Friendship and Virtue Ethics in the Book of Job

For classical philosophers, friendship was a serious topic of ethical reflection, yet in contemporary discussions on ethics, this subject is largely absent. Drawing upon an Aristotelian ethics based on virtue, Patricia Vesely examines friendship as a moral category in Job, illuminating those virtues, motivations, and perceptions that this relationship entails. She argues that for Job, the virtues of loyalty, compassion, courage, humility, honesty, hospitality, and practical wisdom are essential to a relationship of friendship. These traits of character are most fully embodied in actions of advocacy. In addition to a detailed examination of friendship in Job, Vesely addresses topics such as the contribution of virtue to human flourishing, the role of tragic literature in moral formation, friendship in Hellenistic and biblical contexts, and ethics in heroic societies. Her book brings together topics spanning philosophy, ethics, and biblical studies, yielding a work that will appeal to a broad range of audiences.

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It is clear that it is better to pass the days together with friends than with strangers . . . For the happy person, accordingly, there is need of friends. (Aristotle)