The Date of Job

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Genesis 25:8 says that Abraham "died in a good old age, an old man and full of years", and he was 175 years old. Job 42:17 says that Job "died, old and full of days". Job 42:16 says that after his Test, "Job lived one hundred and forty years". The Text does not say how old Job was at the time of his Test, but with ten children, at least some of which were presumably adults, he must have been at least sixty. His life span of at least 200 years would have made him a contemporary of Terah, or even Nahor, Abraham's grandfather. Job 1:1 says that Job lived in the "land of Uz". This Uz was presumably a son of Aram, a son of Shem (Genesis 10:23). It could not have been the distant descendant of Esau (Genesis 36:28), since by that time no one was living anywhere near 200 years.

Job knew Jehovah by name (Job 1:21), and he knew about animal sacrifice (verse 5). Being a descendant of Shem, as was Abraham, he had evidently received instruction about how to please God; and he did so to such good effect that God Himself called Job the best servant He had down here (verse 8).

Elihu is said to be a Buzite (Job 32:2). The second son of Nahor, Abraham's brother was called Buz (Genesis 22:21). But Elihu was also "of the family of Ram". This 'Ram' could not have been the great, great, grandson of Jacob (1 Chronicles 2:9), because that would make Elihu be born later than Ram and he would not have been alive in Job's time. Elihu was the son of Barachel, who was the Buzite, who was of Ram's family. If the Buz here was Nahor's son, why was not Nahor, or perhaps Terah, mentioned, instead of Ram? I conclude that we do not know the identity of the Buz and the Ram mentioned in Job 32:2. If the Buz here were actually Nahor's son, Elihu would not have been born in time to participate in the debate with Job. Job 42:16 also says that Job saw four generations of descendants. If a generation at that time was an average of thirty years, Job could easily have seen the fourth generation, but perhaps not the fifth. On the basis of a generation of thirty years, even if Elihu was a great grandson of Nahor, he would not have been born in time.

But how is it that we have a precise transcription of the discourses in Job? And who recorded all the events in Abraham's life, etc.? Genesis 14:14 records that Abraham led 318 trained men, born in his household, to rescue Lot; that means that with women and children and older men his household probably numbered over 1,000 people. That number would certainly have included a scribe or two, who had the responsibility of making a record of all that happened. If Job was greater than Abraham (Job 1:3), then his household would have been at least as large, including some scribes. There were certainly hundreds of people observing everything that happened to Job, at first hand, and the scribes would be busy recording the discourses. Eliphas himself may have been a scribe. If God inspired the book of Job,

He knew beforehand that He was going to do so, and He would make sure that the discourses were correctly transcribed.

The final composition of the book of Job, as we have it, had to wait for Job's death. Job may have died before Abraham did, or about the same time. The book of Job may have been 'published' some 300 years before Moses wrote the Pentateuch, and would therefore be the oldest book in the OT. Eliphas may well have outlived Job, and he would be a good candidate to have done the final composition. The account of the conversations in Heaven had to be given by revelation to the editor. God's conversation with Job was audible and could have been recorded by a scribe.

To conclude, I would say that the book of Job was probably 'published' around 1,800 B.C.