible books (Exodus, Numbers, Ruth, Psalms, Isaiah, Ezekiel and Joel).
- e. The author of the book

Although the writer of the book of Job is unknown, the following points to Moses

- i. Moses and his successor Joshua are the only ones who refer to the payment in *Qesitah*, mentioned earlier.
- ii. The personal name of God, Yahweh, appears 25 times in the opening of the book, in the dialogue of God with Job and the end of the book, while it only occurs once in the speeches (12: 9). This means that the author was familiar with the name Yahweh, but that the name was not common in the days of Job and his friends. So the writer must have been an Israelite who lived after Job.
- iii. The use of the name Yahweh at the beginning and end of Job finds a clear parallel in the book of Genesis, where most referrals also come from the hand of the author and not from the mouth of the person. Moses was the first to whom God revealed himself as Yahweh (Exodus 6:3) and he is also the presumed author of Genesis.
- iv. In the book of Job three musical instruments are referred to: the drum, harp and flute (Job 21:12, 30:31). All three of them are already mentioned in the book of Genesis: Jubal was the father of the harp and flute players (Genesis 4:21), and Laban had wanted to say goodbye to Jacob while enjoying the tambourine and harp (Genesis 31:27). The harp and tambourine are frequently mentioned in the Old Testament, but the flute is named just one more time (Psalm 150:4). The references to the same instruments in Genesis and Job point to Moses as author.
- v. The unique intimacy that Moses had with God, makes him the most likely person of the Old Testament period to gain such detailed insight into the heavenly encounters between God and Satan described in the beginning of the book of Job.
- vi. The literary forms and quality of rhetoric reveal the literary genius of the author.¹¹ Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds (Acts 7:22). At the court in Egypt or Midian he had ample opportunity to learn about Job's life and he had enough time to write the stories.

Timeline Job



f. Conclusion:

Weighing the advanced age of Job against the time in which he lived, he must have lived in the days of Jacob, the last patriarch, or after him.

Assuming that Moses was the author of the book of Job, Job must have lived in the period between roughly 1800 to 1500 BC.

In the book *Rejected and Loved* the choice was made to place the birth of Job around 1770 B.C. If he reached the age of 210 years he would have passed away in 1560. Thus it was already possible for Moses to write about him, when he lived in Egypt at the court of Pharaoh.

4. Where did Job live?

a. The land of Uz

The opening sentence of the book states that Job lived in the land of Uz (Job 1:1). Today no country is known by that name, so we have to rely on ancient writings to determine the location. The land of Uz is mentioned in two other places in the Bible, namely:

- 1) Jeremiah 25:20 "and all the mixed tribes among them; all the kings of the land of Uz and all the kings of the land of the Philistines (Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, and the remnant of Ashdod)"¹²
- 2) Lamentations 4:21 "Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom, you who dwell in the land of Uz"¹³

In addition, the land of Uz was probably named after one of the following persons:

- 1) The son of Aram, grandson of Shem (Genesis 10:23, 1 Chronicles 1:17).

- 2) The eldest son of Nahor, Abraham's brother (Genesis 22:21). His brothers were Buz, Kemuel the father of Aram, Chesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph, and Bethuel the father of Rebekah.
- 3) A descendant of the Horite Seir (Genesis 36:28).

Assuming Job lived in the time of the patriarchs, there couldn't have been a country yet that was named after the descendant of the Horite Seir.

Both Uz the grandson of Shem and Abraham's nephew Uz are mentioned along with Aram. Therefore, it is likely that the land of Uz bordered Aram, the area northeast of Israel.

In the enumeration of all the kings at the time of the prophet Jeremiah, Uz is mentioned while Aram isn't. It is possible that only Uz was mentioned, because it occupied a large area northeast of Israel.

Lamentations refers to Edom in the land of Uz. This could point to land near the Seir Mountains, named Uz, after the offspring of the Horite Seir. Several people see this as a reference to Job being a descendant of Esau. However, it is also possible that at that time the area of Uz stretched from Aram to Edom. This interpretation fits more with Jeremiah 25:20-21, where are Edom and Uz are mentioned as two separate countries.

b. The east

Job was the greatest of all the people of the east (Job 1:3), indicating he was one of them. To the Israelites "the east" meant the area east of the Jordan River, beyond Ammon, Moab and Edom (Judges 6: 3:33, 7:12, 8:10), and stretched all the way toward Aram, where Balaam came from (Numbers 23: 7). Centuries later, Jeremiah spoke about the territory of Kedar, the second son of Ishmael, as the land of the people of the east (Jeremiah 49:28-31). It is noteworthy that the Hebrew phrase for "people of the east" is exactly the same in Jeremiah and Job.

c. Description of the environment and living conditions

i. Tents

In the book of Job, many references occur to living in tents (eg, 5:24, 11:14, 18: 6:14-15, 19:12, 20:26, 22:23; 14 in total). This corresponds to the (semi) nomadic lifestyle of Job. Although his sons lived in houses and he sat in the gate (Job 29:7), during his childhood he lived in a tent (Job 29: 4). Today, there are wealthy Arabs in Saudi Arabia and the UAE who have pitched a tent in the garden of their palace, where they regularly receive guests and enjoy staying overnight.

ii. Desert

The desert is mentioned a number of times. First, there was a strong wind from the desert that destroyed the homes of Job's sons (Job 1:19). This indicates that Job's sons lived in the vicinity of the desert. Additionally, there are several references to the desert (12:24, 24:5, 30:3, 38:26, 39:6) and to wadi's - dry riverbeds in the desert that become filled only during the rainy season with water (6:17-18, 28:4, 30:6).

iii. Other names

The following are some other references in the book of Job that give an indication of the location of Uz.

God refers to the Jordan (Job 40:18), a relatively small river. That this river was known to Job points out that he didn't live too far away.

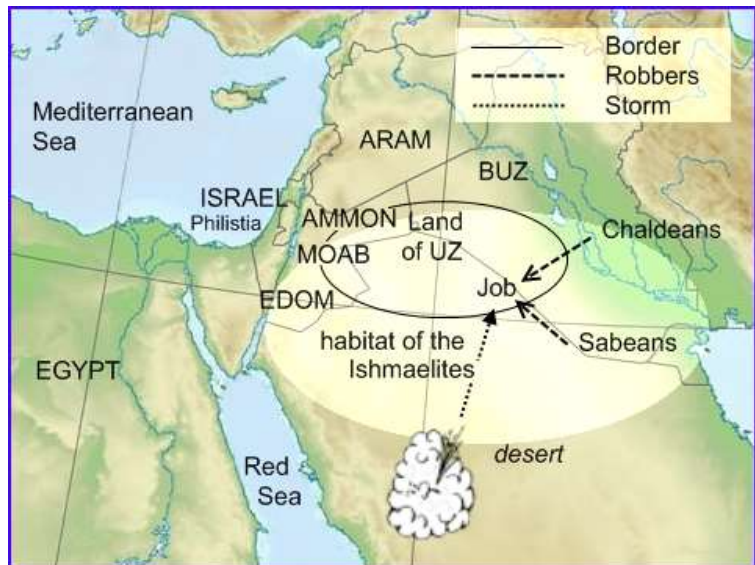
Job speaks of the traders from Tema and Sheba searching for water in the desert (Job 6:19).

Tema was a son of Ishmael and Sheba came from southern Arabia. These traders went far to the north with their wares.

Elihu came from the area of Buz, which probably derived its name from Buz, the son of Abraham's brother Nahor (Genesis 22:21). Unlike Abraham, who was led by the Lord to an unknown land, Buz will have settled near his brothers, somewhere between Ur and Aram. According to Jeremiah 25:23, Buz was a land that belonged to an Arab king. It is called with Tema and Dedan, who were respectively a son of Ishmael and a grandson of Abraham by Keturah. This confirms the possibility that Buz was situated in the northern part of Jordan.

iv. Enemies

Job was attacked by two enemies: the Sabeans and Chaldeans. Both peoples have already been described in section 3b. The latter lived in the area near the Euphrates River, and the first probably descended from Sheba, the son of Jokshan and grandson of Abraham, who lived in the area east of the Jordan. They are thought to have settled in eastern Saudi Arabia. It could be that both peoples attacked Job, because they were jealous of God's blessing on him. In any case they lived at such a distance from Job that it was possible to rob him. This indicates that Uz must have been situated between the Jordan and the Euphrates rivers.



d. Conclusion

Job lived in the area east of Israel in a desert area near Aram, in modern Syria and not too far from Iraq. His friends came from different areas that are far apart, such as Edom and Buz. It is quite possible that Job lived in between, somewhere in eastern Jordan or northern Saudi Arabia.

5. From whom was Job descended?

We have already concluded that Job must have lived at the time of the patriarch Jacob, afterward. He was not a Jew, because he dwelt in the east in Uz.

What more does the book of Job provide that says something about his ancestry?

a. Monotheistic faith

Job was a man who feared God and turned away from evil (Job 1:1). All his friends believed in God, the Creator of heaven and earth. Probably the three friends were descendants of Abraham and Elihu of Abraham's brother Nahor.

Lot was a righteous man that was faithful to God in the midst of the unjust in Sodom and Gomorrah. His descendants however, the Moabites and Ammonites, worshiped idols, so it's unlikely that Job descended from them (Judges 10:6, 1 Kings 11:5,7,11).

Esau grew up with the knowledge of God, but his life does not show that he acted accordingly. Rather, the first two women he married and his plan to murder Jacob point out that he didn't worship God wholeheartedly. His descendants, the Edomites worshiped idols (2 Chronicles 25:14,20).

Job may have been a descendant of one of the sons of Keturah who were sent to the east. However, the Sabeans were violent against Job, suggesting that Job probably belonged to another tribal confederation.

This brings us to Ishmael, the eldest son of Abraham, who in the first years of his life witnessed impressive things with his father, such as the call to circumcision, the visit of God with the birth of Isaac, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and Abimelech's great gifts following his dream in which God appeared. Later Ishmael witnessed the appearance of the angel of God to his mother and God's miraculous provision of water when he was dying. Later he met his father again and also his brother Isaac, and heard even more miracles. All these things will have confirmed that God hears indeed, as his name signifies.¹⁴ There is no record in the Bible of the Ishmaelites worshipping idols ever and it seems that they always remained a god-fearing people. It is therefore quite possible for a descendant of Ishmael to have had the unwavering faith that characterizes Job.

b. Job the most blessed man

Job's possessions gave him the reputation of being the greatest in the east (Job 1:3). That was a sign that he was tremendously blessed by God. That was exactly the basis for Satan's accusation before God, claiming Job worshiped Him because He blessed and protected him (1:10). This blessing actually fits more with the lineage of Israel than with any other nation. Now Ishmael was the only one besides Isaac and Jacob who received the promise of becoming a great nation.¹⁵ Indeed, twelve tribes came from Ishmael and he became a great nation.

Job was also blessed abundantly with seven sons and three daughters, and thus fits most in the line of Ishmael. Of Ishmael it is written that God was with him (Genesis 21:20); God was clearly with Job as well. These parallels make Ishmael the most likely ancestor of Job.

c. Image of the wild donkey

The Hebrew word for wild donkey, *pereh*, appears ten times in the entire Bible, of which four (i.e. 40%) are in the book of Job (see Study Wild Donkey on www.godlovesishmael.com). This gives a strong connection to Genesis 16:12.

God said to Job that He had given the wild donkey freedom (Job 39:5). This gives insight into God's purpose that Ishmael and his descendants might live in freedom, something that was true for Job. Also, God gave the wilderness as a home to the wild donkey. This is also the type of area where Ishmael settled (Genesis 21:20) and where Job lived (see section 4b).

Furthermore, the word "pereh" comes from "being fruitful."¹⁶ That is very appropriate for Ishmael, who fathered 12 sons. Job was also prolific, with his seven sons and three daughters.

d. Jobab

In Genesis 36:33 Jobab is called the son of Zerah, son of Bozrah. The name seems to be a combination of Job and *ab* which means "father." He was a prince, and thus a rich and influential man. For these and for other reasons, some believe that this must be the righteous Job who suffered so much.

However, for a number of reasons this is very unlikely, including the following:

- Bozrah was a place in the territory of Edom and about 35 km south of the Dead Sea. Therefore it can be hardly considered the east.
- In Hebrew the name of Jobab is יוֹבָב *yôbâb* (Strong's H3103) and not a compilation of Job (אִיּוֹב *'îyôb*, Strong's H347) and *ab* (אָב *'ab*, Strong's H1).
- In the book named after him, Job is nowhere depicted as a king; neither before nor after his suffering. He was a wealthy individual, such as Abraham, who took his place in the gate as one of the wise men (Job 29:7; 31:21).
- Both before and after his suffering, Job's riches were expressed in livestock and not in gold or other royal possessions (Job 1:3, 42:12). So he was a nomadic farmer, just like the Ishmaelites.

e. Conclusion

Job's strong faith and blessed life fit most of the descendants of Ishmael. The same applies to the references to the wild ass that describe its life and habitat in the book.

6. Conclusion

Returning to the facts at the beginning of this study, we see the following:

- 1 Job's age puts him in the time of the patriarchs.
- 2 The descriptions of Job's friends and foes point out that he was a contemporary of Jacob and his sons, when Ishmael's twelve sons already had become princes.
- 3 Job's profession and living conditions place him among the nomads, like Ishmael.
- 4 His residence was in the east, the area where the Ishmaelites settled.
5. Job had a clear monotheistic worldview and strong faith, that fits with Abraham and Ishmael.
- 6 The blessings on him as a non-Jew are in line with God's promise to Ishmael.
- 7 The image of the wild ass, that God used to describe Ishmael, is prominent in the book of Job.

Therefore, Job must have been a descendant of Ishmael

Who was Job?

1

No.	Name	Born at...	Fathering Age	LifeSpan	Died at...
1	Adam	0	130	930	930
2	Seth	130	105	912	1042
3	Enosh	235	90	905	1140
4	Kenan	325	70	910	1235
5	Mahalalel	395	65	895	1290
6	Jared	460	162	962	1422
7	Enoch	622	65	365	1290*
8	Methuselah	687	187	969	1656
9	Lamech	874	182	777	1651
10	Noah	1056	502	950	2006
11	Shem "Semites"	1558	100	600	2158
12	Arphaxad	1658	35	438	2096
13	Shelah	1693	30	433	2126
14	Eber "Hebrews"	1723	34	464	2187
15	Peleg	1757	30	230	2049
16	Reu	1787	32	239	2026
17	Serug	1819	30	230	2049
18	Nahor	1849	29	148	1997
19	Terah	1878	130	205	2083
20	Abram (Abraham)	2008	100	175	2183

Source: http://worldwideflood.org/general/noahs_age.htm, accessed in January 2014

² Eliphaz' reference to Job's father indicates he still lived (Job 15:10), so that Job probably wasn't much older than this.

³ Another example where the father was named after the son is found in 1 Chronicles 8:29.

⁴ Matthew Henry Commentary of Job 2:11: Zophar is thought by some to be the same with Zepho, a descendant from Esau, e-Sword, version 10.1.0, © Copyright 200-2012 Rick Meyers

⁵ Bible Commentator Gill on Job 2:11: 'The Septuagint version calls Eliphaz the king of the Temanites, and Bildad the tyrannus, or governor, of the Sauchaens, and Zophar king of the Minaeans.'

⁶ Easton's Bible Dictionary, entry for Naamathite: 'as Uz was in Arabia, probably the Naamah where he lived was on the Arabian borders of Syria.'

⁷ Holman Bible Dictionary, entry for Naamathite: 'Na'amah is perhaps Djebel-el-Na'amah in northwest Arabia.'

⁸ Smith's Bible Dictionary, entry for Naamathite: 'Naamah is too common a place-name to permit of the identification of Zophar's home.'

⁹ Bible Commentators Poole and Matthew Henry on Job 2:11, e-Sword

¹⁰ In Hebrew the root of both names is the same: ksd, with Chesed as 'kesed' and Chaldeans as 'kasdy'. See Strong's Concordance H3777 & H3778

¹¹ The literary structures and the quality of the rhetoric used display the author's literary genius. *NIV StudyBible* 1985 p.731.

¹² *The Holy Bible*, English Standard Version, Copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Ishmael means 'God hears.'

¹⁵ God to Abraham "As for Ishmael, I have heard you; behold, I have blessed him and will make him fruitful and multiply him greatly. He shall father twelve princes, and I will make him into a great nation" Genesis 17:20. God said to Jacob, "I am God, the God of your father. Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for there I will make you into a great nation." Genesis 46:3. See also Genesis 35:11

¹⁶ See Strong's H6500