

TEXTS IN DIALOGUE

PLEASE BE PATIENT

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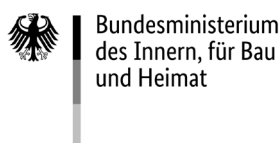
In the English-speaking world, Job is popularly associated with one particular quality: patience. Interestingly, in the German-speaking milieu, the name "Hiob" (Job) most readily makes people think of bad news – *Hiobsbotschaften* refers to messages of misery and bad luck. But does our book of Job specifically extol his patience? No. Job is anything but patient. He very *impatiently* rejects (Job 6:11) the advice of Elphaz, who counsels calm, accepting endurance: what we English-speakers understand as patience. Instead, he assails God angrily (Job 16) and insists on outright confrontation (Job 23).

The idea of Job as an exemplar of patience is the history of Job's reception: the ways in which the book is read, edited, interpreted and especially translated, and the qualities which readers attach to the figure of Job. This begins in the New Testament Letter (Epistle) of James, in the Greek language, in a few words which found their way into English in 1611: "Ye have heard of the patience of Job" (James 5:11). And there they have remained in the English-speaker's "Volksmund", the everyday speech of the people. However, as Ursula explains, "patience" is a very questionable translation of the Greek original. In that word *patience*, we English speakers have been lumbered with a tendentious, inaccurate account of the sort of character Job was.

But of what importance is the sort of character this mysterious man of Uz was? Are we invited to be like him? Would we maybe prefer to have nothing in common with Job? And is this Job the character in our Hebrew text – or as interpreted in our religious traditions – or do we find value in James's wayward choice of patience as Job's key virtue? Following Ursula's exploration, what on earth is "patience" anyway?

Another time, we'll consider the German expression *Hiobsbotschaften*, "Job messages"! Please be patient ...

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