

Some Memoirs of the Life of Job,  
The Son of Solomon, the High Priest of Boonda in Africa;  
Who was a Slave About Two Years in Maryland;  
and Afterwards Being Brought to England, was Set Free,  
and Sent to His Native Land in the Year 1734  
(Excerpt)

by Thomas Bluett

SECT. II.

Of the Manner of his being taken Captive; and what followed upon it, till his Return.

IN February, 1730. JOB's Father hearing of an English Ship at Gambia River, sent him, with two Servants to attend him, to sell two Negroes and to buy Paper, and some other Necessaries; but desired him not to venture over the River, because the Country of the Mandingoes, who are Enemies to the People of Futa, lies on the other side. JOB not agreeing with Captain Pike (who commanded the Ship, lying then at Gambia, in the Service of Captain Henry Hunt, Brother to Mr. William Hunt, Merchant, in Little Tower-Street, London) sent back the two Servants to acquaint his Father with it, and to let him know that he intended to go farther. Accordingly, having agreed with another Man, named Loumein Yoas, who understood the Mandingoe Language, to go with him as his Interpreter, he crossed the River Gambia, and disposed of his Negroes for some Cows. As he was returning Home, he stopp'd for some Refreshment at the House of an old Acquaintance; and the Weather being hot, he hung up his Arms in the House, while he refresh'd himself. Those Arms were very valuable; consisting of a Gold-hilted Sword, a Gold Knife, which they wear by their Side, and a rich Quiver of Arrows, which King Sambo had made him a Present of. It happened that a Company of the Mandingoes, who live upon Plunder, passing by at that Time, and observing him unarmed, rush'd in, to the Number of seven or eight at once, at a back Door, and pinioned JOB, before he could get to his Arms, together with his Interpreter, who is a Slave in Maryland still. They then shaved their Heads and Beards, which JOB and his Man resented as the highest Indignity; tho' the Mandingoes meant no more by it, than to make them appear like Slaves taken in War. On the 27th of February, 1730. they carried them to Captain Pike at Gambia, who purchased them; and on the first of March they were put on Board. Soon after JOB found means to acquaint Captain Pike that he was the same Person that came to trade with him a few Days before, and after what Manner he had been taken. Upon this Captain Pike gave him leave to redeem himself and his Man; and JOB sent to an Acquaintance of his Father's, near Gambia, who promised to send to JOB's Father, to inform him of what had happened, that he might take some Course to have him set at Liberty. But it being a Fortnight's journey between that Friend's House and his Father's, and the Ship failing in about a Week after, JOB was brought with the rest of the Slaves to Annapolis in Maryland, and delivered to Mr. Vachell Denton, Factor to Mr. Hunt, before mentioned. JOB heard since, by Vessels that came from Gambia, that his Father sent down several Slaves, a little after Captain Pike failed, in order to procure his Redemption; and that Sambo, King of Futa, had made War upon the Mandingoes, and cut off great Numbers of them, upon account of the Injury they had done to his Schoolfellow.

Mr. Vachell Denton sold JOB to one Mr. Tolsey in Kent Island in Maryland, who put him to work in making Tobacco; but he was soon convinced that JOB had never been used to such Labour. He every Day shewed more and more Uneasiness under this Exercise, and at last grew sick, being no way able to bear it; so that his Master was obliged to find easier Work for him, and therefore put him to tend the Cattle. JOB would often leave the Cattle, and withdraw into the Woods to pray; but a white Boy frequently watched him, and whilst he was at his Devotion would mock him, and throw Dirt in his Face. This very much disturbed JOB, and added to his other Misfortunes; all which were increased by his Ignorance of the English Language, which prevented his complaining, or telling his Case to any Person about him. Grown in some measure desperate, by reason of his present Hardships, he resolved to travel at a Venture; thinking he might possibly be taken up by some Master, who would use him better, or otherwise meet with some lucky Accident, to divert or abate his Grief. Accordingly, he travelled thro' the Woods, till he came to the County of Kent, upon Delaware Bay, now esteemed Part of Pensilvania; altho' it is properly a Part of Maryland, and belongs to my Lord Baltimore. There is a Law in force, throughout the Colonies of Virginia, Maryland, Pensilvania, &c. as far as Boston in New England, viz. That any Negroe, or white Servant who is not known in the County, or has no Pass, may be secured by any Person, and kept in the common Goal, till the Master of such Servant shall fetch him. Therefore JOB being able to give no Account of himself, was put in Prison there.

This happened about the Beginning of June, 1731. when I, who was attending the Courts there, and had heard of JOB, went with several Gentlemen to the Goaler's House, being a Tavern, and desired to see him. He was brought into the Tavern to us, but could not speak one Word of English. Upon our Talking and making Signs to him, he wrote a Line or two before us, and when he read it, pronounced the Words Allah and Mahommed; by which, and his refusing a Glass of Wine we offered him, we perceived he was a Mahometan, but could not imagine of what Country he was, or how he got thither; for by his affable Carriage, and the easy Composure of his Countenance, we could perceive he was no common Slave.

When JOB had been some time confined, an old Negroe Man, who lived in that Neighbourhood, and could speak the Jalloff Language, which JOB also understood, went to him, and conversed with him. By this Negroe the Keeper was informed to whom JOB belonged, and what was the Cause of his leaving his Master. The Keeper thereupon wrote to his Master, who soon after fetch'd him home, and was much kinder to him than before; allowing him a Place to pray in, and some other Conveniencies, in order to make his Slavery as easy as possible. Yet Slavery and Confinement was by no means agreeable to JOB, who had never been used to it; he therefore wrote a Letter in Arabick to his Father, acquainting him with his Misfortunes, hoping he might yet find Means to redeem him. This Letter he sent to Mr. Vachell Denton, desiring it might be sent to Africa by Captain Pike; but he being gone to England, Mr. Denton sent the Letter inclosed to Mr. Hunt, in order to be sent to Africa by Captain Pike from England; but Captain Pike had sailed for Africa before the Letter came to Mr. Hunt, who therefore kept it in his own Hands, till he should have a proper Opportunity of sending it. It happened that this Letter was seen by James Oglethorpe, Esq; who, according to his usual Goodness and Generosity, took Compassion on JOB, and gave his Bond to Mr. Hunt for the Payment of a certain Sum, upon the Delivery of JOB here in England. Mr. Hunt upon this sent to Mr. Denton, who purchas'd him again of his Master for the same Money which Mr.

Denton had formerly received for him; his Master being very willing to part with him, as finding him no ways fit for his Business.

He lived some time with Mr. Denton at Annapolis, before any Ship could stir out, upon account of the Ice that lay in all the Rivers of Maryland at that Time. In this Interval he became acquainted with the Reverend Mr. Henderson, a Gentleman of great Learning, Minister of Annapolis, and Commissary to the Bishop of London, who gave JOB the Character of a Person of great Piety and Learning; and indeed his good Nature and Affability gain'd him many Friends besides in that Place.

In March, 1733. he set sail in the William, Captain George Uriel Commander; in which Ship I was also a Passenger. The Character which the Captain and I had of him at Annapolis, induced us to teach him as much of the English Language as we could, he being then able to speak but few Words of it, and those hardly intelligible. This we set about as soon as we were out at Sea, and in about a Fortnight's Time taught him all his Letters, and to spell almost any single Syllable, when distinctly pronounced to him; but JOB and my self falling sick, we were hindered from making any greater Progress at that Time. However, by the Time that we arrived in England, which was the latter End of April, 1733. he had learned so much of our Language, that he was able to understand most of what we said in common Conversation; and we that were used to his Manner of Speaking, could make shift to understand him tolerably well. During the Voyage, he was very constant in his Devotions; which he never omitted, on any Pretence, notwithstanding we had exceeding bad Weather all the time we were at Sea. We often permitted him to kill our fresh Stock, that he might eat of it himself; for he eats no Flesh, unless he has killed the Animal with his own Hands, or knows that it has been killed by some Mussulman. He has no Scruple about Fish; but won't touch a bit of Pork, it being expresly forbidden by their Law. By his good Nature and Affability he gained the good Will of all the Sailors, who (not to mention other kind Offices) all the way up the Channel shewed him the Head Lands and remarkable Places; the Names of which JOB wrote down carefully, together with the Accounts that were given him about them. His Reason for so doing, he told me, was, that if he met with any Englishman in his Country, he might by these Marks be able to convince him that he had been in England.

On our Arrival in England, we heard that Mr. Oglethorpe was gone to Georgia, and that Mr. Hunt had provided a Lodging for JOB at Limehouse. After I had visited my Friends in the Country, I went up on purpose to see JOB. He was, very sorrowful, and told me, that Mr. Hunt had been applied to by some Persons to sell him, who pretended they would send him home; but he feared they would either sell him again as a Slave, or if they sent him home would expect an unreasonable Ransom for him. I took him to London with me, and waited on Mr. Hunt, to desire leave to carry him to Cheshunt in Hartfordshire; which Mr. Hunt comply'd with. He told me he had been apply'd to, as JOB had suggested, but did not intend to part with him without his own Consent; but as Mr. Oglethorpe was out of England, if any of JOB's Friends would pay the Money, he would accept of it, provided they would undertake to send him home safely to his own Country. I also obtained his Promise that he would not dispose of him till he heard farther from me.

JOB, while he was at Cheshunt, had the Honour to be sent for by most of the Gentry of that Place, who were mightily pleased with his Company, and concerned for his Misfortunes. They made

him several handsome Presents, and proposed that a Subscription should be made for the Payment of the Money to Mr. Hunt. The Night before we set out for London from Cheshunt, a Footman belonging to Samuel Holden, Esq; brought a Letter to JOB, which was, I think, directed to Sir Byby Lake. The Letter was delivered at the African House; upon which the House was pleased to order that Mr. Hunt should bring in a Bill of the whole Charges which he had been at about JOB, and be there paid; which was accordingly done, and the Sum amounted to Fifty-nine Pounds, Six Shillings, and eleven Pence Half-penny. This Sum being paid, Mr. Oglethorpe's Bond was deliver'd up to the Company. JOB's Fears were now over, with respect to his being sold again as a Slave; yet he could not be persuaded but that he must pay an extravagant Ransom, when he got home. I confess, I doubted much of the Success of a Subscription, the Sum being great, and JOB's Acquaintance in England being so small; therefore, to ease JOB's Mind, I spoke to a Gentleman about the Affair, who has all along been JOB's Friend in a very remarkable Manner. This Gentleman was so far from discouraging the Thing, that he began the Subscription himself with a handsome Sum, and promised his further Assistance at a dead Lift. Not to be tedious: Several Friends, both in London and in the Country, gave in their charitable Contributions very readily; yet the Sum was so large, that the Subscription was about twenty Pounds short of it; but that generous and worthy Gentleman before mentioned, was pleased to make up the Defect, and the whole Sum was completed.

I went (being desired) to propose the Matter to the African Company; who, after having heard what I had to say, shew'd me the Orders that the House had made; which were, that JOB should be accommodated at the African House at the Company's Expence, till one of the Company's Ships should go to Gambia, in which he should be sent back to his Friends without any Ransom. The Company then ask'd me, if they could do any Thing more to make JOB easy; and upon my Desire, they order'd, that Mr. Oglethorpe's Bond should be cancelled, which was presently done, and that JOB should have his Freedom in Form, which he received handsomely engross'd with the Company's Seal affixed; after which the full Sum of the whole Charges (viz. Fifty-nine Pounds, Six Shillings, and eleven Pence Half-penny) was paid in to their Clerk, as was before proposed.

JOB's Mind being now perfectly easy, and being himself more known, he went chearfully among his Friends to several Places, both in Town and Country, One Day being at Sir Hans Sloan's, he expressed his great Desire to see the Royal Family. Sir Hans promised to get him introduced, when he had Clothes proper to go in. JOB knew how kind a Friend he had to apply to upon occasion; and he was soon cloathed in a rich silk Dress, made up after his own Country Fashion, and introduced to their Majesties, and the rest of the Royal Family. Her Majesty was pleased to present him with a rich Gold Watch; and the same Day he had the Honour to dine with his Grace the Duke of Mountague, and some others of the Nobility, who were pleased to make him a handsome Present after Dinner. His Grace, after that, was pleased to take JOB often into the Country with him, and shew him the Tools that are necessary for Tilling the Ground, both in Gardens and Fields, and made his Servants shew him how to use them; and afterwards his Grace furnished JOB with all Sorts of such Instruments, and several other rich Presents, which he ordered to be carefully done up in Chests, and put on Board for his Use. 'Tis not possible for me to recollect the many Favours he received from his Grace, and several other Noblemen and Gentlemen, who shewed a singular Generosity towards him; only, I may say in general, that the Goods which were given him, and which he carried over with him, were worth upwards of 500 Pounds; besides which, he was well furnished with Money,

in case any Accident should oblige him to go on Shore, or occasion particular Charges at Sea. About the latter End of July last he embark'd on Board one of the African Company's Ships, bound for Gambia; where we hope he is safely arrived, to the great Joy of his Friends, and the Honour of the English Nation.

Source: <http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/bluett/menu.html>