

# ORIGINAL ARTICLE


## The Pain and Treatment of Job: Some Traces of Hydrotherapy in the Story of Job

### Abstract

Human beings and their storytelling mind, sometimes, through imagination and exaggeration, move beyond the obvious signs of an event and its consequences, completely removing or devoiding it of its original meaning, dissociating it from daily life, and turning it into a tool to justify their attitudes and beliefs. One of the bitterest examples of this, in human history, is about the way the story of the prophet Job and the cause of his suffering and illness, along with its treatment, have been reported. Throughout history, most related interpretations have been based on the Torah's outlooks and writings, resulting in changing the main message of the prophet Job's story and life.

**Key words:** Job, Torah, Quran, Suffering, Patience, Hydrotherapy, Attitude

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## Introduction

One of the bitterest examples of the interpretation of life events and the history of the ancients in the history of human life has occurred in the story of the prophet Job, keeping the cause of his unbearable suffering secret in human literature to this day. This is probably due to the dominance of the Torah over what has been written in world literature about this patient prophet, as an example of a humanistic interpretation of what is, in fact, heavenly; thus, depriving oneself and others of the mercy of God bestowed on mankind by His prophets.

If there were any other views and interpretations in all human literature than what is stated in the Torah, a great writer like Dostoevsky would not lose his patience after reading about Job and his suffering. It is worth mentioning that, according to his biography (Troyat, 1994) his life was full of suffering and humiliation, making him sensitive to the smallest human suffering. This is represented in most characters of his stories. In addition to being quite familiar with both the Torah and the Bible from childhood, Dostoevsky was acquainted with the greatest figures of European literature and their works. Despite all this, the range of Job's suffering puts intolerable pressure on him, so much so that he writes about this great sorrow in a letter to his wife<sup>1</sup>. (Mojtahedi, 2010)

Reflecting on the roots of what has come down to us in the form of stories, legends, and myths can sometimes prevent us from pursuing the origins of certain deceiving mirages. Hence, as Goerge Dumezil put "mythology is not an act of exhumation, ... . It is, however, discerning the roots of a humane culture; in other words, it resembles a thick tree from which mysterious stories and legends and even epics have grown and flourished like branches, some of which are still present in our unconscious, affecting our views and conducts .... . Mythology, then, is necessary to recognize the immortal elements of culture, and nullify the magic constituents, left hidden and unknown, resembling a mirage of deception." (Sattari, 2000, pp. 8-9) Such a necessity is always felt in the re-reading of ancient religious texts.

According to the Torah, in God's confrontation with Satan over Job's true servitude and God's pride in his faith and faithfulness on the one hand, and Satan's attempt to prove Job's unfaithfulness, Satan, with God's permission, put a lot of pains and torments on Job, so much so that poor Job, in line with his friends' judgment, who were Jewish scholars, found himself guilty. Hating himself, he began to repent in dust and ashes. (The Old Testament, Book of Job, 1979, 2/9, p. 680; 17/6, p. 692; 30/2, 7, 8, 9, p. 702) Later on, these

1- The letter he sent to his wife in 1875 shows that he is deeply saddened by the reading of Job's story: "I read the book and then put it aside and walked around the room with a lot of sadness and tears in my eyes." (Mojtahedi, 2010, p. 205).





stories and reports, full of contradictions, have become the source of some Muslim commentators in the interpretation of Quranic verses about Job.

In the Quran, the name of Job is mentioned only four times; Once it is found from verse 41 / Sura (38) to verse 44, where God speaks of Job's suffering, praying, and begging, along with his solution for healing and eradicating his illness and pain. Muslim commentators mostly have presented the same view of the Torah on the life of Job, his pain, and his treatment in their commentaries. This is seen in the following verses in Tafasir-e Tabari (Yaghmaee, 2007), Al-Tibyan (Shoghi and Ghasir al Ameli, 1989,), Kashshaf (Zamakhshari Al Kharazmi, 1901), Al-Majma Al-Bayyan (Al-Tabrisi, 1997), and the translation of the Quran by Rashid al-Din Meybodi (2009, Surah38: Verses 41-44) and many ancient commentaries and translations, reflecting the Torah's viewpoint. The same view has continued to be used in contemporary translations, including two translations of the Holy Majid Quran, translated by Mohammad Mehdi Fooladvand (1994, Surah38: Verses 41-44) and the Holy Karim Quran, translated by Baha'uddin Khorramshahi (1996, Surah38: Verses 41-44), both of which are almost identical in following ancient views and sources. And here, for example, three verses (41 to 43) related to the subject of this article are presented from the translation of the Holy Karim Quran:

41/ And remember our servant Job when he called upon his Lord: Satan has afflicted me with toil and torment.

42 / [We said] Urge with your foot; here is a cool washing-place and a drink.

43 / And we gave him his family and the like of them with them, as a mercy from Us, and as a reminder to those possessed of understanding (pp. 455-6).

Throughout history, due to wars, brutal actions, and pollution of the earth and living conditions, it has frequently happened that infectious diseases, namely plague and cholera, have killed people in crowds, making life intolerable for their survivors. Job, who had contracted some form of the same infectious disease, was taken out of the residential place to avoid the risk of infecting others, and his wife brought him water and food from time to time. After some time, people noticed that Job, unlike other such patients, was still alive. Just as God places the burdens of His guidance on the shoulders of His chosen prophets and servants, He also chose Job to bring the knowledge of hydrotherapy from heaven, helping human beings better overcome some diseases. Since then, human beings have improved the knowledge of hydrotherapy and used it as a method of treatment. The same Quranic insight is manifested in Islamic mysticism, being manifested as the origin of all human sciences, from astronomy, medicine, and various professions. Even the knowledge of digging graves to burying the dead is considered a gift from heaven. (Masnavi Manavi, Book 4, verses 1295-1302) (Masnavi Ma'navi, 2017, p. 848) In this way, hydrotherapy education finds its way into human culture and experience and has gradually been used in books, receiving approval.

The phrase "rakz berrej" (lit. footsteps) is defined in the Persian dictionary as to use the legs to run and run gently; this is what is called "Pouyeh" in Persian, which is a kind of jogging, running neither fast nor slowly. (Moin, M., 1997, p. 844) In *Asas al-Balagha*, Zamakhshari offers various meanings for rakz, ranging from hitting the ground to hitting one's chest and moving / running.

In verse 42, the word *mughtasal* means water with which one may wash the body or clothes, and it also means the place for washing and laundry (Al-Zamakhshari, 2000, P.



450).

The word “*sharab*” (lit. wine), in this verse, means any kind of drink, and here it means drinking water.

Now, having perceived the meaning of these Quranic words and being aware of the knowledge of the heavenly gifts, we aim to find out the meaning of these three verses:

41/ And remember our servant Job when he called upon his Lord: Satan has afflicted me with toil and torment.

42 / [We revealed to him] Run gently; here is a cool washing-place and a drink.

43 / [Then, after his health, again] we gave him his family and the like of them with them, as a mercy from Us, and as a reminder to those possessed of understanding.

His people respected Job because of having the following virtues: God-fearing, virtuous, wealthy, renowned, and famous. He was chosen for such a difficult mission and became ill. As was routine in those days, his family took him out of the city and painfully waited for his death. In the meantime, his faithful wife, who was worried about his health condition, used to visit him from time to time, giving him food and water. Time passed, but surprisingly Job did not die. In those days, when it was not easy to break and disseminate the news, it took years for many people from far away and even neighboring tribes to become aware of Job’s pain and disease. They did not expect, Job, despite his faith and faithfulness, to become ill. They wondered how and why he got severely ill. They tried to find a good response to that question. One answer was a worldly and humane interpretation or perhaps a jealous interpretation of Jewish friends and scholars who envied Job’s status, wealth, and faithful servitude. Centuries later, this latter interpretation was found in Muslim’s interpretations of Job. Another answer is God’s guidance to Job. This, coupled with his experience, reaches out to his children and family, and through them, to people, as well as those looking for the true answer<sup>2</sup>.

Based on today’s knowledge, we know that jugging and gentle running increase blood flow and consequently heat the skin’s surface. On this basis, God’s guidance to Job is to run gently and immediately after that wash the body in cold water. Of course, today, this is a sort of common knowledge, used with different tools, in different places, and for all age groups. In addition, it is accepted medically, and a myriad of research is conducted on that, encompassing the use of water for treating various pains and diseases. (Lionel, and Calthrop, 1931) In the Scandinavian countries, the precision and development of new tools, especially the introduction

2- Perhaps the first person to bring this knowledge from ancient books to be actually used in human life was a young German priest, named Sebastian Knaip, who had tuberculosis. Doctors told him that his health condition is not good and he would live for a short period of time. Following the search for his cure, he became acquainted with the method of hydrotherapy in ancient books, and he cured himself with diligence and hard work. However, he faced the objection of mainstream medicine; despite this, he, after years of resisting and patience, succeeded to show the treatment effects of hydrotherapy. He found that when he ran slowly, his body temperature increased after a few minutes. When he immersed his body in the cold water of the Danube River (in his neighborhood in Germany) for a few seconds, he noticed some positive changes in his body; he felt fresh and relaxed. He repeated this every day. After about three months, doctors found no trace of tuberculosis in his chest. When I read his experience in the book *Cold Water Healing* by Baumann Werner, this reminded me of the questions I always asked myself after reading those verses about Job.





of new methods in hydrotherapy in the Scandinavian countries, using the Finnish sauna bath and the effects of hot water, followed by cold water called Contrast Therapy and sometimes adjunct therapy is one of the new achievements in modern times. (Heinonen, and Laukkanen, 2018)

Today, the sauna, including experiencing intermittent periods between staying in hot sauna and immersing in freezing cold water for a short time, is prescribed for treating a variety of treatments. In a detailed article, reviewing articles published from 1986 to 2012, the researchers have investigated the effects of Balneotherapy / Hydrotherapy, a variety of hot and cold water treatments, body massage in water, relaxation and stimulation in water, the properties of mineral waters, such as Silica Sulfur, Selenium, and radium and clay soils. It has exhibited positive effects of these treatments on the body's organs, ranging from increasing blood flow and consequently heating the skin surface, decreasing blood pressure and increasing heart rate, increasing blood volume, especially its plasma, in proportional to heat tolerance, increasing blood flow to the bone marrow, both through sauna baths, cold/hot therapy or contrast therapy, and through physical activity that can increase bone marrow activity and ultimately repair body tissues, improving the body's immunity and reducing the susceptibility to colds and increasing the body's natural ability to fight infectious diseases. (Mooventhan, and Nivethitha, 2014)

At present, the issue of water therapy has attracted International researchers, including Iranian researchers. They conducted and published numerous articles, namely *The Therapeutic Uses of Balneotherapy* (Feizi, and Mortazavi, 2003), *Effects of Applying Hydrotherapy on Quality of Life in Women with Multiple Sclerosis* (Ghaffari, et al, 2008), and *The Effect of Hydrotherapy Theory on Maintaining Balance in the Patients Suffering from the Parkinson's Disease* (Kargarfard, Chitsaz, and Azizi, 2012).

### Conclusion

To sum up, in the Quran, one may find traces of the beneficial effects of water therapy. Accordingly, in Job's story, it seems that God first instructs him to increase the temperature of his skin and then, immediately wash it in cold water. Job follows God's guidance and heals himself. Then, it can be said that his experience of hydrotherapy has been brought to human beings from heaven, passed on to people to treat various diseases.

### Conflict of Interest

None.

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