

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.

Patricia Vesely is a scholar of the Hebrew Bible and teaches at Union Presbyterian Seminary and Virginia Commonwealth University.

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-47647-8 — Friendship and Virtue Ethics in the Book of Job
Patricia Vesely
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-47647-8 — Friendship and Virtue Ethics in the Book of Job
Patricia Vesely
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

Friendship and Virtue Ethics in the Book of Job

PATRICIA VESELY
Union Presbyterian Seminary



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-47647-8 — Friendship and Virtue Ethics in the Book of Job
Patricia Vesely
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
314-321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,
New Delhi – 110025, India
79 Anson Road, #06-04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108476478

DOI: 10.1017/9781108568500

© Cambridge University Press 2019

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2019

Printed and bound in Great Britain by Clays Ltd, Elcograf S.p.A.

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978-1-108-47647-8 Hardback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Contents

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<i>page</i> vii
Introduction	I
Chapter Summary	5
1 Introduction to Virtue Ethics	II
Virtue Ethics Emphasizes Character over Action	12
Virtue Ethics Deemphasizes Moral Rules	15
Virtue Ethics Includes a Teleological Understanding of the Role of Virtue in the Human Life	19
Three Representatives of Virtue Ethics	21
2 Friendship in Aristotle and the Wider Hellenistic World	50
Greek Terminology	51
Friendship in Aristotle	53
Friendship and the Polis	59
Friendship in the Hellenistic Tradition	64
3 The Ethics of Reading: Friendship in the Old Testament	74
Hebrew Terminology	76
Friendship in Hebrew Narratives	79
Friendship in the Psalms, Prophets, and Wisdom Literature	82
Genre and Ethics	85
Genre and the Book of Job	91
The Moral Demand of Friendship: Job 6:28–9	94
Appendix to Chapter 3: Antecedent Texts in the Ancient Near East	98

4	Friendship in the Poetic Dialogue	105
	The First Cycle: Job 4:1–7:21	107
	The Second Cycle: Job 15:1–17:16	130
	The Third Cycle: Job 22:1–24:25	151
	The Face of Friendship: Job’s Expectations of Friendship in the Poetic Dialogue	161
5	Contrasting Moral Visions: The Joban Prose Tale	166
	Contrasts of Character	166
	Contrasting Genres	169
	Tales of Heroes and Times Past	180
	Genre as a Friendship Offering by Author and Audience	192
	Summary	194
6	Virtue and the Good Life: Job 29–31	197
	Job’s Social World	199
	Job 29: Job’s Memory of the Good Life	201
	The <i>Telos</i> of Human Life in the Hebrew Bible	208
	The Dispositions of a Worthy Friend: Job 29:12–35	212
	Aristotle and Job 29–31	217
7	Tragic Literature and the Cultivation of Character	221
	Aristotle and Tragedy	222
	Job and Tragedy	223
	Tragedy and Character Formation: Pity and Fear	243
	Tragedy, Virtue, and the Good Life	255
	Appendix to Chapter 7: The Friendship of God in the Book of Job	258
	Conclusion: The Face of Friendship	262
	Limits of Virtue Ethics	266
	<i>Bibliography</i>	269
	<i>General Index</i>	281
	<i>Source Index</i>	284

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I would like to thank my family, without whose support I would not have been able to pursue my dream of an education in biblical studies. Education is always a community effort, and I am deeply grateful for the constant encouragement of my professors, peers, and students at Union Presbyterian Seminary. Their kind words and gestures of encouragement strengthened me when the road was difficult. I would also like to thank Katharine Dell and Samuel Adams for reading this work and for offering their keen perspectives and valuable comments. Not least of all, I would like to extend my gratitude to Samuel E. Balentine, whose dedication and commitment both to me and to my book have inspired me when I was most in need of faith and perseverance. Sam has provided me with a model of honesty, empathy, and advocacy for which I am truly grateful.

I am fortunate to have friends who have lived up to Job's expectations; they are women and men who are compassionate, courageous, discerning, honest, hospitable, and committed. I dedicate this work to them. Thank you for your many years of friendship.

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)

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-47647-8 — Friendship and Virtue Ethics in the Book of Job
Patricia Vesely
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)
