

The Book of Job: A Biography by Mark Larrimore.
LIVES OF GREAT RELIGIOUS BOOKS,
Princeton University Press, 2013.

This addition to the Princeton canon, *Lives of Great Religious Books*, takes the book of Job as its focus. Job is one of the most challenging of all the books in the Hebrew Bible; it is long and linguistically complex, it is difficult to date with any certainty, and it attempts – unsuccessfully – to deal with the issue of Theodicy, a concept that has troubled humanity since we began to believe in a good God who cared for us, and which Rabbi Harold Kushner encapsulated in the phrase – *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*.

Mark Larrimore, editor of *The Problem of Evil: A Reader* has followed the style of previous books in this series by investigating Job's history, the scholarly responses to it across the millennia, and the challenge of Theodicy. The book is divided into five chapters: Job and the Ancient Interpreters; Job in Disputation; Job Enacted; Job in Theodicy; Job in Exile.

In his introduction Larrimore explains the approach he will be taking in each, as well as considering the many challenges that the Book of Job poses. He also expresses the view that many people of faith who have suffered grievously in their lives see Job as an expression of their story, giving the book a powerful, extra resonance.

Some of Larrimore's best phraseology occurs in the conclusion, when he describes the book of Job as what waits for us 'when experience pushes thought and language to their breaking point', and as a book 'for the broken'.

While the biblical text may well fail to provide answers to the biggest question of all for people of faith, Mark Larrimore's biography of the Book of Job is an excellent summary of the historical and spiritual impact of this most controversial of biblical books.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh