



“a Slave About Two Years in Maryland”

Some Memoirs of the Life of Job, the Son of Solomon, the High Priest of Boonda in Africa . . .

compiled by Thomas Bluett, 1734, EXCERPTS

Ayuba Suleiman Diallo (named Job ben Solomon in England) was an educated Muslim nobleman from west Africa who was captured in 1730, enslaved for two years in Maryland, then freed through the efforts of attorney Thomas Bluett, who compiled and published Job’s memoir in 1734. Bluett helped Job ben Solomon return to his homeland in Africa (via England) “where we hope he is safely arrived to the great joy of his friends, and the honour of the English nation.”

SECTION II.

*Of the Manner of his being taken Captive; and what followed upon it, till his Return.*¹

[EXCERPTS]

Capture in west Africa

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*, . . .) 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



“Job, son of Solliman Dgiallo, high priest of Bonda in the country of Foota, Africa,” *Gentleman’s Magazine*, London, June 1750



John Senex, *Africa*, 1725?, detail; Gambia River marked

National Humanities Center, 2009: nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/. Thomas Bluett, *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*, by Thomas Bluett, London, 1734. Some punctuation and paragraphing modernized, and left-margin titles added by NHC for clarity. Full text online in Documenting the American South (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill), at docsouth.unc.edu/neh/bluett/menu.html.

¹ Section I of the Bluett’s account reviews Job’s life and education before his capture. Section III presents “Some Observations, as related by JOB, concerning the Manners and Opinions of his Countrymen.”

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 sailing 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* sailed, 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.

Enslavement in Maryland

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 showed 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 *Pensylvania*, 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*, *Pensylvania*, &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 [arrested] by any Person and kept in the common Goal [jail] till the Master of such Servant shall fetch him. Therefore JOB, being able to give no Account of himself, was put in Prison there.

Imprisonment & Meeting with Thomas Bluett

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* [Muslim], 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.

**Preparations for
Voyage to England**

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 enclosed 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.

**Voyage to
England**

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* [Muslim]. He has no Scruple about Fish; but won't touch a bit of Pork, it being expressly 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 showed 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*.

Arrival in England & Emancipation

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. . . .

The financial arrangements are completed and Job ben Solomon is officially emancipated.

Meeting the Queen

JOB's Mind being now perfectly easy, and being himself more known, he went cheerfully 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 clothed 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 *Montague* 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 show him the Tools that are necessary for Tilling the Ground, both in Gardens and Fields, and made his Servants show 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 showed 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.

Departure for Africa

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.
