



# The Education of Job by David Baird

BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	2
<b>Christadelphian Studies.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Commentaries.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Bible Versions Cited and other Abbreviations used.....</b>	<b>2</b>
INTRODUCTION.....	3
<b>The Title of the Book.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>When did Job live?.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Suggestions for students of the Book of Job.....</b>	<b>4</b>
ANALYSIS OF JOB.....	6
CHAPTERS 1, 2 - THE TESTING OF JOB.....	16
<b>Digression - Where is Uz?.....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Digression - Job's Satan, the sons of God and the LORD.....</b>	<b>30</b>
CHAPTER 3 - JOB'S OPENING LAMENTATIONS.....	33
THE FIRST CYCLE OF SPEECHES - 4:1-14:22.....	38
CHAPTERS 4, 5 - THE FIRST CYCLE OF SPEECHES - ELIPHAZ.....	38
<b>Digression - Eliphaz and 1Corinthians 3:19.....</b>	<b>47</b>
CHAPTERS 6, 7 - THE FIRST CYCLE OF SPEECHES - JOB.....	48
CHAPTER 8 - THE FIRST CYCLE OF SPEECHES - BILDAD.....	55
CHAPTERS 9, 10 - THE FIRST CYCLE OF SPEECHES - JOB.....	59
CHAPTER 11 - THE FIRST CYCLE OF SPEECHES - ZOPHAR.....	67
CHAPTERS 12, 13, 14 - THE FIRST CYCLE OF SPEECHES - JOB.....	72
CHAPTER 15 - THE SECOND CYCLE OF SPEECHES - ELIPHAZ.....	85
CHAPTERS 16, 17 - THE SECOND CYCLE OF SPEECHES - JOB.....	90
CHAPTER 18 - THE SECOND CYCLE OF SPEECHES - BILDAD.....	95
CHAPTER 19 - THE SECOND CYCLE OF SPEECHES - JOB.....	98
<b>Digression - The Redeemer (Heb. "Ga'al").....</b>	<b>102</b>
CHAPTER 20 - THE SECOND CYCLE OF SPEECHES - ZOPHAR.....	103
CHAPTER 21 - THE SECOND CYCLE OF SPEECHES - JOB.....	106
THE THIRD CYCLE OF SPEECHES.....	111
CHAPTER 22 - THE THIRD CYCLE OF SPEECHES - ELIPHAZ.....	112
CHAPTERS 23, 24 - THE THIRD CYCLE OF SPEECHES - JOB.....	114
CHAPTER 25 - THE THIRD CYCLE OF SPEECHES - BILDAD.....	120
JOB'S MONOLOGUES.....	121
CHAPTER 26 - THE THIRD CYCLE OF SPEECHES - JOB.....	122
CHAPTERS 27, 28 - THE THIRD CYCLE OF SPEECHES - JOB.....	125
CHAPTERS 29, 30, 31 - THE THIRD CYCLE OF SPEECHES - JOB.....	131
ELIHU'S MONOLOGUES - INTRODUCTION.....	142
<b>Digression - Elihu: Mixed Emotions.....</b>	<b>143</b>
CHAPTER 32 - ELIHU'S MONOLOGUES - ELIHU IS INTRODUCED.....	144
CHAPTER 33 - ELIHU'S MONOLOGUES - ELIHU'S FIRST SPEECH.....	147
CHAPTER 34 - ELIHU'S MONOLOGUES - ELIHU'S SECOND SPEECH - GOD DOES NOT PERVERT JUSTICE.....	152
CHAPTER 35 - ELIHU'S MONOLOGUES - ELIHU'S THIRD SPEECH - RIGHTEOUSNESS DOES PROFIT.....	159
CHAPTERS 36, 37 - ELIHU'S FOURTH SPEECH.....	161
YAHWEH EDUCATES JOB - CHAPTERS 38:1-42:6.....	170
CHAPTERS 38-40:2 - YAHWEH EDUCATES JOB - YAHWEH'S FIRST SPEECH.....	171
CHAPTER 40:3-5 -YAHWEH EDUCATES JOB - JOB'S REPLY.....	184
CHAPTERS 40:6-41:34 - YAHWEH EDUCATES JOB - YAHWEH'S SECOND SPEECH.....	185
CHAPTER 42:1-6 - YAHWEH EDUCATES JOB - JOB'S REPLY.....	195
CHAPTER 42:7-17 - THE RESTORATION OF JOB.....	196

**1.1 Christadelphian Studies**

---

- R.T. Lovelock            *Job*, The Christadelphian, 1957
- H.P. Mansfield            Unpublished Bible margin notes
- K. Papowski            *Hast Thou Considered My Servant Job*, K. Papowski, 1992
- L.G. Sargent            *Ecclesiastes and Other Studies*, The Christadelphian, 1965
- E.M. Spongberg            *The Book of Job*, Christadelphian Scripture Study Service, 1965
- D. Styles            *The Book of Job: Outlines and Notes*, Christadelphian Study Notes
- C. Tennant            *The Book of Job*, The Christadelphian, 1991
- C.C. Walker            *Job*, The Christadelphian, (Second Edition) 1955

**1.2 Commentaries**

---

- F.I. Andersen            *Job*, in *The Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries*, Inter-Varsity Press, 1976
- F. Delitzsch            *Job*, in *Commentary on the Old Testament (Keil and Delitzsch)*, (trans. F. Bolton), William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976
- E.C.S. Gibson            *The Book of Job*, Klock and Klock Christian Publishers, 1978
- G.C. Morgan            *The Answers of Jesus to Job*, Baker Book House, 1973
- V.E. Reichert            *Job*, in *Soncino Books of the Bible*, The Soncino Press, 1974

**1.3 Bible Versions Cited and other Abbreviations used**

---

- AV            *The Authorised (King James) Version*
- BDB            *Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon*, Associated Publishers and Authors Inc., 1978
- Bullinger            E.W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*, Baker Book House, 1981
- CompB            *The Companion Bible*, Samuel Bagster and Sons, 1974
- Ges            H.F.W. Gesenius, *Gesenius' Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures*, (trans. S.P. Tregelles), Baker Book House, 1979
- Girdlestone            R.B. Girdlestone, *Synonyms of the Old Testament*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, (Second Edition), 1970
- Green            J. Green, *The Interlinear Hebrew/Greek/English Bible*, (Second Edition), 1986
- IDB            *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, Abingdon Press, 1962

JB	<i>The Jerusalem Bible</i>
LXX	see Septuagint
Moffat	J. Moffat, <i>The Moffat Translation of the Bible</i> , (Final Edition)
NEB	<i>The New English Bible</i>
NIV	<i>The New International Version</i>
NKJV	<i>The New King James Version</i>
Roth	J.B. Rotherham, <i>The Emphasized Bible</i>
RSV	<i>The Revised Standard Version</i>
RV	<i>The Revised Version</i>
Septuagint	<i>The Septuagint Version (Greek-English) of the Old Testament</i> , (trans. L.L. Brenton)
Soncino	<i>The Soncino Bible</i>
Strong	J. Strong, <i>The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible</i>
TWOT	<i>Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament</i> , Moody Press, 1980
YLit	R. Young, <i>Young's Literal Translation of the Bible</i>
Young	R. Young, <i>Analytical Concordance to the Holy Bible</i>

## 2 INTRODUCTION

---

### 2.1 The Title of the Book

---

The name of both the Book and its main character is "Job." This word is based on the Greek and Latin transcriptions and provides a rather inaccurate rendering of the Hebrew form of the name (*iyob*). However the etymology of "Job" is uncertain. A number of authorities suggest it could be derived from *ayab* ("to be an enemy" TWOT) but vary as to whether "Job" means, "an object of enmity" (BDB), "persecuted" (Ges), or "enemy, foe" (IDB, TWOT). Another suggestion is that it is derived from the Arabic (*'wb*) and carries the connotation of repentance (TWOT, BDB, "the penitent one" IDB). Thayer writes concerning the sole New Testament usage of "Job" (*Job*) in James 5:11 that it means, "harassed, afflicted," but immediately follows with, "but questioned."

While it would be wrong to dogmatize on the meaning of Job's name, and bearing in mind that there may be no spiritual significance in his name anyway, it seems appropriate that "persecuted" should be the meaning of the name of a person who is a victim of a savage, albeit justified, experiment and the target of cruel criticisms from his friends.

### 2.2 When did Job live?

---

We do not know who wrote the Book of Job and this in no way detracts from our understanding of it. However, we can with reasonable accuracy place Job into a historical context. A wide range of dates has been suggested, extending from antediluvian to Hellenistic times. The earliest dates are easily discarded after noting the heritage of Eliphaz (a Temanite descended from Esau) and the most recent dating (2nd Century B.C.) is decisively contradicted by fragments of the Book of Job found among the Dead Sea Scrolls, especially those in the Old Hebrew script.

I believe that the date of the history narrated was post-Abrahamic and pre-Mosaic. Details can be unearthed in the Book that supports this dating. For example, the religion depicted is rudimentary. There is no priesthood or central shrine. Approach to God is through a personal priesthood (1:5 with Gen 22:16), and divine anger is assuaged by sacrifice offered by the patriarch (42:8), as in the Balaam story (Num 23:1,14,29). Wealth consists of cattle and servants (1:3 with Gen 12:16, 13:5, 32:5) and the unit of money mentioned in 42:11 (**qesitah**) is only specified elsewhere in Genesis 33:19 and Joshua 24:32. Job's exceptional longevity (42:17) is matched or surpassed only in the patriarchal period and earlier.

The Book of Job does not directly refer to any historical events; not even those that were prominent in the mind of an Israelite - the call of Abram, the Red Sea crossing, the exodus, the conquest of the land, etc. The Book does not refer to any of the familiar institutions of Israel - the Law of Moses, the monarchy, the temple, the prophets. The few historical allusions it seems to make belong to Genesis - Adam's fall (31:33), the flood (22:16), maybe the destruction of Sodom (18:15).

In the scant descriptions of Job's friends we are directed to the same patriarchal times. Eliphaz the Temanite takes his heritage from Teman, the son of an earlier Eliphaz and the grandson of Esau (Gen 36:4,11; 1Chron 1:35-36). Bildad the Shuhite is of Abrahamic origination. Shuah was a son of Abraham by Keturah (Gen 25:2) and one of those who, "he sent away from Isaac his son, while yet he lived, eastward, unto the east country" (Gen 25:6 see 1:3). Eliphaz appears to be the eldest of the company as it is he who is mentioned first of the friends and he who leads off the comments to Job. He is probably describing himself as such when he says to Job, "Both hoary and venerable are among us, One mightier than thy father in days!" (15:10 Roth). The sense is singular and Rotherham correctly reflects this. Therefore, if we take Eliphaz's lineage to an extreme it would be - Abraham, Isaac, Esau, Eliphaz, Teman, Eliphaz - the fifth generation from Abraham. If Eliphaz is well advanced in years, contemporary with Job's grandfather or father, the date of the action in the Book is deferred to the sixth or seventh generation from Abraham and would have occurred while the children of Israel were in Egypt.

While it is not crucial to our overall appreciation of the Book it is reasonable to claim that Job existed between the lifetimes of Joseph and Moses.

### **2.3 Suggestions for students of the Book of Job**

---

The Book of Job is not an easy Bible book to read and/or study. The barriers it presents include:

- i) Its size - 42 chapters;
- ii) The complexities of the original Hebrew, especially the vagueness in the poetical sections (i.e. the majority of the Book);
- iii) The subsequent variations, both subtle and wild, among Bible versions and commentators;
- iv) The difficulties in determining the correctness or otherwise of the speeches - Is what is being said right? What is the tone/attitude of the speaker? Are the words, while possibly indelicate, valid in the circumstances? etc;
- v) The anomalies in the Prologue - e.g. Who or what was the Satan? The sons of God? The LORD? Why was Job's wife kept alive? etc;
- vi) The relentless, on-going nature of the dialogue - Will these speeches ever stop?; and
- vii) The mysteries surrounding Elihu - Good, bad or in-between? Where does he fit overall in the Book? Where did he come from and where did he go?, etc.

The following suggestions are offered to assist anybody who wishes to look a bit more carefully at this challenging Book.

### **Read the whole Book**

As Brother Walker writes, "Rightly to appreciate the Book of Job, it requires to be read deliberately through at a single sitting, which might perhaps occupy about three hours. It is, as it were, listening to the conduct of a case in a court of law. If we were to listen to scraps of evidence, only occasionally, we should have difficulty in coming to a conclusion. A sustained and connected effort admits of clearer comparison, and will produce better results."

### **In a different version**

While translators agree that the Hebrew text of the Book of Job presents more problems than most other parts of the Old Testament and I am an advocate of the Authorised Version, it is preferable to read (as opposed to study) the Book using a modern version. One of the few reservations about the Authorised Version is its weakness when translating poetical sections of the original text. Modern versions tend to be less ambiguous and their English is easier to understand. Recommended versions are those of the conservative idiomatic variety such as the Revised Standard Version and, to a lesser extent, the New International Version (despite its unsubstantiated assumption in 1:6 and 2:3 - "angels"). The Jerusalem Bible is really quite a superb translation of the text but cannot be used for reading in one sitting because, for reasons only known to its creators, it conjures up a third speech of Zophar out of what is almost universally considered to be the words of Job.

### **Always, the context first**

This is essential when considering the speeches. Don't launch into the words, even the phrases. Read the whole speech carefully. Think about it as it relates to the previous speech. Try to detect the flow of thought. Then, perhaps, start digging around in concordances and lexicons and commentaries to see how your contextual resolutions withstand scrutiny.

### **Beware the sweeping generalisation**

For example, Job is righteous therefore everything he says is correct (Job does not think so - 42:3), and the friends are condemned so everything they say is suspect (The Apostle Paul does not think so - 1Cor 3:19). Observance of the other suggestions helps to avoid this practice. Job is not a Book that can be interpreted in such a black-and-white manner. To do so is to mirror, in some degree, the error of Job's comforters.

### **Don't focus on the early chapters**

Due to its size and a predilection to focus on the parts that we are comfortable with, many people can wax eloquently on the "questions/crotchets" generated by the Prologue of the Book. The first two chapters are preparing the way for the speeches that follow. Becoming an expert in Job's disease, or the Satan, does not necessarily enhance one's appreciation of why Job reacts to Zophar the way he does. Or why Eliphaz doggedly holds on to a patently wrong philosophy. To ignore the bulk is to miss the Book with its lessons and challenges. Andersen has this to say, "Job is a prodigious book in the vast range of its ideas, in its broad coverage of human experience, in the intensity of its

passions, in the immensity of its concept of God, and not least in its superb literary craftsmanship. It reaches widely over the complexities of existence, seeking a place for animals as well as men in God's world. It plumbs the depths of human despair, the anger of moral outrage, and the anguish of desertion by God. By one man's agony it reaches out to the mystery of God, beyond all words and explanations."

## ***PART 1 - THE PROLOGUE - Chapters 1-2***

### **Chapters 1, 2 - The Testing of Job**

1:1-5	The integrity of Job
1:6-12	The enmity of the adversary
1:13-19	The first disasters
1:20-22	The effect on Job
2:1-6	The persistence of the adversary
2:7-8	Job's illness
2:9-10	Job's second reaction
2:11-13	The friends come and sympathise with him

## ***PART 2 - THE DIALOGUE - The Debate Between Job and His Friends - Chapters 3-31***

### **Chapter 3 - Job's Opening Lamentations**

#### *Job Curses His Day*

3:1-2	Job breaks the silence
3:3-10	Birth lamented
3:11-19	Infancy lamented
3:20-26	Manhood lamented

### **Chapters 4, 5 - The First Cycle of Speeches - Eliphaz**

4:1-7	Eliphaz commends then criticises Job
4:8-11	His theory of observation
4:12-21	He claims divine revelation

- 5:1-7            The wicked suffer due to personal folly
- 5:8-16         Suffering is divine punishment: repent
- 5:17-27        God delivers the righteous

### **Chapters 6, 7 - The First Cycle of Speeches - Job**

#### *Job's Answer to Eliphaz*

- 6:1-7            Job justifies his grief and impatience
- 6:8-13         He repeats his desire for death
- 6:14-23        He reproaches his friends for their failure to help him
- 6:24-30        Job rejects the conclusions of their arguments

#### *Reflection and Appeal*

- 7:1-10         Job ponders his hopeless, helpless condition
- 7:11-21        Job's intemperate appeal to God

### **Chapter 8 - The First Cycle of Speeches - Bildad**

#### *Bildad's Appeal to Job*

- 8:1-7            The doctrine of retribution - God does discriminate
- 8:8-10         Go to the ancients - they have the answers
- 8:11-19        Three examples - the ancients speak through nature
- 8:20-22        Conclusion and application to Job

### **Chapters 9, 10 - The First Cycle of Speeches - Job**

#### *Job's Reply to Bildad*

- 9:1-4            God is just - who can defy Him
- 9:5-10         God is omnipotent
- 9:11-13        God's ways are inscrutable
- 9:14-21        Man cannot stand up to God
- 9:22-24        Suffering is not always evidence of sin
- 9:25-31        The hopelessness of Job's case

9:32-35 Job's desire for an umpire

*Job's Attempt to Reason with God*

10:1-7 "Why are You doing this to me?"

10:8-12 God's former care of Job

10:13-17 Job's confusion

10:18-22 Job's cries of despair

**Chapter 11 - The First Cycle of Speeches - Zophar**

*Zophar's Instruction - I Know*

11:1-4 Job rebuked as verbose and boastful

11:5-6 God knows your sinfulness

11:7-12 God is beyond human comprehension

11:13-19 Repent and be blessed

11:20 No hope for the wicked

**Chapters 12, 13, 14 - The First Cycle of Speeches - Job**

*Job's Reply to Zophar*

12:1-5 My knowledge is not inferior to yours

12:6 The wicked do prosper

12:7-10 Let Creation teach you the wisdom and power of God

12:11-25 Job describes God's absolute power

13:1-12 Job reproves his friends as utter failures

*Job Appeals to God*

13:13-19 Job turns to God as his friends cannot help

13:20-28 Job pleads with God

14:1-12 Man's lot is hopeless, whereas a tree has hope

14:13-15 Is there life after death?

14:16-22 Job's present state - perplexed and distressed



## **Chapter 15 - The Second Cycle of Speeches - Eliphaz**

### *Job is Rebuked*

- 15:1-6 Eliphaz rejects Job's claim to wisdom
- 15:7-10 He declares Job's experience to be inferior
- 15:11-13 He rebukes Job for his ingratitude
- 15:14-16 He refutes the innocence of man

### *Doctrine of Exact Retribution Reaffirmed*

- 15:17-19 Listen to me and the words of the ancients
- 15:20-24 The life of the wicked
- 15:25-28 The foolishness of the wicked
- 15:29-35 God's judgements against the wicked

## **Chapters 16, 17 - The Second Cycle of Speeches - Job**

- 16:1-5 Job reproves his comforters
- 16:6-17 Despondency - God's treatment of Job
- 16:18-21 Job's confidence
- 16:22-17:2 Despondency - Humiliating death awaits
- 17:3-9 Appeal to God as man does not care
- 17:10-16 Despondency - His friend's insensitivity as death approaches

## **Chapter 18 - The Second Cycle of Speeches - Bildad**

- 18:1-4 Job indignantly reproved for his words

### *The Doom of the Wicked*

- 18:5-6 The light of the wicked extinguished
- 18:7-16 His fate is exact retribution for his folly
- 18:17-21 The complete extinction of the wicked

## **Chapter 19 - The Second Cycle of Speeches - Job**

- 19:1-7 Job reacts to his friend's cruelty
- 19:8-12 God is the Author of Job's troubles
- 19:13-19 Job is utterly isolated
- 19:20-22 A plea for pity
- 19:23-27 Job's confidence in his eventual vindication
- 19:28-29 Job warns his friends

**Chapter 20 - The Second Cycle of Speeches - Zophar**

- 20:1-5 I am insulted and exasperated
- 20:6-11 The prosperity of the wicked is short-lived
- 20:12-19 Sin and its retribution
- 20:20-22 The wicked cannot escape from his inevitable punishment
- 20:23-28 God's vengeance on the sinner
- 20:29 Zophar's conclusion - his philosophy summarised

**Chapter 21 - The Second Cycle of Speeches - Job**

- 21:1-6 Job appeals for a fair hearing
- 21:7-13 The prosperity of the wicked
- 21:14-16 The impiety of the wicked
- 21:17-18 The apparent immunity of the wicked
- 21:19-21 Why should their children suffer?
- 21:22-26 Some suffer, others do not
- 21:27-28 I know what you think of me
- 21:29-33 Broaden your experience and get the facts
- 21:34 Job's conclusion

**Chapter 22 - The Third Cycle of Speeches - Eliphaz**

- 22:1-5 God is judging Job's wickedness
- 22:6-11 A description of Job's wickedness

- 22:12-20 Warning against arrogance before God  
22:21-30 Final appeal - make your peace with God

### **Chapters 23, 24 - The Third Cycle of Speeches - Job**

#### *Job's Response to Eliphaz's Appeal*

- 23:1-7 If only I could find God  
23:8-9 But I cannot find Him  
23:10-12 If I could, I would gain a favourable outcome  
23:13-24:1 God has a purpose but Job is confounded

#### *Job's Appeal to Observation - Iniquities in Others Go Unpunished*

- 24:2-4 The way of the tyrant  
24:5-8 The plight of the poor  
24:9-12 The exploitation of the poor by the tyrant  
24:13-17 Sinners who work in darkness  
24:18-20 You say, "The wicked are punished"  
24:21-25 Reality disproves your theory

### **Chapter 25 - The Third Cycle of Speeches - Bildad**

- 25:1-3 God's omnipotence  
25:4-6 Man's impotence

### **Chapter 26 - The Third Cycle of Speeches - Job**

#### *Job's Reply to Bildad*

- 26:1-4 Job's scornful reproof of Bildad  
26:5-14 The incomprehensible majesty and power of God

### **Chapters 27, 28 - The Third Cycle of Speeches - Job**

#### *Job's First Monologue*

### *Job's Conclusion*

- 27:1-6 I am right, you are wrong
- 27:7-12 God's justice will prevail
- 27:13-23 What if my oppressors are punished?

### *The Excellency of Wisdom*

- 28:1-6 The ingenuity of man
- 28:7-8 The superior knowledge of man
- 28:9-11 The skilfulness of man
- 28:12-19 Wisdom - where is it? It cannot be bought
- 28:20-22 Wisdom - where is it? It is hidden
- 28:23-28 Wisdom - it is with God

## **Chapters 29, 30, 31 - The Third Cycle of Speeches - Job**

### *Job's Second Monologue*

### *Job's Past Glory*

- 29:1-6 Job's former prosperity when blessed by God
- 29:7-11 The honour that was Job's
- 29:12-17 Respected because he helped others
- 29:18-20 His anticipated security
- 29:21-25 Job - An object of universal respect

### *Job's Present Misery*

- 30:1-8 But now - Despised by dogs
- 30:9-15 But now - Derided and diminished
- 30:16-19 But now - Dying and diseased
- 30:20-23 But now - Denied by Deity
- 30:24-31 But now - Destitute and dissipated

### *Job's Repudiation of Offences and His Final Appeal*

- 31:1-12 Job's personal integrity
- 31:13-23 Job's fair dealing with his fellow man
- 31:24-28 Job's faithfulness to God
- 31:29-34 Job's repudiation of dishonourable thoughts
- 31:35-40 Job's final appeal as an honest man

### **PART 3 - ELIHU'S MONOLOGUES - Chapters 32-37**

#### **Chapter 32 - Elihu is Introduced**

- 32:1-5 Elihu is Introduced

#### *Elihu Introduces Himself*

- 32:6-10 Though young, I will express my opinions
- 32:11-14 Job is unanswered
- 32:15-22 I have no choice, I must speak

#### **Chapter 33 - Elihu's First Speech**

#### *Elihu's Address to Job*

- 33:1-7 Why Job should listen to Elihu
- 33:8-13 Elihu recounts Job's presumptions
- 33:14-22 God speaks to man in many ways
- 33:23-30 God does save
- 33:31-33 Elihu's challenge to Job

#### **Chapter 34 - Elihu's Second Speech - God Does Not Pervert Justice**

- 34:1-4 Elihu's appeal to the wise
- 34:5-9 Elihu's rebuke of Job's assertions

#### *Elihu Defends the Justice of God*

- 34:10-12 God never does wrong
- 34:13-15 God is all-powerful

- 34:16-20 God's justice is superior
- 34:21-30 God does not answer to anybody

*Elihu's Condemnation of Job*

- 34:31-33 The correct response to God
- 34:34-37 The incorrect response of Job

**Chapter 35 - Elihu's Third Speech - Righteousness Does Profit**

- 35:1-3 Elihu's summary of Job's complaint
- 35:4-8 Elihu's answer to Job
- 35:9-13 Why God does not always answer prayer
- 35:14-16 Elihu's final rebuke of Job

**Chapters 36, 37 - Elihu's Fourth Speech**

*Adversity is Remedial*

- 36:1-4 Elihu introduces his final speech
- 36:5-15 "God is mighty" - His justice declares this
- 36:16-21 Therefore, He should be feared

*God is Omnipotent*

- 36:22-25 "God is powerful" - Who can accuse Him?
- 36:26-33 "God is great" - He is beyond our comprehension
- 37:1-5 The thunder of God's voice
- 37:6-13 God causes the winter
- 37:14-18 "God is wonderful" - Lay this to heart
- 37:19-24 "God is awesome majesty" - Elihu's final appeal

**PART 4 - YAHWEH EDUCATES JOB - Chapters 38:1-42:6**

**Chapters 38-40:2 - Yahweh's First Speech**

- 38:1-3 Yahweh's dramatic intervention

*The Wonders of the Inanimate Creation (God's Universal Power)*

- 38:4-7      What does Job know of God's power in the Creation?
- 38:8-11     Who controls the sea?
- 38:12-15    Who commands the dawn?
- 38:16-21    Has Job plumbed the mysteries of the earth and light?
- 38:22-30    Can Job account for the weather in all its variations?
- 38:31-38    Can Job control the stars, clouds and lightning?

*The Wonders of the Animate Creation (God's Universal Care)*

- 38:39-41    Who feeds the lioness, young lions and the raven?
- 39:1-4      Does Job understand the breeding of wild animals?
- 39:5-8      Who gives the wild ass its freedom?
- 39:9-12     Can Job tame the wild ox?
- 39:13-18    Why is the ostrich foolish?
- 39:19-25    Did Job give the war-horse its courage?
- 39:26-30    Is Job responsible for the eagle's attributes?
  
- 40:1-2      Will Job contend with God any longer?

**Chapter 40:3-5 - Job's Reply**

- 40:3-5      "I am of small account"

**Chapters 40:6-41:34 - Yahweh's Second Speech**

- 40:6-9      Introduction and challenge
- 40:10-14    Job is invited to rule the world
- 40:15-24    Behemoth - who can overpower him?

*Leviathan*

- 41:1-9      Can Job tame leviathan?
- 41:10-11    Who then can confront leviathan's maker?

- 41:12-24 The power of leviathan
- 41:25-29 Man is ineffectual against his ferocity
- 41:30-32 He causes turbulence
- 41:33-34 He is king of his domain

**Chapter 42:1-6 - Job's Reply**

- 42:1-6 "Now mine eye seeth thee"

**PART 5 - THE EPILOGUE - Chapter 42:7-17**

**Chapter 42:7-17 - The Restoration of Job**

- 42:7-9 Yahweh's verdict
- 42:10-11 Job's rehabilitation
- 42:12-15 God blesses Job
- 42:16-17 After this, "full of days"

4 CHAPTERS 1, 2 - THE TESTING OF JOB

---

- 1:1-5 The integrity of Job**
- 1:6-12 The enmity of the adversary**
- 1:13-19 The first disasters**
- 1:20-22 The effect on Job**
- 2:1-6 The persistence of the adversary**
- 2:7-8 Job's illness**
- 2:9-10 Job's second reaction**
- 2:11-13 The friends come and sympathise with him**

**1:1-5 The integrity of Job**

"There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect (*tam*) and upright (*yasha*), and one that feared (*yare*) God, and eschewed (*sur*) evil" (1:1). Hence we are introduced to the historical character Job (Ezek 14:14,20; Jas 5:11).



While these notes will not follow a phrase-by-phrase approach, a recommended way to appreciate the character of Job as presented in the first verse is to analyse the Hebrew words and then construct a composite picture of him.

Job is perfect (**tam**). **Tam** is from **taman** ("complete") and means "whole, upright, always in a moral sense" (Ges). It does not mean that he was sinless. He was "an all-round man in the best sense of the word" (Morgan). He was complete, true, sound and blameless in his dealings with his fellow man.

The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, in a fascinating little study of **taman** and its derivatives, writes, "Scriptures preeminent example of the **tam** 'perfect' man, is Job (1:1). He claimed to be **tam** (9:21-22) and **tamim** ['blameless' NIV] (12:4) and held fast to his **tumma** 'integrity' (27:5, 31:6), as recognised not only by his wife (2:9) but also by Yahweh in heaven (1:8, 2:3). In reference to the root meaning of **taman**, he was a 'finished product,' well rounded and balanced ... Job, however, prefaced his own assertions by granting, 'Though I be perfect, it (marg., he) shall prove me perverse' (9:20 ASV). He admitted his sins (7:20-21, 9:2,15, 10:6, 14:16-17), even from his youth (13:26), and ended by retracting his rash charges against God and by repenting in dust and ashes (42:6). As he explained, 'If I have truly erred, my error lodges with me'; i.e. he was not guilty of the accusations made by his 'friends' (22:6-9) and was **tamim**, wholehearted in his commitment to the person and requirements of God."

1:1 states that Job was **yasha**, which literally means "straight", and feared (**yare**) God - he was devout, reverencing God because he feared Him. As well as these positive characteristics he "eschewed" or turned aside from evil.

When we add the components together the "Job model" is that of a man who was dedicated to doing God's will and manifesting right ways. He was a man who was complete, upright, an all-round man in the best sense of the word. One who was straight, unwavering, possessive of sound wisdom because, out of an appreciation of Yahweh, he revered Him and departed from evil.

He had a large family, a "very great household (**abuddah** - only here and Gen 26:14 "servants"), and large herds of livestock, denoting significant wealth. He was also "the greatest of all the men of the east" (1:3). This greatness was declared in his spirituality, reputation and affluence. Chapter 29 provides a graphic portrayal of just how celebrated and esteemed Job was. And in being all this he was unquestionably an oversized target for envy: the quintessential tall poppy.

Furthermore, his family was able to enjoy the benefits of Job's greatness. Despite the apparent intimacy of the family relationship Job's wealth was such that each of his seven sons, probably unmarried, were homeowners. "Every one his day" would feast with his brothers and sisters (1:13).

What is "his day"? Some say that it referred to their individual birthdays (3:1) but it is more likely the day of the week when it was each brother's turn to have the company of his siblings. If this is the case it should be noted that there is no hint of inebriation, indecency or indolence. These are not alcohol-drenched birthday parties. These delightful family gatherings are a part of the ambience of well-being that begins the Book of Job.

As he was mindful of God during his prosperity and not just his affliction, Job faithfully fulfilled his function as family priest. He believed in the power of a mediator and deeply cared about the spiritual health of his family. His earnestness and conscientiousness are evidenced in that he "rose up early in the morning". He fears that his sons may sin and curse (**barak**) God in their hearts - the very sin that the Satan predicted Job would lapse into (1:11, 2:5) and his wife encouraged him to commit (2:9).

**Barak** actually means "bless"! Andersen suggests, "It could be a euphemism, introduced by the scribes, to avoid even reading such a horrid expression." Rotherham's marginal notes state that, "The Hebrew here was originally **kalal**, properly 'to curse': but that the Sopherim deliberately altered it euphemistically to **barak**, 'to bless.'" The Companion Bible unequivocally lists this anomaly as one of the "Eighteen Emendations of the Sopherim." The work of the Sopherim (from **saphar**, to "count", or "number"), under Ezra and Nehemiah, was to set the Text in order after the return from Babylon (Neh 8:8). When their work was completed the Massorites became the authorised custodians of the Sacred Text. Anyway, the conclusion of the matter is, the Authorised Version is correct.

This priestly role Job conducted "all his days" ("This he always did" NEB; "This was Job's regular custom" NIV) It was his lifelong habit. He continually reminded himself that what things he had in life were from God. What he didn't know was just how prodigiously those things would change.

### **1:6-12      The enmity of the adversary**

Job's prosperity has aroused the resentment of the adversary who is in attendance at a meeting of the "sons of God". He is asked, "Whence comest thou?" (1:7) which is an interesting greeting possessing some intensity. It is used by Elisha to Gehazi after Gehazi had deceitfully acquired gifts from Naaman (2King 5:25), by the superstitious seafarers to Jonah (Jonah 1:8) and by Joshua to the Gibeonites who deceived him with their craftiness (Josh 9:8). It is more than just a standard opening statement. It is an inquisitive question that is genuinely attempting to ease some uncertainty. What is the Satan doing here? He obviously is looking for trouble or he has not been seen for some time. It is likely that he was once one of the "sons of God" - they know him, he knows their routine - and his response is flippant but clever. He gives nothing away and he uses terminology that is normally applied to God (2Chron 16:9; Zech 1:10,11, 4:10, 6:7). Yes, he once was religious. He throws his knowledge around as he ego-trips in front of this esteemed gathering - "Proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy" (1Tim 6:4 see also Psa 50:16-23).

The LORD makes the offer to the Satan to consider (**leb**) His servant Job. **Leb** means "the heart" and is better translated in 1:8 as "applied thy heart" (Roth). In other words, the Satan was invited by God, who knows the hearts of men (Heb 4:13), to examine his heart in the light of faithful Job (Hag 1:5 - "Consider [**leb**] your ways"). The LORD knew why the Satan had appeared in their midst. He knew the feelings he had towards Job. In praising Job He repeats the words of 1:1 as well as calling Job His servant - an honourable title attached to a number of the faithful including Abraham (Gen 26:24), Moses (Num 12:7-8), Caleb (Num 14:24), Joshua (Judg 2:8), David (Psa 89:20), Elijah (2King 9:36), Isaiah (Isa 20:3) and, of course, Jesus (Isa 42:1). Righteous men are rare. It may be difficult to find a few (Gen 18:22-23) or even one (Psa 12:1; Jer 5:1; Ezek 22:30) in a city, but it is possible and when Yahweh observes a good man, He is delighted (2Sam 22:20).

"'Yes,' Satan said 'but Job is not God-fearing for nothing, is he? Have you not put a wall round him and his house and all his domain? You have blessed all he undertakes, and his flocks through the countryside'" (1:9-10 JB). The adversary resorts to that common form of slander, the "Yes, But" statement. "Yes", God exists, He is powerful and has the ability to bless and curse, "But", God has gone soft. "Yes", Job does fear God, "But", he is a hypocrite, a mercenary, he only fears God for the commercial success it gives him.

The adversary was a total cynic. He believed nothing was genuinely good - neither Job in his piety nor God in His generosity. He thought he knew enough about religious people to be persuaded that they are in it only for what they can get out of it in their present life. There is no doubt that there are people like that. But Job? To suggest that Job, contrary to Yahweh's eulogy, is a trickster, performing on a stage in order to gain the accolades of the Almighty, is to make three significant errors. Firstly, it infers that God has judged incorrectly and has been fooled by a mortal. Secondly, it misjudges Job, who remained steadfast despite the efforts of the Satan, Job's wife and his three friends. Thirdly, it is clear that the Satan has based his opinions on the knowledge he had accumulated while going to and fro in the earth. He was now a philosopher of the world rather than a practitioner in the word. He felt Job was hedged in,

shut in for protection and restraint. Job's experience was limited by God. Take away the hedge, remove the protection, broaden his life experience, give Job a taste of the dark side, and he will corrupt like everybody else.

So goes the theory. The Satan was so convinced of it he confidently predicted that Job would curse God to His face (see notes 1:5 on "curse"). If he was right, then God did not have one faithful servant and religion was all a sham. "Moreover, the only possible way to induce him (and everyone else like him) to amend, was to subject a righteous man to trials that would strip everything from him except his righteousness, and so to prove the adversary wrong by showing that the righteousness of God was value in itself" (Spongberg). But was this fair? Should one whose life was dedicated to serving and trusting in God be subjected to such devastating trials initiated by Him? Yes. Not only is it unwise to question God's ways, a lesson that Job was to learn himself (40:8), He has the right to try the hearts of those who claim to be His. In doing so God may also shut the mouths of those that slander the faithful (1Pet 3:16).

God was requested to "touch all that he hath" (1:11). According to Bullinger that phrase is an example of a figure of speech called **Tapeinosis**. **Tapeinosis** is "the lessening of a thing in order to increase and intensify the same thing." Rotherham renders the word as "smite" (see also NIV, YLit). The adversary was not merely asking for Job to be touched. He wanted him to be struck hard as that would be a more sure test, although, by implication, a touch would probably be sufficient. As Andersen paraphrases, "But now, you just extend your hand and damage all his property." And this was permitted with the condition that Job be physically unscathed. Why? For the glory of God, the honour of Job and the encouragement of God's afflicted people throughout history. God knew that Job could bear it (1Cor 10:13).

So Satan went forth from the LORD's presence, not to walk to and fro, but to watch the outcome of this bizarre experiment. Like Cain he leaves Yahweh's presence with the blood of his brother on his hands (Gen 4:16). He is worse than Jonah, who fled Yahweh's presence, because not only did he reject God's judgment (Jonah 1:3) he was convinced he could prove the Almighty wrong. And he was like Judas who left the presence of Christ in a bid to destroy the greatest man alive (John 13:30).

### **1:13-19      The first disasters**

This was the first of two sets of disasters that afflicted Job. Within it was four distinctive catastrophes:

- i)      1:13-15      Sabeans - taking the farm animals and servants;
- ii)     1:16            Fire from God - taking flocks and servants;
- iii)    1:17            Chaldeans - taking camels and servants; and
- iv)     1:18-19        Great wind - taking Job's children.

We can observe an interesting symmetry in these tragedies: Man, God, Man, God. Job's affliction was comprehensive. He was assailed by man and God, although, as we know and he at this stage didn't, God was responsible for all that came on Job. While it may be argued that what Job encountered was entirely natural and Job could have undergone similar traumas in the natural course of events, never would they have occurred with such ferocity, rapidity and efficiency.

These disasters had something about them that would have declared God's hand to Job. They differed to the normal natural cataclysm. In the supreme disaster no survivors are accounted for (Exo 14:28), but in each of these four incidents, by some remarkable coincidence, one survivor remained to inform Job.

The contrast is established in these verses as they commence with familial health and conclude with total desolation. The cycle of family gatherings had recommenced (see notes on 1:4-5) and Job would probably have completed or been in the midst of sanctifying his children (1:5) when the Sabeans struck the first blow.

The Sabeans were the descendants of Sheba and most commentators place them in the area we would refer to as Yemen. They were known as traders, never as bandits, and their incursion was far more precise than that of marauding predatory nomads as, directed by God, they were thorough, taking all Job's asses and oxen, and moved with dramatic speed. They came up from the south, far from their usual haunts and attacked when the oxen were ploughing (i.e. in the winter).

What should Job do? The normal reaction would be to gather the remaining servants and attempt to retrieve as many animals as possible. But while the first messenger was still hastily blurting out his story, a second arrived. His horror story: fire from God had wiped out the sheep and even more servants. Then while this information was hammering at Job, a sole survivor from a third catastrophe arrives, interrupting the second, to report a Chaldean invasion that killed even more servants and confiscated all his camels. Then to complete the absolute ruination of Job, a fourth messenger, speaking as the third was finishing, gives Job chilling news: his children were dead. So much for pursuing the Sabeans.

God's protective wall was removed. Job had no servants to chase his enemies and no wealth to purchase replacements. His fleet-footed camels were on their way eastward. And to push the knife right into his very soul, his children, the flock he cared for most of all, were gone.

The second calamity was "fire (**esh**) from God." This was probably lightning (1King 18:38; 2King 1:10-14) rather than volcanic activity (e.g. Gen 19:24) because it was deadly accurate. Its pinpoint placement saw 7000 sheep and all the servants bar one consumed. It was "of God" due to it falling from the heavens. It is likely that Job could see the **Elohim** working against him. This seemed to be more than just an unlucky lightning strike. The Companion Bible says that although **esh** is the usual Hebrew word for "fire," it should, in 1:16, receive special emphasis. It was the "great fire" or "terrible fire." It was unprecedented in the life of Job and perhaps even in the history of mankind.

Next the Chaldeans took Job's 3000 camels and put more of his servants to the sword. The Chaldeans were not noted, at this time in history, as a mob of marauding nomads. Nor did they normally venture this far from home. With the size of their haul (3000 camels is a lot of camels) and the efficiency of their operation, it was not difficult to discern that God had directed the Chaldean army to conduct this raid.

Their destructive work not only demonstrated their military proficiency, it clearly declared that the hedge (1:10) was removed. The Chaldeans would have attacked from the north. This was the normal flight path for invading Mesopotamian armies as they did not fancy crossing the desert. 1:17 specifies that they formed three bands which would have implemented, I believe, an encircling tactic. The south had already been scythed open by the Sabeans, so the Chaldeans would have dominated the northern, western and eastern flanks. Thus the protective hedge around Job was smashed down on all four fronts. And it was no good looking to the heavens for relief as they had been raining lightning bolts. It is also noteworthy that there seems to be no overlap in the disasters that struck. Sabeans are not crashing into Chaldeans. Camels are not being hit by lightning. This could indicate the dimensions of Job's holdings. His massive domain could easily accommodate sizable herds separate from each other and what was happening in one part of his territory was not known in another part.

Yahweh was intent that Job be untouched but the very beings closest to him, his "children" (1:19 LXX; "young people" RSV, NEB, JB - not "young men" AV. Job's daughters were slain as well.), were crushed by a freak wind. This was the hardest blow. The adversary would have sensed that his victory was nigh. Job would have to curse God now. Job

had nothing, not even his children, and it was obvious that the wind that rose up from the wilderness was divinely directed. It would have been a whirlwind because just one residence was demolished. Of all the houses it could have struck, it smote only one. And it did not simply damage it. The whirlwind totally wrecked it and slew its inhabitants. A tragedy saved until last. The most testing of them all. The climax, if that is the appropriate word, to the worst day in Job's life. When a child dies a parent is sore wounded. To lose ten in one day, in a moment, is inconceivable.

"For man also knoweth not his time: as fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them" (Ecc 9:12).

### **1:20-22      The effect on Job**

Job's response was magnificent. His actions were deliberate and dignified, mirrored by David (2Sam 12:20) and Hezekiah (2King 19:1-2). He stood up and did three distinctive acts:

- i) He rent his mantle (**meil**). The **meil** was the upper robe, an outer covering quite different to the mantle (**addereth**) of Elijah which was more of an ornamental badge of office. To rend one's garments was a sign of grief or heartbroken astonishment (e.g. Ezra 9:3);
- ii) He shaved his head - a symbol of mourning (Jer 7:29, 16:6; Mic 1:16). Shaving the head was part of the mourning rituals in Mesopotamia and Canaan, and because of its heathen associations was eventually forbidden in the Law (Lev 21:5). Job, as he pre-existed the Law of Moses, would not have sinned in shaving his head;
- iii) And he fell down on the ground and worshipped (**shachah**). **Shachah** means, "to depress, i.e. prostrate (espec. reflex. in homage to royalty or God)" (Strong). He humbled himself under the hand of God in a way that was exhibited by Moses (Deut 9:18) and the Lord Jesus Christ (Matt 26:39). To fall on one's face to the ground is a sign of complete humility as it is as close to the earth that a person can get. It is a completely defenceless position before a superior being, and nobody is superior to the God of heaven: He who does not need to make direct physical contact with the earth. Job recognised his true status before Yahweh.

It is important to note what Job did not do. He did not curse God. He did not lose his temper. He did not break out into any extravagant passion. He conducted himself with all the wisdom and uprightness that the Satan rejected and God expected.

And when he spoke, Job uttered some of the noblest words to be found in Scripture: "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD" (1:21). As Andersen records, "Job sees only the hand of God in these events. It never occurs to him to curse the desert brigands, to curse the frontier guards, to curse his own stupid servants, now lying dead for their watchlessness. All secondary causes vanish. It was the Lord who gave; it was the Lord who removed; and in the Lord alone must the explanation of these strange happenings be sought."

Job recognised in death he would have nothing and that the LORD had the power to remove a man's life as swiftly as He had removed Job's wealth. Job's beliefs differed to the pagans of his era who in preparation for their after-life furnished their tombs with material possessions. No, at birth he emerged naked from his mother's womb and at death he would enter naked into mother earth (Gen 2:7).

The adversary prophesied, "He will curse thee" (1:11), but Job blessed God. Despite the enormity of his trauma he was wonderfully sensible in the presence of the Almighty. This attitude was displayed by other men of old. For example, Eli (1Sam 3:18), David (2Sam 16:11) and Hezekiah (2King 20:19). It is also a posture we are encouraged to develop (Eph 5:20; 1Thess 5:18). But Job's resignation to God's will goes beyond these examples. For they received the just desserts of their wrong actions. Job does not have the assurance that what he is undergoing is a direct result of sin because that is simply not the case.

Overriding all these wondrous responses to his impoverishment, "Job sinned not nor charged God foolishly (*tiplah*)" (1:22). Satan was wrong. Job did not worship God for the fringe benefits. He knew that "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15). All things belong to God. There is no mention of the rights of the individual, of human rights. Yet it was his faith in the Almighty that caused his agony. He loved his God with an intensity unmatched by the most devout of pagan worshippers.

He did not charge God with "unsavouriness" (Ges: *tiplah*). He did not accuse God with being senselessly unjust or doing deeds that were unreasonable or foolish. Job's patience bore up under tremendous pressure. As James 5:11 says, "Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience (*hupomonee*) of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is pitiful, and of tender mercy."

How was Job patient? We say or we have it said to us, "Patience is a virtue," but our usage of patience is more in line with "temperance" - the control of our passions, especially frustration and anger. In the New Testament "patience" is not as passive. The Greek is *hupomonee* and comes from two Greek words, *hupo* ("under") and *meno* ("abide, continue, sojourn"), thereby literally meaning "to abide under". The word is better rendered as "endurance" and "steadfastness" and as Thayer explains it is "the characteristic of a man who is unswerved from his deliberate purpose and loyalty to faith and piety by even the greatest trials and sufferings." Trench writes that it refers to he "who, under a great siege of trials, bears up, and does not lose heart or courage (Rom 5:3; 2Cor 1:6)." Barclay picks up this aspect of courage and says, "In Greek *hupomonee* always has a background of courage."

The Apostle Peter uses *hupomonee* in 1Peter 2:20 where Peter lucidly spells out that there is no credit, no glory, in taking punishment manfully when one has done wrong. It is the patient, uncomplaining submission to unjust suffering, or suffering when one has done well, that is acceptable to God. Such action was championed in the behaviour of Christ. A fact that Peter is leading up to when he describes the demeanour of the suffering Messiah: "Who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously" (1Pet 2:22-23). A fact that declares Job, in these circumstances, to be plainly pre-figuring the work and character of Christ.

Why be patient? Was Job wasting his time? The New Testament provides the answers:

"Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised those that love him" (Jas 1:12 NIV);

"If we endure, we shall also reign with him; if we deny him, he will also deny us" (2Tim 2:12 RSV);

"In this ye greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1Pet 1:6-7 NKJV).

In other words, if we be as Job we shall enter into the Kingdom of God.

## 2:1-6 The persistence of the adversary

The action moves into the next round. The same verbal formulae are used, with minor variations (compare 2:1-4 with 1:6-12). The atmosphere becomes more tense.

Some time has elapsed since the first trial and the "sons of God" had reassembled. Job's adversary was present. Job's material environment was dramatically modified, but his righteousness was intact. The Satan thought that Job's righteousness was predicated on his prosperity. Wrong. Perhaps the adversary should cut his losses and withdraw gracefully. Maybe he could admit his misjudgment and indulge in some serious self-examination. No, the adversary of Job was a cold, ruthless operator. Correction was evil to him (Prov 15:9-10). He was not grief-stricken, realising he had made a mistake and deprived a righteous man of his livelihood and family. Rather he felt that his opinion was still valid, his correction a mere aberration, and he was out to prove that he was right and Yahweh wrong. "For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved" (John 3:20).

The Satan has not changed. He still has the same smug response to Yahweh's question as he had in 1:7. He represents the fleshly, carnal world. As Brother Sargent explains, "The Adversary's question bears the stamp of a very human cynicism. This is the voice of shallow minds laying claim to worldly wisdom. Have they not 'gone to and fro in the earth and passed up and down it?' They are not stay-at-home simpletons easily taken in by a show of piety in those who are doing well by keeping on good terms with God ... Having no spiritual depths in themselves, such men cannot credit others with qualities beyond their own capacity."

The LORD addresses the Satan as He had beforetime, exclaiming confidently that Job "still holdeth fast (**chazaq**) his integrity (**tumma**)" (2:3). **Chazaq** means "to tie fast, to bind bonds strongly" (Ges); "to fasten upon; hence to seize, be strong ... obstinate" (Strong). Job was clinging to his integrity as strongly as he could. He was determined nothing would shake his loyalty to his Heavenly Father.

**Tumma** ("innocence" Strong, LXX) is the feminine form of **tom** which, in turn, is derived from **taman**. **Taman** as already discussed in these notes at 1:1, means "to be complete." Job is clinging to the commendation that commenced the Book of Job. It had not been shaken. He was tied fast, bonded strongly, obstinately attached to serving God loyally and completely.

Why use the uncommon feminine **tumma**? Job, in this section, epitomises the Bride of Christ. The Bride, the **ekklesia**, must endure the fires of testing before she can be truly purged of the dross of the world. Job in his total submissiveness, his lack of aggression, his humble acceptance of all that befell him, beautifully displayed the characteristics of the Bride. As Proverbs 11:3 (the only place outside of the Book of Job [2:3,9, 27:5, 31:6] where **tumma** is found) reads, "The integrity (**tumma**) of the upright (**yasha** - see notes at 1:1) shall guide them: but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them." The very terms used to describe Job are held up for the observation of the saints. Job is our guide. He is the upright, straightforward, innocent one. The example is ours to pursue. "Blessed is the man who endures trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life which God has promised to those that love him" (Jas 1:12 RSV - see also 1Pet 1:7).

Yahweh continues, "Although thou movest (**suth**) me against him, to destroy him without cause (**hinnam**)." Brother Walker writes, "We must well remember here that the power that The Adversary wielded was God's, and not his own. It is so throughout the divine dealings; even Pharaoh was raised up for a purpose, - that God's name and power might be declared throughout all the earth. And in New Testament prophecy (Rev 12:9,10) 'The adversary ... the accuser of our brethren', has his work and the time of his 'casting down' delimited by God." Whoever did the smiting, Yahweh or the Satan, is not the issue. It must be stressed that the adversary had no power, whatsoever, of his own to accomplish what he intended.

**Suth** is used in a number of places in Scripture to refer to a divine action that was not without cause (1Sam 26:19; 2Sam 24:1; 2Chron 18:31). The Authorised Version's rendering of **hinnam** ("without cause") is severe and not entirely correct. While a number of authorities feel that it means "gratuitously" (Andersen, Young), within the context of the Prologue it best means "in vain" or "for nothing" (see Gen 29:15; Exo 21:2; Prov 1:17). It is the same Hebrew word as the "for nought" of the Satan's question (1:9). It is now obvious that Job was prepared to serve God for no material gain and that Yahweh was allowing Job to be swallowed up in, what was for the Satan, a failed experiment.

To the adversary the first round was not a true test because he had not been permitted to hurt Job himself (1:12). Now the Satan dares Yahweh to touch the skin of Job. If Job's body feels the damaging touch of God he will, claims the Satan, reveal his true character by open vituperation. He has changed his ground. He had not asked for so much the first time (1:11). The Satan was unabashed by his failure, but Job's faith had proved tougher than expected. But even to suggest that personal discomfiture would swing Job to the dark side assumes that Job was wholly selfish and cared little, if at all, for his children and servants.

"Skin for skin," demanded the Satan (2:4). What does that mean? Bullinger says that "Skin" is a figure of speech called **Synecdoche** where a part is put for the whole (e.g. Matt 27:4). In Job it stands for what is most precious to man. In the opinion of the Satan, Job's skin was his personal well-being. That was all Job really had concern for. If it was touched, Job would do anything to save his life regardless of his alleged integrity. He would forfeit his innocence for robust health - Skin for skin. In other words, smite his physical skin and his spiritual "skin" would no longer be of importance to him.

The Satan was basically correct when he said, "All that a man hath will he give for his life." But it was misapplied to Job. He would give all, even his mortal life, his skin, in order to attain unto immortal harmony with God. It is true that when our life is endangered we readily shed objects that were once important to us (Isa 2:20-21; Jer 41:8; Acts 27:18-19). But Job was not about to permit his calamities to daunt his allegiance to God. If we strove to keep our integrity as eagerly as we would preserve our life then we would be able to overcome many of the stumbling-blocks placed in our spiritual path.

But nothing is more likely to ruffle the thoughts and put the mind into disorder than acute, personal, bodily pain. Examples exist of faithful people who rose above their infirmities to maintain their service to God (Gen 32:24-32; 2Cor 10:10, 13:7-9). Job retained his integrity while under severe tribulation, yet we can buckle in less testing trials.

In 2:6 permission is granted by Yahweh to the Satan that he may touch the skin of Job. There was one restriction, "But save his life (**nephesh**)."  
He was not to kill Job as this would not allow Job to prove his mettle. Some authorities state that **nephesh**, in this context, would imply "reason" or "mind" or "intellectual powers." This makes sense because if Job was afflicted with a mental debility his response could not be accurately assessed. It would be the language and behaviour not of his heart, but of his uncontrollable madness.

## **2:7-8            Job's illness**

So the adversary (using power either granted by God or God Himself acting on the motion of the adversary) smote Job with a loathsome disease; sore boils (**shechin**). The horrible disease covered his whole body. Not a section remained untouched.

**Shechin** is a general word to describe a number of abhorrent complaints. It is used for the "botch of Egypt" (Exo 9:9-11; Deut 28:27,35), leprosy (Lev 13:18-23) and Hezekiah's boil (2King 20:7; Isa 38:21). To limit **shechin** to a specific disease is more than likely wrong. It doesn't really matter what the precise nature of the illness was. Whatever it was, it was not nice. Andersen offers an excellent precis of Job's condition: "Tradition favours either



leprosy (Lev 13) or elephantiasis, for these exotic diseases had a fascination for Europeans who had never seen them. The simple story does not indulge in the exaggerated fantasies loved by tales and legends. The lack of detail prevents clinical diagnosis.

In assessing the symptoms described by Job in the dialogue, we must remember the poetic medium. The brief data point to boils, ulcers, or one of the numerous diseases of the skin ... Some kind of acute dermatitis spreading everywhere and developing infections with darkened (30:28) and peeling (30:30) skin with constantly erupting pustules (7:5) would manifest the pruritis [sensation of itching in the skin] and purulence [discharging pus] highlighted in 2:7. Other symptoms may be the results of complications in the wake of such a severe malady: anorexia, emaciation (19:20), fever (30:30), fits of depression (7:16, 30:15), weeping (16:16), sleeplessness (7:4), nightmares (7:14). These and other general sufferings, such as putrid breath (19:17, compare 17:1), failing vision (16:16), rotting teeth (19:20) and haggard looks (2:12) are less direct clues. They add up to a hideous picture of a man tortured by degrading disfigurement (Isa 52:14) and unendurable pain, a bleak reminder that a man is flesh, made out of soil from the ground."

Job was inflicted with something he probably did not deserve. In Deuteronomy 28:35 a result of disobedience was to be struck with **shechin** "from the sole of thy foot unto the top of thy head." It was, as the earlier part of the verse expounds, "a sore botch that cannot be healed." We are being introduced to Job as a type of Christ.

The phrase, "from the sole of his foot to his crown" is language used of mortal, vain flesh. It is used of Absalom: "In all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty: from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him" (2Sam 14:25). Absalom strikingly portrays the vanity of flesh. He committed moral atrocities, who despite the love of his father plotted his downfall, he harboured and made sure he was the centre of attention. In Isaiah 1:6 we see Israel in an extremely low spiritual condition described as, "From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment."

It is true Job bore the same decaying mortal body as Absalom and the people of Israel, but Job did not live as they did. He strove to please God and to retain his personal integrity. But his complaint demonstrated exactly the worth of mortal flesh. Brother Roberts, in "The Christadelphian Instructor", has this to say concerning Christ's death: "Because being born of Adam's condemned race, and partaking of their condemned nature, Christ was made subject, equally with them, to the consequences of Adam's transgression. Therefore his public execution was a public exhibition of what was due to man from God." Job's diseased body was a public exhibition of the worth of mortal flesh.

The type continues. Jesus did not remain in the grave because God raised him up again (Acts 2:24), just as Job's **shechin** was not "a sore botch that cannot be healed." "The LORD turned again the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before" (42:10). Christ's sacrifice, in opening the way of redemption to mankind, resulted in him being resurrected to glory. Job's dedication and prayers for his companions, after the hardship they dumped on him, resulted in him receiving salvation from an incurable disease. It also gave him the prospect of glory in the future age.

Job was now a man on his own. Help, in the form of soothing ointments and healing salves, was not forthcoming so he had to turn to a piece of broken pottery for relief. He scratched himself with the potsherd, not as an exhibition of his grief, but because of the itch and to scrape away the pus (LXX). His display of grief was to sit in ashes (Josh 7:6; 2Sam 13:19; Ezek 27:30; Jonah 3:6; Matt 11:21). Brother Sargent graphically records, "Job receives the final affliction: stricken with a form of leprosy, he has to go out through the gate where he had sat an honoured elder, isolated from his fellows, he gets what dusty comfort he can from the warmth of the mazbalah, that accumulation of years of burnt animal dung outside the city which was the resort of outcasts." Andersen adds, "This self-abnegation was more likely his own sorrowful way of accepting his new status as a piece of human trash to be thrown out with other refuse 'in this place of discarded things'." The reversal of Job's fortune is now at its limit. In 1:5 he stood

before Yahweh offering burnt sacrifices, now, not much later in time, he is sitting in the town dung-hill, the rubbish dump, scraping his putrescent body with a piece of broken pottery.

Agur, the son of Jakeh, wrote in Proverbs 30:7-9:

"Two things I beg of you,  
do not grudge me them before I die:  
keep falsehood and lies far from me,  
give me neither poverty nor riches,  
grant me only my share of bread to eat,  
for fear that surrounded by plenty, I should fall away  
and say, 'Yahweh - who is Yahweh?'  
or else, in destitution, take to stealing  
and profane the name of my God" (JB).

Agur foresaw the problems of having too much ("I should fall away") or not enough ("profane the name of my God"). Job abided in one of either of these two conditions; the greatest man of the east or extreme destitution. Nothing in between. Yet in prosperity he was "perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil" and in poverty "Job sinned not nor charged God foolishly." Job truly was complete in his worship. Job was an amazing individual and the example is not one to be brushed aside. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Rev 2:10).

## **2:9-10 Job's second reaction**

A new personality enters the drama: the wife of Job. Her character is the source of some controversy. Is she good or bad? Rather than initially tackling this issue it is preferable to examine what she said.

Her first statement is a question. Some say that it could have been a taunt. Sort of like, "Look at what God has done to you. So why do you remain faithful to Him?" This can be seen in the same light as the statement made by the discouraged messenger in 2Kings 6:33, "Behold, this evil is of the LORD; why should I wait for the LORD any longer?" I believe that this is the correct way to interpret her words but not as a taunt. She has reached the end of her patience, her integrity. Job's children were her children. They are dead. She has seen her husband deprived of everything, including his health, and she presents statements that are, to her, totally logical.

Her opening question is laced with irony as she was requesting he do what the Satan predicted (2:5). Job was not directly tempted of the Satan. He knew nothing of his words but they came to him by way of his wife. This fact sets up the nasty interpretation of Job's wife. Matthew Henry paints her as a most insidious creature: "Satan urges him, by the persuasions of his own wife, to curse God. She was spared to him when the rest of his comforts were taken away, for this purpose, to be a troubler and tempter to him." Morgan jumps to the other extreme: "...and then there came the moment when her love-lit eyes looking at her man in agony, physical agony, she said, 'Renounce God and die.' Which meant, I would rather know you were dead, than see you suffer. I sympathise with her. So does every woman." Straight out of Mills and Boon. So what sort of person was she?

Job's wife could not have been the Satan's emissary as she receives no condemnation from God but is blessed with ten more children (42:13). Nor can one dogmatically say that she was to the other extreme as the Satan would have had her slain to add to Job's woes. It seems that she was a woman of some faith that the adversary knew would wilt under pressure, lose faith when the hedge was removed, and hence not be a strength or comfort to Job.

She cannot be justified for saying what she did. True, she was distraught, but to tell Job to, "Curse God and die," is irresponsible. The Apostle Peter writes, "Married women ... be submissive to your husbands ... Yours ought to be an inward beauty of nature, the imperishable ornament of a gentle and peaceful spirit, which is indeed precious in the sight of God. For this is how of old the holy women who set their hopes upon God used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their husbands" (1Pet 3:1-5 Weymouth). If Job's wife set her hopes on God, prayed for Job's restoration and comforted him in his distress, instead of placing a death wish before Job, she would have been of sterling service to her suffering husband.

Whatever motive lay behind her words, Job rejects them. Job compares her to one of the foolish (**nebalah**) women ("base women" Roth; "impious fool" Moffat; "impious women" RVmg). **Nealah** is the feminine of **nabal**, which means, "To be foolish" (Ges). It does not mean, "To be wicked." Moreso, "To be impious." In other words Job is saying to his normally godly wife, "What are you saying? You sound like the ungodly women; women you were never like before." It is crucial to our understanding to note that "Job did not call his wife a fool nor did he say that such reasoning was godless; he was careful only to point out that such reasoning resembled the type of reasoning in which the godless indulged" (Spongberg).

Job continues by declaring the correct attitude to adopt: "If we take happiness from God's hand, must we not take sorrow also?" (2:10 JB). His attitude has not changed from 1:21. Job in all this did not sin with his lips. Some rabbis say that this implies that while his speech was blameless his thoughts were wavering (e.g. "But in his heart he sinned."). There is no justification for this interpretation. It does not say Job sinned in his heart. Such an interpretation places Job squarely in the condemnation his friends assailed him with. It contradicts Job's approach to religion; that it was more than outward propriety (1:5). Job's humble acceptance of his calamities indicated that he acknowledged God's power over His creation.

Job's conduct is typical of that expected of the true saint: "For in many things we all stumble. If any stumble not in word, the same is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body also" (Jas 3:2 RV).

What more can we say about Job's wife? She had been with her husband faithfully year after year. Her faith, however, did not match her husband's. When the trial became too much (her reaction it seems did not occur until after the disease was placed on Job) she forsook the principles of the Lord and instructed her husband to do likewise. Remember those close to Christ - "What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matt 26:40-41). Remember their earlier confidence. Peter - "Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended" (Matt 26:33). He was. James and John, were they able to drink of the cup Christ was to drink of, that cup of shame and suffering? "We are able" (Matt 20:22). What happened when Jesus was taken in the garden? "All the disciples forsook him, and fled" (Matt 26:56). Here we see Job again presented as a type of Christ and his wife typifies the bride - the disciples of Christ throughout history - who cannot achieve, who cannot endure, like her Lord.

Jesus did what no other man has or can achieve. He is the only begotten of the Father (John 1:14), God manifest in the flesh. Even when he was on the earth he stood out as somebody unique. He was a step up, maybe several steps up, from his brethren. Yes, they "beheld his glory." Why? What was the distinguishing feature of this mortal man? "As of the only begotten of the Father." God was his Father. He was conceived of the Holy Spirit (Matt 1:20). Nobody else can legitimately claim that. "The Word ... made flesh." Nobody else was called that. Whereas Job stood out as the greatest man of his time, Jesus was the greatest man of all time - "full of grace and truth."

And we forsake our Lord. Just as Job's wife did. Just as the disciples of Christ did. But through the grace of God we are saved. The disciples were reconciled to he who was greater than them. Job's wife was blessed with her husband. And we, the bride of Christ will be united, reconciled and blessed with our groom, the Lord Jesus Christ, at the dawning of the new age.

## **2:11-13      The friends come and sympathise with him**

Once again, the adversary has been proven wrong. He now passes out of the record. The Satan has served his purpose and is no longer required. Instead, these final verses of Chapter 2 introduce the second part of this five part drama. Job's three friends arrive to eventually afflict Job but in a different way. The Satan instigated a corporeal crisis, the three friends embroiled Job in verbal jousting, a war of words.

The fact that they met by appointment shows that they were already acquaintances who felt it better to come by common consent together. There is no reason to doubt that they were genuine friends and that their motives for visiting Job were sincere. As Matthew Henry writes, "Job's friends came to mourn with him, to mingle their tears with his, and so to comfort him ... They were not sent for, but came of their own accord." They came "to mourn (**nud**) with him and to comfort (**nacham**) him."

**Nud** is only translated "mourn" in 2:11. It means "to nod" (Strong) or "to be moved" (Ges). It has both a good and bad sense in that it can be extended to mean "to pity, to commiserate (as signified by a motion of the head) ... to comfort the afflicted" (Ges) or "to deplore, or (from tossing the head) taunt" (Strong). The intention of Job's friends was to sympathise and comfort but as their visit progressed they displayed the negative side of **nud** by wagging their heads in dismay, deploring his words, and challenging him, almost tauntingly.

**Nacham** also has a dual meaning. It can mean "comfort" as it does "repent". Job's friends came to comfort him, but were unanimous in believing that he was a sinner who should repent. Ironically, Job does "repent" (**nacham**) in 42:6.

### **Eliphaz the Temanite**

His name most probably means "To whom God is strength" (Ges). He was of Teman which can be located in Edom. The only evidence its site has of its status is a large amount of pottery that indicates that it had considerable importance and could well have been the largest and most important region in the central Edomite area. This seems confirmed in Scripture where it is also listed as a venue for wisdom (Jer 49:7,20; Ezek 25:13; Amos 1:12; Obad :8-9).

### **Bildad the Shuhite**

His name means "Son of contention" (Ges, Young). He was presumably a descendant of Shuah, son of Abraham by Keturah (Gen 25:2). As Genesis 25:6 indicates, the children of the concubines were sent east, that is east of the Jordan. The land of the Shuhites is sometimes identified with the Assyrian Suhu, on the right side of the Euphrates between the mouths of the Balikh and Khabour rivers (IDB).

## Zophar the Naamathite

Quite a mysterious character. Opinions vary as to the meaning of his name: "Twittering bird" (IDB); "Hairy, rough" (Young); "Impudent" (Ges). Zophar is the only Naamathite in Scripture and nobody is really sure where Naamah is. For example: "Perhaps Djebel-el-Na'ameh, in NW Arabia" (IDB); "A land or tribe of Naamah is not known; the Judean town mentioned in Joshua 15:41 hardly qualifies" (Andersen). Others vaguely place it in the east country, land of wise men (1Kings 4:30).

Job's friends could not recognise him. As they were still some distance off, this does not mean that they thought he was somebody else. No, they could already see how different he looked from their last contact with him. He was, in this way, a type of Christ: "As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any other man, and his form more than the sons so men" (Isa 52:14). While his physical deprivations had their impact, Job, not unlike Naomi in Ruth 1:19, would have born the marks of the acute mental discomfiture he was undergoing.

They saw him and wept. They could not relieve the pain Job was in. They were helpless (1Sam 11:4, 30:4; Esther 4:1). They saw Job miserably altered, but did not recoil from him in fright or loathing. They responded with the feelings expected from a true friend. There were many times that they, either collectively or individually, reclined on his luxurious couches or ate at his sumptuous table, and now they are minded to share in his abject poverty, sitting in the place of outcasts with this grotesque caricature they know as Job. They determined to stay with him until he revived or died even though he could do nothing for them.

"Then, as Job had done earlier (1:20), they rent their mantles to express their heartfelt sorrow and threw dust upward to heaven so that it might fall upon their heads, both actions expressive of their feelings that what broke Job's heart broke theirs, and what fell from heaven upon him, their friend, fell also upon them (Josh 7:6; 1Sam 4:12; Lam 2:10)" (Spongberg).

They were so shocked at the change in Job that they sat down with him, in that filthy dung-hill, and mourned in silence as though he were dead. Seven days was the statutory period of mourning for the dead (Gen 50:10; 1Sam 31:13). He was a paradox: living death, a mere survivor who would appear better off dead. Nobody spoke, but dwelt in thought. Thought that formulated the words to follow.

Andersen sums up the conclusion of the Prologue when he says, "Attention is focused, not on the abstract mystery of evil, not on the moral question of undeserved suffering, but on one man's physical existence in bodily pain. There was nothing to be said. These wise men are horrified and speechless. They were true friends, bringing to Job's lonely ash-heap the compassion of a silent presence."

### 4.1 Digression - Where is Uz?

---

The exact location of Job's homeland, Uz, cannot be clearly ascertained nor is it crucial to our understanding of the Book of Job. A number of sites have been suggested. Firstly, 1:3 declares that Job "was the greatest of all the men of the east (*qedem*)."  
To the Israelite everything on the other side of the Jordan River was *qedem*, and therefore incorporates a huge tract of land. Lamentations 4:21 links Uz with Edom - a region of mountainous terrain, touching the south-eastern parts of the Dead Sea and extending some kilometres south almost to the Gulf of Aqaba. As the New Bible Dictionary notes, "The fact that Job is numbered with the people of the East (1:3 compare Judg 6:3,33; Isa 11:14; Ezek 25:4,10) seems to substantiate a location in the area of Edom." Genesis 10:23 associates Uz with Aram, father of Syria, and Genesis 22:21 with Nahor, elder brother of Abram, who eventually settled around Haran in northern Mesopotamia (Gen 24:10 with Gen 27:43). Job could have been close to the wilderness (1:19) and was open to attacks from Sabeans (probably based in the area we would identify as Yemen) (1:15). The home of the elderly Eliphaz - Teman in central Edom - is another indicator of Uz's proximity to Edom.

A combination of all these factors could place Uz on the northern borders of Edom, stretching along the east bank of the Jordan River.

## 4.2 Digression - Job's Satan, the sons of God and the LORD

---

Much, and I mean much, has been written about and debated over, especially by Christadelphians, the identities of the Satan, the sons of God and the LORD in the first two chapters of the Book of Job. And much of what has been written to support specific points of view is frustratingly valid. Frustrating in the sense that no sooner does one think they have it all worked out when a feasible alternative approach contradicts earlier conclusions.

In this digression I will essentially present the orthodox belief, Christadelphian options, and the viewpoint I support but not dogmatically. Throughout these notes, rather than interpret who the characters are, they will, in most instances, simply be presented as they are in the Book of Job. Unfortunately, because so much ink has been spilt and there have been many complex discussions on these matters, the important messages of the Book tend to become submerged. This digression is but another angle and the footnotes to it document the sources if you wish to pursue the alternatives.

### Conclusions

By way of introduction, my almost definite conclusions are:

**The Satan** (literally "The Adversary") was human, an evil adversary to Job, once a member of "the sons of God," and was, at this time, an intruder or missing from their midst for some time (1:7).

**The sons of God** were the faithful servants of God, again human, who met for worship. "Sons of God" is a term used elsewhere in Scripture for mortal believers (Gen 6:2; Phil 2:15; 1John 3:1-2).

**The LORD (Yahweh)** is Yahweh's representative on earth. Again human, this person was a representative, possibly a priest, who could speak and act for God. Such a conclusion is feasible as God will work His providence through whomsoever.

### "The Satan" - The Orthodox Viewpoint

The orthodox point of view of a supernatural Satan is encouraged by the rare use of the definite article in the Hebrew. Job's Satan is *hassatan* - "the Satan." *Hassatan* is only found in the Books of Job and Zechariah (Zech 3:1-2) and is interpreted as a "superhuman adversary" (BDB) who continues to exercise power on earth and has access to God (TWOT).

However, a number of factors should be noted. Firstly, *hassatan*, according to the Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, means no more than "the one who acts as accuser, or prosecuting attorney, on a given occasion." Secondly, as that publication rightly points out, "Moreover far from being the antagonist of God and chief of a rival dominion, he is his subordinate and can only act in accordance with his orders" (1:12, 2:6).

Furthermore, Satan as a fallen angel is inconsistent with what the Scriptures have to say about angels. Jesus said that the angels are "continually in the presence of my Father in heaven" (Matt 18:10 JB). The writer to the Hebrews says, "Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?" (Heb 1:14 NIV). This "Satan went from the presence of the LORD" on two occasions (1:12, 2:7) and if he was the supernatural malevolent tempter of mainstream Christianity he would hardly qualify under the terms of Hebrews 1:14. The orthodox "Satan" and "angel" are not interchangeable.

Another factor that could support the mainstream view is that the "sons of God" of Genesis 6:2 were angels. While "sons of God" can be angels (38:7) those of Genesis 6:2 are clearly human. Angels do not marry (Mark 12:25) whereas "the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful, and they married any of them they chose" (Gen 6:2 NIV). The feeling there was a dispute in heaven also seems illogical in the light of Christ's words that, "If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand" (Mark 3:24).

### **"The Satan" - The Christadelphian Alternatives**

- i) The "human" option (i.e. The "Conclusions" presented in the early part of this digression) is supported by Brethren Thomas<sup>1</sup>, Styles<sup>2</sup>, Sponberg<sup>3</sup>, and Walker<sup>4</sup>. Furthermore, Brother Thomas<sup>5</sup> in a detailed exposition conjectures but doesn't prove that, "(The Satan) was probably the Chief of the Sabeans ... To this man Yahweh said by His priest, 'Whence comest thou?'" Questions that cast some doubt on this option include, "Does this make the Book of Job inconsistent within itself as the only other reference to the 'sons of God' (38:7) is undoubtedly bound to immortal angels?" and, "If the 'sons of God' is a meeting of faithful mortals why wasn't Job in attendance?" To the second question the answer is, "I don't know, but perhaps there was no compulsion for Job to be in attendance." The issue raised by the first question could be answered in that, in this instance, the immediate context determines the interpretation rather than a broader "Book" consistency.
  
- ii) The "angel" option has a number of variations. Brother Kingston<sup>6</sup> claims that the Satan was an angel operating for the benefit of the earthly believer he represented. Brother Tennant<sup>7</sup> states that it was "descriptive of an angel who is there to act as an adversary for a specific purpose." Brother Whittaker<sup>8</sup>, in his provocative way, believes the Satan to be "one of God's angels of evil (see 'Gospels'. HAW, p118), being empowered by the Almighty ... although the angels are immortal, they are beings limited in understanding and in physical powers ... The Almighty was almost compelled to respond as He did to this angelic challenge, because His own character was being put in question ... and, second for the benefit of the angel, Job had to be brought under test for the improvement of the angel's education, so to speak."

This option, with its variations, can be called into question in some of the same ways the orthodox version is (i.e. division in heaven, serving the faithful, always in the presence of God). It also seems odd that heaven has regular meetings where God renews His acquaintance with His angels and makes important decisions via some sort of committee process. The language of 1:6 seems more like that of mortals assembling to worship God (Deut 31:14-15; Josh 24:1). In 1Samuel 10:19 it says quite clearly that the people were to "present themselves before the LORD," when, in reality, they presented themselves before Samuel, Yahweh's representative.

- iii) The "all in the mind" option is advanced by Brother Watkins<sup>9</sup>: "Here is a suggestion. Let us try to think of Satan as a symbol of unworthy human thoughts - not in the world, but amongst the 'sons of God'." His evidence is not convincing as the text simply does not read that way. It reads of real entities involved in real communication. Brother Lovelock's<sup>10</sup> view contains a similar concept while incorporating the angelic

council viewpoint.

- iv) The "find another character in the story" option throws up two prospects. Brother Pennington<sup>11</sup> affirms that Eliphaz is Satan. This seems unlikely as it places Job's adversary in the lengthy debate designed to plumb the cause of Job's suffering. Eliphaz's theory of exact retribution (i.e. the amount one suffers is directly proportional to their sin quotient - see 4:7-8) contradicts the motive for Satan's activity - to prove that Job's righteousness was the result of God's protection (1:9-11).

Brother G. Mansfield's<sup>12</sup> assertion is the slightly more plausible alignment of Elihu with Job's adversary. However, it cannot be proven beyond doubt. Besides the fact that the text is silent on identifying who the Satan is, Elihu does not appear to do or say anything that clearly links him with the Satan. The verse advanced as proof, Job 34:36, does not "cruelly allege that Job ought to die because of his claims." Much of the evidence for this option is derived from conjecture and Elihu's unresolved exit from the text.

- v) The "Cain" option is unique to Brother Davison<sup>13</sup>. However, it was impossible for Cain to be contemporary with Job because Job certainly existed after the flood. The fact that Eliphaz was a Temanite, descended from Esau, bears this out. The link between the Satan and Cain is valid (Gen 4:26, 6:2 with Job 1:6; Gen 4:12 with Job 1:7; Gen 4:6 with Job 2:7). It affirms that the Satan was of similar mind to Cain.

The choice is yours! But as Brother Ashton<sup>14</sup> writes, "None of these suggestions disturbs the facts of the case which have to be accepted. The initiative for the testing came from God, as did the 'evil' which occurred in Job's experience. Job learned through his suffering and so did his friends. Rather than arguing about exactly who or what is being described by Satan, it will be more profitable to learn the great lesson of the book, and recognise that the Lord of Heaven and Earth can only do that which is right and good."

- |    |                |  |
|----|----------------|--|
| 1  | J.Thomas       | "Herald of the Kingdom and Age to Come" magazine, 1857, p44-45                 |
| 2  | D.Styles       | <i>The Book of Job: Outlines and Notes</i> , Christadelphian Study Notes, p2-3 |
| 3  | E.M.Spongberg  | <i>The Book of Job</i> , Christadelphian Scripture Study Service, 1965,p2-4    |
| 4  | C.C.Walker     | <i>Job</i> , The Christadelphian, (Second Edition) 1955, p8-10                 |
| 5  | J.Thomas       | <i>Eureka</i> , The Christadelphian, 1974, Vol IIIa, p57                       |
| 6  | D.J.Kingston   | <i>Angels And The Court of Heaven</i> , David Kingston, 1988, p146-152         |
| 7  | C.Tennant      | <i>The Book of Job</i> , The Christadelphian, 1991, p48-54                     |
| 8  | H.A.Whittaker  | <i>Bible Studies</i> , Biblia, 1987, p372-373                                  |
| 9  | P.Watkins      | <i>The Devil - The Great Deceiver</i> , The Christadelphian, 1976, p37-40      |
| 10 | R.T.Lovelock   | <i>Job</i> , The Christadelphian, 1957, p19-21                                 |
| 11 | A.E.Pennington | "The Christadelphian" magazine, 1997, p457                                     |
| 12 | G.E.Mansfield  | "Logos" magazine, March 1998, p179   |
| 13 | W. Davison     | Letters to the Editor, "The Christadelphian" magazine, 1992, p71               |
| 14 | M. Ashton      | Answers to Correspondents, "The Christadelphian" magazine, 1992, p28           |



### **Job Curses His Day**

<b>3:1-2</b>	Job breaks the silence
<b>3:3-10</b>	Birth lamented
<b>3:11-19</b>	Infancy lamented
<b>3:20-26</b>	Manhood lamented

### **Job Curses His Day**

#### **3:1-2 Job breaks the silence**

After the seven day silence Job speaks out first. Job had, as it were, completed the ritual test for uncleanness that a leper was required to undergo (Lev 13:26). Job had served his time and now his friends were ready to comment from the observations they had made in those seven long, silent days. Job's feelings at this time are reflected by the Psalmist:

"I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me. I was dumb with silence, I held my peace, even from good; and my sorrow was stirred. My heart was hot within me, while I was musing the fire burned: then spake I with my tongue" (Psa 39:1-3).

"In the end it was Job who broke the silence and cursed the day of his birth" (JB).

Brother Spongberg describes the dilemma Job was in at this time when he writes, "In order to understand Job's desperate plea one must remember that a long time had elapsed since his trials began, and he had been stripped bare of goods, family, home, relatives, friends. His wife, whatever her intentions, had been unsympathetic, unhelpful. His friends had come from afar, but seven days passed and they could find no word of condolence - there was nobody, literally, nobody, to whom he could turn - for God also, it appeared, had deserted him. The utter loneliness of his position gradually pressed itself upon him, and caused him to give vent to his three-fold cry of despair."

Job opens his mouth and curses (see comments on 1:5) but he does not curse God. Satan did not gain any victory in this speech. Job curses his day, his very existence, in a cry that falls into three parts. Job doesn't curse himself for his misdeeds. He simply wishes he was not there. He is not suicidal in what he is about to say. Nor does he call on Eliphaz, Bildad or Zophar to slay him. He curses his day in wishing that he was not alive to suffer the afflictions he was undergoing. Job is justifiably very depressed.

In 3:2 the word "spake" is normally translated throughout the Old Testament as "answer." The Hebrew word is **anah** and in this sense should, as Gesenius states, mean, "to lift up the voice, to begin to speak." Literally, the word means, "to sing." Job did not merely speak. He was lifting up his voice. He was breaking a harrowing seven-day silence. He was doing something much grander than uttering a few selfish complaints. The scene is now set for the poetry of the Book of Job to flow until 42:6.

Jeremiah echoed the sentiments of Job in Jeremiah 20:14-18 in a remarkable parallel to the three pleas of Job 3.

The first plea of Job (3:3-10) says basically, "Cursed be the day of my birth. Would God, in his mercy, not allowed me to be conceived." Jeremiah 20:14-16 reads, "Cursed be the day wherein I was born: let not the day wherein my mother bare me be blessed ..."

The second plea (3:11-19) can be summarised as, "Why wasn't I still-born, dying in my mother's womb?" Jeremiah 20:17 mirrors, "Because he slew me not from the womb: or that my mother might have been my grave ..."

The third plea of Job (3:20-26) - "Why should one be kept alive when all he wants is death?" - is reflected in Jeremiah 20:18 as, "Wherefore came I forth out of the womb to see labour and sorrow, that my days should be consumed with shame?"

Both Job and Jeremiah were despairing in that they failed to understand why they were suffering. Both were in depths of despondency but neither cursed God. Both these men of sorrow retained their integrity towards God as they were pushed to their very limits in trial.

### **3:3-10 Birth lamented**

This is the first of Job's laments as he wishes he was never born or that he was not conceived. Job's grief is clearly evident as he harps on the concept of darkness (3:4,5,6,9) and establishes a number of parallelisms between day and night. In 3:3 Job proclaimed the day, a period of light, to be of no joy to him. He would sooner see the day perish along with the man-child born during it. The night when the proud husband declares he is going to be a father represents a disaster to Job.

How deep is the grief of Job. We cannot blame his friends as they have not yet begun to exacerbate the situation with their reasonings. Job exposes his deepest emotions after seven days of deathly silence.

3:4 commences another day and night parallelism. 3:4-5 concern the day and 3:6-7 are about the night. Job wants the day cursed. He wishes that God would have no thoughts for it - that the day be swallowed up in darkness. Would God, who controls day and night, have prevented the day of Job's birth occurring.

We read in 3:5, "Let darkness and the shadow of death stain (**gaal**) it." The term "shadow of death" is better as "deep shadow" (Gibson, NIV) whereas "stain it" (AV, NEB, CompB) is considered by a number of authorities (Gibson, JB, Delitzsch, NIV) to be better linked with its meaning "to redeem" (Strong). **Gaal** is translated throughout Scripture as "redeem", "redeemer" etc including 19:25 where Job exclaims, "I know that my redeemer (**gaal**) liveth." It signifies "to procure compensation for the downtrodden and unjustly oppressed" (Gibson). That is how Job saw his day of birth and he is asking that it be redeemed by darkness. Darkness can only be an improvement as it would have

rescued him from the rest of his life. Yet in 19:25 Job has a different outlook. His redemption is not death, it is something living. It is not darkness. It is light. Job's laments in Chapter 3 are his first spoken words after seven days of silence and intense thought. His initial reaction was extreme but his later responses are tempered by his disputations with his colleagues.

The end of 3:5 is perplexing. Nobody really knows the correct translation. The context of "darkness" and "light" point the reader in the direction of supernatural obscurations of light, such as eclipses, that would, as it were, frighten the day so that it would not be able to show its face.

In 3:6 Job turns to the night of 3:3. He longs that darkness seize it. This would appear to be a redundant request as night is regularly overwhelmed by darkness. However, Job is using **ophel**, a different Hebrew word to that found in 3:4-5 for "darkness". **Ophel** means "darkness, especially thick" (Ges); "intense darkness" (CompB). In Isaiah 29:18 it is rendered "obscurity" in regard to a blind man. For Job, night was not good enough. He craves for the night of rejoicing over the announcement of his conception to have been absolutely black with darkness - devoid of all light. Job uses **ophel** in a number of places to reflect the depths of his misery:

- i) 3:6 - to despair of his conception;
- ii) 10:22 - to request death;
- iii) 23:17 - to emphasise his confusion at God's dealings with him;
- iv) 28:3 - to describe the limit's of man's endeavours; and
- v) 30:26 - to declare his personal frustrations.

He wanted that night of rejoicing to be removed from the calendar. It is to become "barren" (NIV, Roth, Gibson, Delitzsch - "solitary" AV) so that no human being shall ever be conceived or born or greeted joyfully during it.

3:8 inserts an interesting allusion to "leviathan" (AVmg - "their mourning" AV) and the verse is better rendered as, "Let those who curse the day curse it, who are skilled in stirring up leviathan" (Delitzsch). Eclipses were attributed to the work of a mythological dragon who as an enemy of the sun and moon would devour them until a wild tumult performed with drums and copper vessels caused the beast to disgorge its prey. Job's desire was for the dragon to devour the day of his birth. This does not suggest that Job was a believer in dragons and magical incantations. It was merely a poetical allusion on a subject he had already covered in 3:5. Job is referring to tradition without endorsing it.

Job leaves no part of the night untouched in his grief as he next decries the dawn. Let the final stars be darkened, let the light that night longs for fail to emerge, let the night not be refreshed by the "eyelids of the morning" - a reference to the sun's rays that reach out heralding its rising.

Why the bitterness against that day? It failed to prevent the conception of Job, it began a life that was to lead to its present misery. But Job was conceived so he asks the question in 3:11, "Why died I not from the womb?"

### **3:11-19      Infancy lamented**

In this second lament Job bewails his infancy. He changes his approach from cursing to questioning. There is a progression. He wishes he was not conceived, but if he was that he would have died in the womb. If not that, that he had not been born, but if he had he would have died at once. As he has grown to maturity, he desires death. As far as Job was concerned, if he had died, by whatever means, he would have been better off. Death would mean the end of all miseries. He would have "been at rest."

The deepness of Job's depression is readily perceived, yet even as we read Job's words we can note a calmness beginning to surface. He is no longer questioning or cursing, moreso pondering the grave and those who go there. He recounts the great ones and the persecuted. He looks at the extremes of life; extremes that he had undergone. He was a man of wealth and wise counsel yet he wishes he was still-born. He built grand houses now he is the oppressed servant of circumstances. He was great now he is small. He sees the grave as the leveller, not the ticket to future happiness. Look at what the grave does:

- 3:14 The kings and counsellors who built large buildings could just as easily built ruins as the buildings mocked their splendour since in death they are no better than slaves;
- 3:15 The wealthy princes who could have filled their houses with silver find no value for silver and gold in the grave;
- 3:16 The middle point of Job's musings. It represents his ideal. To be still-born would have been better than the foolishness of riches or the torment of poverty;
- 3:17 The "lawless" (Roth) can no longer afflict nor are the weary worn down any further. Both are at rest;
- 3:18 The prisoners (i.e. those in forced labour) will be at ease ("rest" AV - *shaan* - not the same as "rest" in 3:13,17) and their taskmaster's (Exo 3:7) voice will no longer be heard;
- 3:19 The summary. Social inequalities are evened up in the grave. The two ends of the scale, the servant and the master, are brought together, along with the great and the small, in the grave.

### **3:20-26 Manhood lamented**

Job's first two lamentations were meaningless. Why lament your birth or your infancy when you are a man? How can Job request that his birthday be obliterated and his mother be unable to nurture him when both activities had entered the realm of the irrevocable past?

However, Job's question in 3:20 was quite reasonable - "Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery, and life unto the bitter in soul?" Job moves out of the past into the present but Job has permitted his present circumstances to colour his appreciation of the past. Job's prosperity, family and worship were once sources of joy to him. Now, because his prosperity, family and worship have been either destroyed or altered, everything beforehand is tarnished. Job's desire for redemption is a request for death, not a request for deliverance and a fresh start.

Job wants death. He wanted death as keenly as a treasure hunter wanted success. How desperate was that? Thomson, in "The Land and the Book," explains: "There are frequent allusions to hid treasure in the Bible. Even in Job ... we read that the bitter in soul dig for death more earnestly than for hid treasures. There is not another comparison within the whole compass of human actions as vivid as this. I have heard of diggers actually fainting when they have come upon even a single coin. They become positively frantic, dig all night with desperate earnestness, and continue to work until they are exhausted" (T Nelson and Sons, 1890, p135).

Job would rejoice exceedingly if he found the grave. A peculiar expression because those who find the grave cannot rejoice exceedingly. They are dead. We can observe the gross gloominess of Job by the positive terms he uses concerning death ("rejoice exceedingly" and "glad" 3:22). "Rejoice exceedingly" implies great exuberance and is translated "shout with joy" (JB); "rejoice unto exultation" (Roth, Soncino). "Glad" has the connotation to "leap and spring" (Ges) and is used of the grasshopper in 39:21. Delitzsch translates it as "enraptured."

In 3:23 Job becomes less general and more personal. He repeats the question of 3:20. Why is light given, why is life prolonged for those who are in distress and long for death? The latter part of the verse sees Job declaring that God has hidden the way and it cannot be found. What good is life, Job complains, to a man if God has covered up the way? "Hedged in" (**sakak**) means "to entwine" (Strong), "weave, to interweave" (Ges) or "covered up" (CompB -see also Exo 33:22) and in the context of 3:23 has application to being restricted or straitened ("straitly enclosed in" Roth). It is not the same word found in 1:10 which means to shut in for protection. Job feels restricted. He feels trapped. In this last phrase we note the first indication of the tendency to regard God as his enemy. Job does not renounce or curse God. He detects the hand of God in his suffering.

His diet was now one of sighs and groanings. Job's trauma is accurately reflected in Psalm 42:3, "My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?" Job compares his cries to the roaring of a lion. Gesenius states that "roarings" (**shagah**) in this context refer to the "cry of a wretched person, wrung forth by grief." **Shagah** is also used of the anguish of the crucified Messiah in Psalm 22:1 and the traumatised David as he sought reconciliation with God after the sins he committed in relation to Bathsheba (Psa 32:3).

We can remember Job in 1:5 being diligent in his prosperity. Calamity struck anyway. The very thing he dreaded has happened to him. What was it? Versions vary as to the tense of 3:25. If past tense (AV, NIV), it would refer most probably to the loss of God's favour or protection. If present tense (RSV; "Whatever I fear comes true, whatever I dread befalls me" JB), then Job's present horrific torture, the unrelieved dread disease that wracked his mortal frame and threatened to upend his mind, was the object of Job's fear. All the dire developments that Job imagined, were now reality. Whatever option we pursue, and contextually the present tense seems most appropriate, Job does not know why this has happened to him.

The last verse of this opening speech sums up his present circumstances. It is made up of four sharp clauses; each stab like a knife. Andersen translates 3:26:

"I cannot relax!  
And I cannot settle! ("rest" AV - **shaqat** - "repose" Strong)  
And I cannot rest!  
And agitation keeps coming back!"

What are we to make of Job's opening lamentation? Job is reacting far differently to the man who accepted his fate with humble resignation and recognition of God's ways in 1:20-21 and 2:10. However, Job's mind reeled in perplexity during those days when his friends gathered in awe-struck silence. Job assumed that as good came from God so too did evil (2:10) and that this "evil" would lead to death. Job submitted to what he considered to be God's wisdom and awaited death. Death did not come. "Where was God's justice in keeping a miserable man alive?" Job's statements are rash and set the scene for the criticisms he was to receive from his three friends. Were his statements right? Strictly speaking, no. He failed to see how that God could work through suffering. Job's ordeal ultimately taught him that. He had "uttered that I understood not" (42:3). At this point in time he had also lost sight of the future - "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom 8:18 see also Phil 3:8-11).

Job is set forth as an example (Jas 5:11). Let us remember the cause and final end of his trials, and exercise faith, courage and patience in our own (Heb 12:5-11).

## Introduction

Chapter 4 commences the first cycle of speeches. These speeches constitute the largest part of the Book yet it is not uncommon for discussion to revolve around the other portions of the Book of Job such as the prologue and epilogue, Elihu, the animals of the later chapters. However, the basic questions of suffering and sin are painstakingly addressed in the speeches. The friends operate from what appears to be the accepted orthodox theology of the time. The theory is simple - Suffering is the punishment of sin. They behold Job who is in great affliction, therefore he is a great sinner. They assume that Job is guilty and that his troubles are as a consequence of sin. However, each of his three friends promise Job a bright future if he repents of his sins: Eliphaz in 5:17-27, Bildad in 8:6-7 and Zophar in 11:13-19.

The first round is carried out in strict orderly fashion. Nobody speaks out of turn. Nobody directly accuses Job of being a gross sinner. They speak in general terms and usually state their theories broadly - each adopting a different basis to address their overall point of view.

Difficulties emerge when one attempts to determine the rightness of the words of Job and his three comforters. Some, looking for a black and white solution, claim that whatever Job says is right and whatever the three say is wrong. However, it is not that easy as the apostle Paul quotes the words of Eliphaz as truth in 1Corinthians 3:19. A better approach is to take on board the overall arguments. What is the message that Eliphaz or Bildad or Zophar is trying to impress? The difficulty is attempting to determine, within that message, what elements are truth, what are error, and what are the areas of uncertainty.

<b>4:1-7</b>	Eliphaz commends then criticises Job
<b>4:8-11</b>	His theory of observation
<b>4:12-21</b>	He claims divine revelation
<b>5:1-7</b>	The wicked suffer due to personal folly
<b>5:8-16</b>	Suffering is divine punishment: repent
<b>5:17-27</b>	God delivers the righteous

In introducing the character, Eliphaz the Temanite, Brother Mansfield has this to say: "A descendant of Esau (Gen 36:15). The Temanites were noted for their wisdom (Jer 49:7). Eliphaz was evidently the eldest of the three, and the most courteous also. He was the religious moralist and spoke from the standpoint of personal observation and experience. He claimed a personal revelation based upon a weird experience he had (4:12-21). His speeches are hard, cruel and rigidly dogmatic and his theme is summarised in 4:7. He emphasised the unapproachable majesty and purity of God (4:17-21, 15:12-16) but attempted to justify God by pressing Job into the mould of his theory relating to sin.

"He commences on a very polite note, but he is obviously irritated and severer in his second speech (15:2-16). In his third speech he outrightly condemns Job (22:5-9) where he flatly contradicts his own commendation of Job in his first speech."

#### **4:1-7 Eliphaz commends then criticises Job**

Eliphaz feels that Job's outburst requires a response. He begins courteously and favourably recalls Job's past. Eliphaz could detect that Job was not in an appropriate frame of mind to receive criticism - "If one should address a word to you, will you endure it? Yet who can keep silent?" But Eliphaz had to speak. Seven days of extra-ordinary silence were broken by Job. It was now Eliphaz's turn. He commends Job in 4:3-4 as one who was a father figure, one who "admonished" (Roth; "chastise" Strong; "instructed" AV) many, who strengthened the feeble, the wavering, the overburdened.

This gives us a valuable insight into the stature Job once possessed and the work he previously accomplished. He was not merely a religious rich man. He was active in the service of God. He was concerned about the welfare of others and worked among the poor and needy. Job confirmed this in 29:12-13 when he declared, "I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me: and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy." One wonders where all the people were to help him now? Surely, many were assisted by Job's benevolence and wisdom. Perhaps the prevailing theology of God punishing only sinners turned them against him. There is also a New Testament echo when the chief priests ridiculed the crucified Messiah with "He saved others; himself he cannot save" (Matt 27:42).

Then comes that telling word, "But." "You helped others when they were in trouble, but now that you are smitten you can't take it." Eliphaz either deliberately or accidentally harks back to earlier words and events. Job feared a loss of God's favour (3:25). Eliphaz says it has arrived, "But now it is come upon thee, and thou faintest." Job was "touched" (*naga*) in 1:11, 1:19 ("smote") and 2:5. Eliphaz comments, "It toucheth (*naga*) thee, and thou art troubled." After a complimentary opening Eliphaz utters hard sayings. Job was suffering more than any other man, yet Eliphaz compares him to those Job had helped. These are not compassionate statements. Perhaps Eliphaz thought he could jolt Job into repentance so that Job could start afresh with a divine blessing. The problem was Job's inability to reveal the required sin and this was a source of frustration to his friends whose simplistic solutions were made obsolete by the complexity of the situation.

What is Eliphaz inferring in 4:6-7? If Job is convinced of his piety he should show more confidence in God. In Eliphaz's estimation, the fact that Job lacks confidence implies his guilt. 4:7 is the crux of Eliphaz's argument:

"Think now: who ever perished, being innocent?  
And where have the righteous been cut off?!" (Delitzsch).

Is Eliphaz right? No. God does not forsake the righteous (Psa 37:25) but that does not mean the righteous are protected so that they never suffer personal tragedy or a violent death (Ecc 7:15, 9:1-2). Examples abound of righteous people being cut down (e.g. Abel, Samson, Jonathan) or suffering greatly (Heb 11:36-38). The point is, God will not forsake them because ultimately they will be rewarded and ultimately the wicked will be cut off.

In probing Job's wounds, Eliphaz is being heartless. It was not so long ago that the children he loved and made burnt offerings for (1:5) were dead - "Who ever perished, being innocent?!" Commenting on this verse Reichert notes, "If one is visited by suffering, afflicted with disease, or has buried his children, one must not speak to him as his companions spoke to Job."

#### 4:8-11 His theory of observation

Eliphaz says that his theory is reinforced by observation. But he goes too far. In the case of Job what is happening does not comply with his previous observations. Eliphaz will accept no exception to his rule. Therefore, Job's instance must conform to it. The inference is that Job must have plowed for iniquity (**aven** - "nothingness, vanity" Strong; "bad conduct flowing from the evil desires of a fallen nature" CompB - see Roth) and sown wickedness (**amal** - "wearisome labour" Ges; "sin viewed in the light of the trouble it causes" CompB) because he is reaping the same (note Job's use of **amal** "sorrow" in 3:10).

The problem is that there is an element of truth in what Eliphaz is saying (Psa 7:14-16; Prov 22:8; Hos 8:7; 2Cor 9:6; Gal 6:7-8), but Eliphaz is classifying a limited experience as a universal law and most verses that seem to support Eliphaz are contexted in the long-term; the judgment, the grand punishment of the wicked, and the Kingdom, the ultimate vindication of the righteous.

In 4:9-11 Eliphaz begins to wax eloquently as he uses a number of figures of speech and five different words for "lion". As Andersen pens, "What Eliphaz's argument lacks in substance he makes up for with rhetoric ... it gives Eliphaz's words that touch of pomposity that betrays his limits as a counsellor."

Bullinger identifies the figures of speech as:

- i) "The blast of **Eloah**" - **Antimereia** - A vehement blast; and
- ii) "By the breath of his nostrils" - **Anthropopatheia** - used twice in this phrase where "breath" and "nostrils" are attributed to God - "by his anger" AVmg.

The image portrayed in 4:9 is that of the judgment of the wicked. They are overtaken by a fiery breath (2Thess 2:8), which scorches and withers up the grass of the field (Isa 40:7; Amos 1:2; Jas 1:11).

The five words that Eliphaz uses, in the space of two verses, for "lion" are:

- i) "lion" - **aryeh** - general term for "lion" (Gibson);
- ii) fierce "lion" - **shakhal** - the roaring lion (Gibson);
- iii) young "lions" - **kephiyr** - a young lion, already weaned, beginning to rovin (Ges);
- iv) old "lion" - **layish** - crushing (Strong), strong lion (Gibson) - only found here and in Prov 30:30; Isa 30:6;
- v) "lion's" whelp - **labhi** - a lioness (Ges).

This illustration of the lions is a second description of the discomfiture of the wicked. Eliphaz's overdone metaphor indicates that as far as the wicked are concerned it does not matter whether they are young or old, small or great, ferocious beasts, they will not survive the wrath of God.

#### 4:12-21 He claims divine revelation



Eliphaz has already proclaimed that he was a man of experience. He had seen what he was professing. But, as if his observations were insufficient (and they were in their superficial treatment of Job's excellent character), he provides another witness to his credibility. He claims divine revelation. In 4:12-16 in a graphic, metaphysical way he describes a vision. In 4:17-21 he declares the words that were spoken by the indiscernible form that inhabited his vision.

Some commentators consider the vision to be authentic. If it was it did not come from God. The words spoken by the shape about angels clearly identified Eliphaz's imagination as the source of the vision. Perhaps he has dreamed and because it supported his theory he therefore adduced a divine origination. Nobody else would have experienced this dream. Who can tell him it was all a mistake? Once I was confronted by a member of a Pentecostal church who claimed he saw Jesus Christ while under the influence of marihuana. To tell him otherwise only invoked the response that I was deficient. I had not received the same sensation. Eliphaz has placed Job in a similar position.

The vision is an absolute gem. Eliphaz succeeds in creating a supernatural atmosphere. The vision is mysterious, solemn and one that would evoke great curiosity. We could imagine Bildad and Zophar craning forward to hear this eerie tale from the old man. The Jerusalem Bible captures the mood of the phantasm as well as retaining accuracy of translation:

"Now, I have had a secret revelation,	12
a whisper has come to my ears.	
At the hour when dreams master the mind,	13
and slumber lies heavy on man,	
a shiver of horror ran through me,	14
and my bones quaked with fear.	
A breath slid over my face,	15
the hairs of my body bristled.	
Someone stood there - I could not see his face,	16
but the form remained before me.	
Silence - and then I heard a Voice"	

Amazing! Unlike the prophets who heard the word of God with all their faculties operational, Eliphaz has difficulty seeing and hearing. Anyway, 4:17, the first words spoken by the form, needs clarification. It seems highly unlikely Eliphaz believed that Job considered himself more just than God. Eliphaz, to this point, has only directly accused Job of weakness (4:5) and Job has only exclaimed how miserable he feels and how he wished he were dead. The Revised Standard Version translates 4:17 as: "Can mortal man be righteous before God? Can a man be pure before his Maker?" (RVmg, Gibson, JB, Delitzsch, Soncino, Moffat, LXX support this translation).

The implied answer is, "No." Eliphaz does not attempt to show how man can be made righteous in the eyes of God because to him it is not possible. Instead he outlines just how unrighteous man is. In doing this he makes some extreme statements that only indicate that this vision is not of God. As Brother Styles points out, "According to Eliphaz God is stern, rigid, unapproachable, finding no pleasure or happiness in His creation but seeing evil all around him. This is, of course, a wrong view of God."

The words of 4:18 are clearly not words of spiritual revelation. Angels are not prone to "folly" (**toholah** "error" BDB - only here in the Old Testament - see Exo 23:20-23; Psa 34:7, 103:20-21 for verses that contradict Eliphaz) and, for that matter, it seems far-fetched to believe that God cannot trust his faithful "servants" (a term used of Job in 1:8, 2:3). The fact that God professed trust in his servant Job and it was vindicated (1:22, 2:10) demonstrates another error of 4:18.

Eliphaz's vision continues in 4:19-21 by saying that if the angels, spirit-bodied creatures, can be charged with folly then how little must God think of man who dwells in a house of clay (2Cor 5:1); his foundation is the dust (Gen 2:7). In fact, man is like a moth. Delitzsch translates the end of 4:19, "They are crushed as though they are moths" (see also NIV, Roth, JB, CompB). "Moth" (**ash**) is derived from **asheh** which means to "shrink" or "fail" (Strong). The moth is an unwelcome member in a household as they destroy garments etc. They are killed mercilessly and nobody cares (4:20). To Eliphaz the same happens to man because of his wickedness, his destructive ways. God crushes him as easily as one would crush a moth. Again Eliphaz is exposing the limitations of his experience. The righteous do not perish forever nor do the wicked always suffer. They often prosper (Psa 73).

The literal translation of 4:21 is, "Is not their tent-rope within them torn away? They are disrobed of wisdom!" (Roth see also Gibson, NIV, Soncino).

What does that mean? This is Eliphaz's final simile of man's frailty. Man is like a tent held up by one tent-rope. Remove that rope and it is sudden death. Some commentators compare the tent-rope to a life thread. The effect is dismal to the extreme. Man perishes before he has attained wisdom. Eliphaz is well-meaning in his magnification of God but he has placed man in an absolutely appalling state.

### **5:1-7      The wicked suffer due to personal folly**

The spook in the vision has finished and Eliphaz now speaks from his own observations and wisdom. Despite the many attempts to portray Eliphaz as the most sagacious, polite and respectful of Job's three friends, this section demonstrates the heartlessness of his character. He is at once cold, cruel, callous yet seemingly courteous. His friendship appears genuine but superficial. He presents as concerned yet self-righteous. Such is the paradox of Eliphaz and those like him. While offering advice and friendship we could be pushing the knife in just that little bit further. Eliphaz has travelled many kilometres to be with his afflicted friend only to increase his pain. There is no doubt he is trying to help and that he feels Job will benefit from his comments. Job would beg to differ.

Brother Mansfield breaks this section into three sub-sections:

- 5:1-2      General Proposition;
- 5:3-5      Proof; and
- 5:6-7      Trouble Inevitable.

In 5:1-2 Eliphaz exhorts Job to call to any around him, to the holy ones if needs be, and they will reinforce the words of the vision. The words for "saints" (**qadosh**) means "sacred" (Strong) or "holy" (Ges) and can be used of both mortals and immortals (6:10). The Septuagint renders the word here as "holy angels" and this could be correct. Eliphaz is convinced that what he says has divine approval. After challenging Job, Eliphaz puts forward a proposition: "Vexation, grief (Strong) killeth the foolish man, and indignation (AVmg) slayeth the simple (NIV)."

Eliphaz is impressing on Job that his lot will only worsen if he complains about it or is indignant at the prosperity of others. Job's attitude is simply unacceptable and he is, in essence, labelling Job as foolish and simple.

In 5:3-5 Eliphaz outlines another personal experience ("I have seen" 4:8), this time to illustrate the proposition of 5:2. It is not difficult to see the parallel between this experience and what happened to Job. There is really no great subtlety being exhibited by Eliphaz. He describes the case of a man who had been prosperous and taking root (compare with Psa 37:35), when suddenly his prosperity was no more and his children were ruined. Sounds familiar, doesn't it?

Commentators struggle with the closing words of 5:3 - "I cursed (***kabab***) his habitation." This is literally correct (Green) but Soncino asserts that ***kabab*** should be ***nakab*** which means "marked." A number of authorities concur that Eliphaz marked or noted his destruction (see CompB, JB, NIV, LXX). This makes sense as Eliphaz was in no position to effectively curse an evildoer. As Eliphaz admits in 4:9 it is by the blast of God that the wicked perish.

In what could be a reference back to the incidents of 1:19, Eliphaz grimly outlines how this man was cursed. His children were far from safety. They were not protected by the government of the day. There was none to deliver them. Although these children were not put to death, as Job's children were, the parallel is more than coincidental. "To be crushed in the gate," refers to the children not obtaining justice in a court of judgment (Prov 22:22). The gate is the open area at the entrance of the city where judgment is given (Isa 29:21; Amos 5:10). The upshot of the matter is that due to the ruin of the father, his children are unable to receive equity. They are tarnished by the reputation of the father (see Psa 127:5 for an interesting contrast). The phrase, "Neither is there any to deliver them," is used in a number of places to refer to an act of God that nobody could prevent (Deut 32:39; Job 10:7; Psa 71:11; Isa 5:29, 43:13 etc). Maybe Eliphaz has such a connotation in mind.

In 5:5 the man of Eliphaz's experience suffers his possessions being pillaged by covetous men. This happened to Job (1:15,17) According to Brown, Driver and Briggs the word "robber" is translated from a doubtful Hebrew word and is considered by many to an error of transcription for the word meaning "thirsty" (JB, Gibson, RSV, NIV, RV). This provides a neat counterpart with the "hungry" in the verse. The hungry and thirsty are those that covet the possessions of others as opposed to the righteous (Psa 107:5) who "hunger and thirst after righteousness" (Matt 5:6). The expression, "taketh it even out of the thorns," is in reference to the thoroughness of the robbers in stealing the harvest. Thomson writes, "The farmers, after they have threshed out the grain, frequently lay it aside in the chaff in some private place near the floor, and cover it with thorn-bushes, to keep it from being carried away or eaten by animals. Robbers who found and seized this would literally take it from among the thorns" (W.M.Thomson, The Land and The Book, T Nelson and Sons, 1890, p348).

After describing the experience of a man he knew, experiences remarkably similar to those that afflicted Job, Eliphaz explains their cause (5:6-7). The problem is not environmental. Man's troubles are innate and, it would seem, inevitable. Affliction and wearisome labour are not things you find lying in the dirt. Man is born to trouble. Man's afflictions are brought upon him due to his mortal nature, from which vexation rises up "as the sparks fly upward." This proposition has, along with much of what Eliphaz says, an element of truth (14:1; Jer 17:9; Heb 12:15). However, Eliphaz is too narrow in his thinking and incorrect in his application. Contrary to the conclusion he is moving towards, dire affliction is not compulsorily and only brought upon people because of some great wickedness they have committed. Think of Abel. Consider the atrocities committed against the Lord Jesus Christ. There are also positive outcomes: "He that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Gal 6:7-8). Here lies the key. Eliphaz in his restricted application paints too gloomy a picture.

## **5:8-16      Suffering is divine punishment: repent**

Brother Sargent writes, "[Eliphaz] therefore suggests a remedy, 'I would seek unto God,' with the implication that in this, too, Job had fallen short. Was there a subtle emphasis on the first person pronoun? What a human impurity is the self-righteous ego! Along with the other two friends in the first round of replies, Eliphaz is convinced that the purpose of Job's suffering is disciplinary. Where they err is in the thinking that the strokes of the rod are measured retribution for specific sins, and that Job has only to turn to God to be healed."

The "I" emphasis of 5:8 is strong (CompB, Delitzsch, Roth). The way of a comforter is one of patience and humility. Eliphaz is patient but humility is not listed in his personality profile. 5:8 also contrasts with 5:7 as Eliphaz attempts to switch from his mournfulness to a cheerful, optimistic tone. The New International Version correctly translates the start of the verse, "But if it were I". Delitzsch has, "On the contrary, I."

What is puzzling about 5:8 is the two different words used for God: "I would seek unto **EI**, and unto **Elohim** would I commit my cause." Brother Lovelock includes in his book an appendix on the use of the Names of God in the Book of Job. He states that in the Book of Job, **EI** is the title which expresses "the absoluteness of God in all His attributes, His omnipotence, omniscience, holiness and authority." **Eloah**, the singular of **Elohim**, is frequently used in the Book and primarily refers to God "as upholder and sustainer of His universe." But this was the only time **Elohim** was uttered by Eliphaz. How does the plural, **Elohim**, fit into 5:8. Brother Lovelock's answer: "In patriarchal times the One, supreme and eminent in all His creation, was recognised as **Eloah**, and when His intervention was through a plurality of agents, the plural form **Elohim** was used ... One such passage is of great interest in this connection, from a speech of Zophar:

'This is the portion of a wicked man from **Elohim**,  
And the heritage appointed unto him by **EI**' (20:29)

"Here the man receives the punishment from the divine agent, but the appointment of that heritage comes from God as **EI**."

Therefore, in similar vein, it could be said that although reward or healing is provided by the divine agent, it originally comes from God as **EI**. Eliphaz instructs Job to seek **EI** by committing his case to **Elohim** and these would logically be the angels. Ironically, in adopting this optimistic outlook Eliphaz inadvertently softens some of his earlier comments. The rigidity of his opinions cannot be sustained by Eliphaz. If 4:18 is correct then approaching angels could be a move that produces a response that Job could not trust. Despite the contradictions and smugness of Eliphaz his advice, in this matter, is sound (Psa 37:5; Prov 16:3).

In 5:9-16 Eliphaz declares how marvellous God is. This section is one of the clearest in the Book of Job, thus not necessitating detailed explanation, and also replete with truth. But, as we have said a number of times already, his application of truth is somewhat suspect. His words may have been of value to Job. Job seems to present his condition as irreversible (3:24-25) but Eliphaz correctly points out that nothing is impossible with God. It is as if a touch of humanity has got the better of the religious severity of Eliphaz.

God's universal goodness is demonstrated in rain, that oft-used symbol of divine beneficence (5:10; Psa 65:10, 68:9, 104:13).

In 5:11 Eliphaz, using an expression found throughout Scripture, says that God sets up on high those that are low. How low could Job go? According to Eliphaz, if Job repented of his evil then it was likely he would be lifted up. Job was eventually elevated in his lifetime and the words of Hannah (1Sam 2:6-8) and the Psalmist (Psa 113:7) seem to be drawn from that incident. However, the application of this concept in Psalm 18:27 and Matthew 23:12 is future as are the final comments of Hannah. This is where Eliphaz errs. Although Job's calamity was reversed in his lifetime, it was not guaranteed nor was it directly related to his repentance. God will elevate the needy in the time of His

Kingdom on earth. This exaltation (**sagab** - "be high and steep, inaccessible" Delitzsch) will exceed the hyperbole of Eliphaz - "Those who go in dirty, black clothes because they mourn, shall ... come to stand on an unapproachable height of prosperity" (Delitzsch).

Eliphaz continues by declaring that God confounds the crafty so that they cannot perform in accordance with their enterprise (**tushiya** - "wisdom" 6:13; "counsel" Ges; "intrigues" JB). The reasoning of the crafty recoils on their own heads (Psa 7:15, 9:15) as it is hastily conceived and executed and thus easily detected and frustrated. Instead, an utter confusion overtakes them (Deut 28:29).

The New International Version offers a good translation of the difficult 5:15: "He saves the needy from the sword in their mouth." The sense is similar to that of Psalm 57:4, 64:3 where the tongue is likened to a sharp sword cutting deep with bitter words. The crafty can inflict pain through the use of the tongue. Ironic words, nestled as they are within the hurtful statements Eliphaz has directed to Job.

Eliphaz completes his description of God's methods with a message of hope. The poor have hope and iniquity (i.e. the iniquitous person - use of metonymy) will stop her mouth (Psa 107:42).

#### **5:17-27 God delivers the righteous**

The speech of Eliphaz becomes more persuasive as it moves to its conclusion. Since God humbles him who exults himself, and He humbles in order to exalt, it is a happy thing when He corrects. Therefore, His chastisement should not be received with a turbulent spirit, but resignedly, even joyously (Psa 94:12; Prov 3:11-12 possibly a citation from Job 5:17; Heb 12:5).

In emphasising the chasm that exists between God and man, Eliphaz uses **Eloah** and **Shaddai** to describe God and **enosh** to describe man. As Brother Lovelock writes, "With the couplets and triplet containing **Eloah** and **Shaddai** we come to a more interesting distinction, for both express similar ideas; **Eloah** is God supreme in directing His creation, and **Shaddai** is God in love guiding His sons. In the first speech of Eliphaz we catch the subtle extension which thinks of fatherly chastisement as an extension of divine correction - the addition of the personal emotion and response to the impersonal but righteous act:

'Behold, happy is the man whom **Eloah** correcteth:  
Therefore despise not thou the chastening of **Shaddai**' (5:17)."

**Enosh** is the least flattering of words to be translated "man". According to the Companion Bible it is always used in a bad sense and speaks of man being morally depraved and physically frail. The contrast is unmistakable - man's inability and weakness in the face of God who is able to nourish albeit through chastening.

This section is probably the most beautiful of all the words of the comforters. But for all their sweet and soothing eloquence and their promises of peace and restoration they did not assist Job as they were based on a fundamental assumption that Job's suffering was a direct punishment for sin. Instead of consoling Job they confronted and stung.

In striving to establish the point that God's harsh treatment is ultimately to the sufferer's good and that God's wounding hand is also that which heals (5:18; Deut 32:39; Hos 6:1), Eliphaz lists six troubles out of which God delivers (5:19-22). He uses "ascending enumeration" (Gibson) in 5:19 whereby the speaker after mentioning one

number adds a still higher one to denote emphasis and completeness. Six troubles are listed but Eliphaz adds the comment, "Yea, in seven," to indicate that the six listed do not represent the limits of God's ability to deliver. The six troubles are:

- i) Famine - **raab** - "hunger, scarcity of grain" (Ges) - Psa 33:19;
- ii) War - **milchamah** - "battles" (Strong) - Psa 27:3; Zech 14:2;
- iii) The scourge of the tongue - a vigorous phrase for the sin of slander. Slander which is like a whip (Soncino) - Isa 28:15;
- iv) Destruction - **showd** - "violence" (Strong);
- v) Destruction (**showd**) and famine - **kaphan** from a word meaning "to bend" (Ezek 17:7). **Kaphan** is only found in 5:22 and 30:3 in the Old Testament. Many interpretations exist and Strong is one of the better ones, "hunger (as making to stoop with emptiness and pain)." To laugh at "destruction and famine" is a use of metonymy to express security against them; and
- vi) Beasts of the earth.

If Job advances from correction to blessing he will find himself in the idyllic circumstances outlined from 5:23. He will "be in league (**beriyth**) with the stones of the field." In other words, a covenant (usual translation of **beriyth**) will be made with the stones that they should not cause damage and, as Eliphaz continues, with the wild beasts that they will not attack his flocks or tread down his crops. As well as this, the tent and homestead of Job will be undiminished and in peace. The word "visit" here has the connotation of "inspect" (Andersen). It infers that Job's estate will not show any reduction at each annual stocktake. Beautiful words but harsh to Job, whose previous prosperity was based on grazing. The phrase, "and shall not sin," is an odd translation and is more correctly rendered as, "and find nothing missing" (NIV, Roth). In 5:25 the knife is pushed in a bit further. Job is given the promise of numerous descendants. This is not overly comforting to a man who has been recently made childless.

Finally, if Job responds to the chastisement of God he is promised a long and healthy life. Again there is a component of truth in Eliphaz's comments and his comparison of an old man's contented death to the harvesting of fully ripened grain adds a touch of beauty. The astonishing aspect of Eliphaz's closing comments is the irony of it all. Job did live a full life and died a contented old man. Eliphaz in his eloquent, though uncaring, words has accurately prophesied the closing years of Job's mortal existence. However, this ironical outcome does not validate Eliphaz's theory of exact retribution.

Eliphaz concludes his first speech with a restatement of his authority base ("We have searched it, and so it is.") and a final exhortation for Job ("Hear it, and know thou it for thy good."). Eliphaz is confident that what he has said is true and it is Job's responsibility to do something about it.

What of this speech? Delitzsch writes, "The skill of the poet is proved by the difficulty the expositor has in detecting that which is false in the speech of Eliphaz." Doctrinally, the speech is reasonably sound and snippets of it can be favourably compared to the Law and the Psalms. Where is the defect? Why is it that Eliphaz is singled out for special attention by God in 42:7 as "being one that did not speak that which was right"?

Eliphaz was inept as a counsellor. He was cruel in the way he twisted truth to sting a man in the depths of depression. He never once offered words of sympathy. Instead he finished by deflecting Job's mind to a promise of health, while Job is scratching himself in the town dung-hill; to a promise of wealth, while the Chaldeans and Sabeans were returning to their lands with Job's animals; to a promise of numerous descendants while Job's ten children lie crushed to death.

Eliphaz's speech fits his theology but it does not fit Job's case. He is correct in his description of the power and justice of God but he restricts God to the rules of his religion.

Job possesses a more detailed understanding of God. He has learnt to view his good life as a gift, not a reward, so he does not curse God when it is removed. God can give and retrieve His gifts at His pleasure (1:21). He can send good or bad (2:10).

If Eliphaz is right then the fate of Jesus is proof that it is futile to be good. It is futile to be good, unless. Eliphaz does not understand the "unless" of the gospel. Unless the vindication of serving God lies beyond the grave, when the victory of resurrection proves the indestructibility of a faithful life when combined with God's grace; when God bestows His greatest gift to mortal man, eternal life (Rom 6:23).

### **SPEECH 1 - ELIPHAZ - TECHNIQUES**

- Polite Start Followed By Harsh Words - 4:3-4, "But" 4:5⇒
- Third Person Recollection - 4:7; 5:3-5 - Not A Direct Assault
- Speaks From Actual Experience - 4:8; 5:3 - "I Have Seen"
- Speaks With Eloquence - 4:9-11
- Speaks From Supernatural" Experience - 4:12-21 - "A Thing Secretly Brought"
- Use Of Extreme Language To Impress A Point - 4:18-19 - "His Angels He Charged With Folly"
- Focus On Job's Two Most Sensitive Areas: Job's Loss Of Family And Loss Of Status
- "If I Were You" - 5:8

### **7.1 Digression - Eliphaz and 1Corinthians 3:19**

---

The Apostle Paul cites the words of Eliphaz (Job 5:13) in 1Corinthians 3:19. Bearing in mind the divine condemnation of Eliphaz's words in 42:7, what conclusions can we draw from this citation? The following are suggested:

- We cannot declare everything said by Eliphaz to be incorrect. While his overall philosophy is wrong many of his individual statements possess truth.
- The citation does not declare Eliphaz to be working under inspiration. Peter's citation in 1Peter 3:6 of the thoughts of Sarah was used to indicate Sarah's healthy regard for her husband couched as it was in her unhealthy disregard of the message of the angels.
- Paul's use of Eliphaz's speech brilliantly fits the message he was conveying in 1Corinthians 3:19. Not only were the words appropriate but Eliphaz himself fell victim to them. His wisdom was foolishness with God and he was taken in his own craftiness. Paul's skilful citation would have sent his readers back to the Book of Job where the vanity of man is placarded and the righteousness of God is upheld.

### **Job's Answer to Eliphaz**

- 6:1-7** Job justifies his grief and impatience
- 6:8-13** He repeats his desire for death
- 6:14-23** He reproaches his friends for their failure to help him
- 6:24-30** Job rejects the conclusions of their arguments

### **Reflection and Appeal**

- 7:1-10** Job ponders his hopeless, helpless condition
- 7:11-21** Job's intemperate appeal to God

How is Job to respond to Eliphaz? Eliphaz, while courteous, has been insensitive. While not accusing, he has been less than subtle. While offering a solution, he has only irritated Job with his moralising. Rather than offer sympathy, he has indicated that Job is overreacting. Even if we give Eliphaz the benefit of the doubt, his words still stung the tormented Job. Only the sufferer feels his own grief. Eliphaz has not helped and Job responds with an alarming emotional outburst.

He seeks to justify his behaviour. How could they possibly appreciate what he is going through? If only he could die. Eliphaz has not identified what he has done to deserve this treatment. "Teach me," Job exclaims, "And I will hold my tongue: and cause me to understand where I have erred" (6:24).

In Chapter 7 he relates the pitiful state of mankind and since death is the only remedy for that condition he becomes passionate in his plea for God to slay him. Job closes with words that almost doubt God's fairness. How far Job has been stretched that he, a man who greatly loved his Lord, is beginning to question God. He cannot understand "Why have You set me as Your Target?" (7:20 NKJV)

### **Job's Answer to Eliphaz**

- 6:1-7** Job justifies his grief and impatience



Job is not in any way appeased by the words of Eliphaz. Instead he reacts very passionately to his statement that, "For he is a fool who is destroyed by complaining, And envy slays the simple one" (5:2 Delitzsch). Job picks up the word Delitzsch translates as "complaining" (**kaas**) and hurls it back. "Oh that my grief (**kaas**) were thoroughly weighed, and my calamity laid in the balances together!" (6:2). If only Eliphaz could appreciate the vexation and ruin of Job's life he would not be so glib in his treatment of it.

"To be honest," Job continues, "My calamity far outweighs my complaining." Job represents his tragedy with the familiar hyperbole of the sand of the sea. It is immeasurable. It is little wonder that his "words have been rash" (6:3 NKJV).

The reason why his grief is so overwhelming is not just because of the pain and the indignity but also the understanding that God is responsible. Job is addled and afraid. It appears that God is his adversary. God is likened to an archer who has fired poison-tipped arrows into Job's spirit. Job is seized with fear as he perceives God set in battle array against him.

Job next continues to justify his wild words while also chiding his friends. Are not his friends like wild asses in a field of lush grass? Surely they have no reason to complain. Does an ox low when its fodder is within reach? How can they fairly criticise a man when they are in clover and he is in need?

6:6 presents a few difficulties as the details are unclear. Two opinions are advanced:

- i) Job is referring to the speech of Eliphaz. It is insipid and tasteless, of no value to Job's situation; or
- ii) Job is alluding to his drama. How can he enjoy something like the traumas he has undergone and is undergoing? It is like trying to enjoy tasteless food.

I believe Job is referring to both. Job has recognised that God is behind his suffering. The link with 6:4 is thus made but Eliphaz's assertion, "Behold, happy is the man that God correcteth," is merely the platitude of a man who is like an ass in a lush field of grass or an ox in easy reach of its fodder. Both his suffering and the advice of Eliphaz are completely unappetising to Job.

As Job continues, "The very dishes which I cannot stomach, these are my diet in my sickness" (6:7 JB). Job's complaining is not without cause. How can Eliphaz object when as Job said in 3:24, "My only food is sighs, and my groans pour out like water" (JB)? And why must his vile diet be supplemented with the bland homily of Eliphaz?

### **6:8-13 He repeats his desire for death**

All Job wants is simple. He desires death. He condenses the enormous amount of feeling that filled his opening lamentation (Chapter 3) into a few lines. Death is his request and it is not as Eliphaz would see it - the just destruction of a sinner by God (4:9,19-20, 5:2). Even if it pleases God to crush Job, so be it!

Note how Job again uses Eliphaz's words in his reply. Eliphaz spoke of sinners being "crushed (**daka**) before the moth" (4:19) and how the foolish man's children "are crushed (**daka**) in the gate" (5:4). Job declares that if God

chose "to destroy (**daka**)" (6:9) him it would give Job comfort. How ironical. His friends came to comfort him (2:11) but now after the most venerated of the three offers advice Job proclaims that comfort can only come with death.

While death is what Job longs for (**tikvah** - hope - 6:8) so that his misery may end, how is it his "consolation" (Ges)? The original Hebrew is obscure in 6:10 but the New International Version probably approaches the correct sense with, "Then I would still have this consolation - my joy in unrelenting pain - that I had not denied the words of the Holy One (**qadosh**)."

Had Eliphaz accused Job of denying the Holy One? Not directly, but perhaps that was the underlying message of 5:1 - "Call if you will, but who will answer you? To which of the holy ones (**qadosh**) will you turn?" (NIV).

Job in his aggrieved state gives the impression that he is clutching at Eliphaz's comments and veiled accusations intent on defending himself. To which holy one could Job turn? Even if it pleased the Holy One to crush him, he would never be condemned for denying Him. We see Job lifting his mind to a higher spiritual plane. What is his consolation? Clearly, the resurrection, judgment and future reward. There is no doubt that such concepts were part of his understanding (14:13-15, 19:25-27). Job could see beyond the grave and this faint scent of the Kingdom age seems to marginally dilute Job's desperation; especially as evidenced in Chapter 3 where Job wished he had never been born and exposed to God's ways. As we progress in our consideration of the dialogue between Job and his comforters we will find that Job's desire for oblivion is less strident and the prospect of salvation occasionally bobs to the surface.

Having requested death, Job wants to know why he has to wait for it (6:11). Eliphaz told him to wait as sooner or later God would save him (5:17-27). Job claims that he just does not have the physical strength to do so. He is not strong like stone or brass. He is frail and, unlike inanimate objects, possesses intense sensitivities. He is a man of flesh whose resources are spent. He has nothing to live for.

In concluding 6:13 Job again questions another of Eliphaz's observations. He had declared that God "disappointeth the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot perform their enterprise (**tushiya**)" (5:12). In other words, God confounds the shrewd so that they cannot perform in accordance with their wisdom. Perhaps Job detected another underhanded poke at him; that Job's affliction was divine retribution against his shrewdness. Job's response - "Is not wisdom (**tushiya**) driven quite from me?" In his adversity, Job had all shrewdness, any ability to succeed, driven from him. Not only was he physically debilitated, he was incapable of using his intellect to develop a solution. To whom could he turn (Jer 9:23-24)?

#### **6:14-23 He reproaches his friends for their failure to help him**

If shrewdness has been driven from him then somebody must help Job. Up until this moment Job had been defending himself as well as disputing some of Eliphaz's reasonings. Now he turns and confronts his comforters. How good were they? In not demonstrating kindness to one who is afflicted (**mas**) they could not claim to be religious men.

There is some dispute over the meaning of 6:14. Of the options presented I prefer that advanced by the Revised Standard Version: "He who withholds kindness from a friend forsakes the fear of the Almighty" (see also JB, Andersen). Job is afflicted or as the Hebrew (**mas**) means, "one who is consumed with calamities" (Ges). **Mas** is derived from a word meaning, "to melt, to flow down, to waste away" (Ges). Job expected his friends to comfort him. Indeed he could be close to casting off his faith in God (Delitzsch) and therefore should be treated with sensitivity, not with insinuations of guilt. Why should he be vexed further? Surely his pain is enough. If they truly feared God they would not be so callous in their treatment of Job. This, I believe, is Job's intended meaning. The context bears this out as Job continues to reproach his friends.

I suppose we can easily do an Eliphaz. Instead of assisting our needy brother we psychoanalyse him. We ponder rather than provide. We hypothesize rather than help. What use is that (Jas 2:16)? Practical loving help is the spirit of the true brotherhood (1Pet 4:8).

In 6:15 he begins by saying that his brothers (note: they are his brothers not his foes) are as false as a wadi - a winter stream that can be a rushing torrent but dries up, often completely, in the summer. Such are his friends whose sympathy has also dried up. When he does not need their help, symbolically winter when water is plentiful, their help is overflowing. When he needs their help the ground is parched. No help is forthcoming.

In case they missed Job's complaint, he elaborates it in 6:16-17. In winter the streams cascade off the snow-clad slopes turbid with ice, soil and snow. When summer comes they are dried up. What value are they to the traveller? When the streams are needed they are gone.

6:18 describes the wanderings of the ancient caravans in their struggle to find water. They follow a promising water source only to have it disappear into the rocks or evaporate in the aridity of the desert. Streams that were once bubbling, full of sustenance, are now dry, mocking creek beds.

Just so Eliphaz is fully aware of Job's chagrin, Job refers to people very familiar to Eliphaz. "The caravans of Tema (Eliphaz's district - 2:11) look to them, and on them Sheba's convoys build their hopes. Their trust proves vain, they reach them only to be thwarted" (6:19-20 JB). Job's hopes had just as swiftly been built up. His friends came from afar to comfort him and mourn with him. But, like a desert mirage, he was thwarted. He was humiliated by his friends. Job uses two words, similar in meaning, to stress his shame. "Confounded" (*bosh*) means "to be ashamed" (Ges), "disconcerted, disappointed" (TWOT) and "ashamed" (*haper*) means "to blush, be ashamed ... Mostly used of shame arising from disappointed hope" (Ges). *Haper* is primarily used in Scripture to reinforce the emotion of *bosh* (e.g. Psa 35:26; Isa 24:23; Jer 15:9; Mic 3:7).

6:21 is the punchline. The New International Version gives us a solid, conservative rendering of this Hebraically difficult verse with, "Now you have proved to be of no help, you see something dreadful and are afraid." How were they afraid? They have all had the fortitude to sit for days with the disease-ridden Job. Eliphaz has not been afraid to express his opinion. Perhaps their fear was that they did not want to get too close to Job; a man who by their conventional theology must be experiencing the displeasure of God. Fear can present a barrier between counsellor and client and Job is accusing his friends of being fearful to help him.

Job had not asked anything of them. He did not request that they bring something, or a ransom from their wealth, or redemption from an enemy. All Job wanted from them was comfort, their sympathy. He had received veiled accusations of wrong-doing. Not good enough. But is Job being illogical? Even if he did ask for the items he mentioned in 6:22-23 not only would they be difficult to procure, they would be inappropriate for his circumstances. Job, in his tormented state, is using these examples, not because he desired them, but to expose the little he did need and his disappointment at not receiving it. Job is being a bit extreme because his friends did come to comfort and mourn without waiting for a specific invitation. Their good intentions broke down only because, after seven days meditating on Job's dilemma, they arrived at the wrong conclusions.

#### **6:24-30 Job rejects the conclusions of their arguments**

How severe Job's trials were. And how difficult it would have been for Eliphaz to counsel a man almost hysterical with grief, particularly when his creed dictated that Job was a sinner. Job knows where Eliphaz's line of thought is heading

- an open accusation of sin - so Job gets in first, "Put me right, and I will say no more; show me where I have been at fault" (6:24 JB). The crucial issue is crystallized in Job's outburst. Eliphaz has not directly accused him but Job, sensitive to the first speech he heard, easily detected Eliphaz's message. "Where have I erred (*shaga*)."  
The primary emphasis in *shaga* is sin done inadvertently (TWOT). If only they could identify the causative sin, he would accept their logic and cease complaining.

After all, he continues in 6:25, "Right words are powerful, but what does your arguing argue" (Green). Thus far they had not revealed anything of note. He was not seeking condemnation wrung out of familiar philosophy. He wanted proof, specific evidence, before he would accept their reasonings.

Perhaps they could accuse him of being rash with his mouth. He had admitted such in 6:3 but these words were subsequent to the disasters of the first two chapters. Even those words, justifies Job, are merely desperate speech that the wind blows away (see RSV, JB). Despite Eliphaz's criticism of complaining speech (5:2) Job is convinced that the rash words he uttered are not worthy of reproof.

Job attacks in 6:27. It is Job's conviction that they are the ones who stand condemned, not him. If they accuse him, he can accuse them. Job can give as good as he gets. His accusations against them are exaggerated, rough and designed to hurt. In Job's estimation they are so pitiless, so remarkably dispassionate, they would cast lots for an orphan of a debtor in order to sell the child into slavery. They would barter away a friend. The relationship between Job and his friends is deteriorating. In 6:15 they are his brothers. By 6:27 he feels they would gladly sell him to the highest bidder.

Are such insults justified? We must never forget the extremity of Job's condition coupled with the insensitivity of Eliphaz's carefully constructed opening speech. Despite this, Job's words would not have enhanced objective discussion.

After stunning his friends with the force of his feelings, Job returns to his primary debating point. Convinced of his innocence he asks his friends to "be content" ("show willingness" TWOT) to look him straight in the face. No longer should they avert their eyes as one may do to a repulsive sight or a dying man. He is confident that he is correct and sure that they will arrive at the same conclusion.

In what seems to be deliberate irony, Job urges them to "Think again" (NEB), "Relent" (NIV, JB) about their assessment of him (6:29). It was not that long ago Eliphaz was indirectly telling Job that he should repent - "Despise not the chastening of the Almighty" (5:17) - and that his words were for Job's well-being (5:27). Job now encourages them to relent from their original dogma, rethink their stance on the matter because his righteousness was at stake and, as far as he was concerned, it "still stands" (NKJV).

Maybe they thought there was iniquity in his tongue. No, infers Job. To him there was no disclaiming the rectitude of his speech. He acknowledged its rashness but will not back down from its essence. Did they consider his taste, his moral discernment, to be suspect? He knew they thought he has spoken ill-advisedly and that his moral sense was befuddled. Until he could convince them otherwise he was wasting his breath on them. He has reasoned with them, rebuked them, insulted them, challenged them, pre-empted them. Now he turns from them.

## **Reflection and Appeal**

### **7:1-10 Job ponders his hopeless, helpless condition**

Job, having rejected his friend's counsel, moves into a soliloquy that leads to a remonstrance against God Himself. Briefly, he reflects on the endless drudgery of human existence before describing the unmitigated abjection of his dread disease. Just when it appears that Job may rise above his environment, his recall of his condition plunges him into despair. In chapter 6 there were tiny specks of light as he brushed against the future (6:10) and he confidently challenged his comforters to reveal the sin their philosophy required for its vindication. All that is past. His lament is that his life is but a breath speeding hopelessly to oblivion.

His opening statement is general, "Is not man's life on earth nothing more than pressed service, his time no better than hired drudgery?" (JB). Job would not have used such language to describe his lot prior to his affliction. Even in its early stages Job could see more to life than "pressed service" or "hired drudgery" (1:20-22, 2:10). But Job is now some months removed from then.

He felt trapped, unable to escape. He was like a servant working in the fierce heat of the day longing for shade and respite. The indignity of it all. He reduces mankind to the symbols of servants (**ebed** - commonly used for "slave") and hirelings (**sakir** - "one who works for wages" - a description of the lowly working class. Job's servants were not **sakir**. They were the less derogatory **naar** - "young men" Green - 1:15,16,17,19). Job was not averse to hard work. It was his loss of dignity that rankled. He was worse off than the slave and the hired labourer. At least the slave had shade and the labourers received a salary. He had "months of emptiness" (RSV) or "futility" (NKJV, NIV) and "nights of misery" (RSV, JB).

Think about what Job is saying with "months of emptiness". It gives us a sharper insight into why he was reacting the way he was. When we read the Book of Job we could understand it to cover a short, albeit dramatic, period of time. No, even at this early stage we are talking of months. Job could be exaggerating. I think not. The message of Job's plight had to travel considerable distances in order to reach his three friends. They met together before deciding to travel as a group to visit Job (2:11). After what would have been slow and laborious travel, not forgetting that Eliphaz was quite old, they finally arrived in Uz only to be stunned into seven days of silence. It is little wonder that the emotion of Chapter 3 is so vigorous. It has been months of unrelenting distress. It should hardly surprise that Job is appalled by Eliphaz's comments and is pitched into deep despair. His condition over those months has degenerated, both mentally and physically.

He wants relief in sleep but even this is denied him as night is the worst time for depression. We usually have difficulty sleeping when we are vexed with a problem. Imagine the quality of Job's sleep. Time is so magnified for Job. Everything is in slow-motion. He wants the new day. Perhaps it offers hope. "But the night is long" (RSV). He would love to sleep but he is "full of tossings to and fro unto the dawning of the day" (7:4). Even when he does sleep he is plagued with nightmares (7:13-14).

His body is creeping with maggots, born in his putrefaction, and covered with dirt-like scabs ("clods of dust") which alternately harden and crack open oozing vile pus. His mind is raging with conflicting thoughts. While the nights seem long and very slow, he laments "Swifter than a weaver's shuttle my days passed, and vanished, leaving no hope behind" (7:6 JB).

"Hope" (**tikvah**) also means "cord" or "thread" and is translated as "line" in Joshua 2:18,21. In keeping with the analogy of the weaver's shuttle, the New English Bible renders 7:6 as, "My days are swifter than a shuttle and comes to an end as the thread runs out." Job sees no prospect of recovery. The suggestions of Eliphaz (5:17-27) have not encouraged him to think otherwise.

In 7:7 Job's soliloquy changes as he addresses somebody. Most suggest God (NIV even inserting a textually unsupported, "O God."), few suggest his friends. I believe that 7:7-10 is spoken by Job to anybody who would care to

listen. It is a general lament. His life is but a breath. It can cease at any moment. His eyes would never again see joy. Sorrow mars his final days and in sorrow he expects to die. Job is but a cloud dissolved by the hot sun, whisked away on the breeze. He goes down to the grave not to come up again.

Is Job denying the resurrection? Has his despair reached such a level? Maybe, but 7:10 may clarify the problem. Perhaps he is stating that he would have no further participation in the present dispensation. He would not see his family and his friends would see him no more. They would return home with only memories of their deceased friend.

### **7:11-21 Job's intemperate appeal to God**

This is all too much for Job. He must speak out. Not to his friends, not in soliloquy, but to God Himself.

Most versions start 7:11 with "Therefore." Literally it should read, "Even I" (Green) or, "I cannot restrain my mouth" (Roth). Of all people, Job, he who refused to speak against God, he who blessed God (1:21-22), feels constrained to say something. Before he dies Job will pour out his complaint in the bitterness of his soul. Once started his pent-up bitterness pours out to God. Has the Satan succeeded? Has Job finally cracked under the pressure, fulfilling his adversary's prediction? No, Job does not curse. He questions. He complains. He seeks forgiveness. His language seems intemperate but Job's adversary is not vindicated.

How he cries to God! He wants to know if he really is such a threat that he needs to be so stringently controlled. Is he the sea, a mighty ocean, that must not exceed its limit (Gen 1:10)? Is he the sea monster, the mythical Tiamat of eastern mythology who was subdued by the Creator and closely guarded lest it break loose and destroy the world? Job is just a frail mortal, a helpless creature who does not need such divine watchfulness.

Even the benefit of sleep is kept from him as he remains virtually in a state of insomnia. When he does manage some sleep he is plagued with nightmares. And it is God who brings them on to Job - "thou scarest me with dreams, and terrifiest me through visions" (7:14).

Why must he be kept alive "So that my soul chooseth strangling, Death rather than these my bones!" (7:15 Roth)? But Job is becoming careless. He considers God to be his terrorist. So he wants God to leave him alone; to stop harassing him.

In 7:17-19 Job continues to bitterly question why God ascribes to man so much of His attention. In stark contrast to Psalm 8:4, where God is praised for lifting man from the dirt to be crowned with glory, Job feels that God should leave mankind alone. After all, man should not be magnified. This is a true statement. But, Job also declares that God's attention has exacerbated man's situation. This is a false statement pulled out of a bitter mind begotten by its circumstances. Rather than feel separated from God, Job is vividly aware of being under His constant scrutiny. We can almost feel his exasperation as he interrogates, "Will you never take your eyes off me long enough for me to swallow my spittle?" (7:19 JB). "Swallow my spittle" is a proverb for the minimum of time. The New International Version interprets it as, "Even for an instant."

Job's attitude is in contrast with the sentiments of some of the faithful elsewhere in Scripture. Psalm 22:11 states, "Be not far from me; for trouble is near." Psalm 121 is given over to gratitude for the closeness of God when the Psalmist is in distress. Job's reaction is confined by his limited view. He is consumed by his condition. He believes he is an object of ceaseless suffering.

Job will eventually be educated in such a way that he will learn to never again question God's methods (42:2-6). But who of us would not react at least as Job has done? In similar circumstances, the words we would have uttered could well have made Job's appear respectable.

Despite the abrasiveness of Job's talking, he acknowledges that he has sinned. He does not pretend to be sinless. Some authorities insert "If" at the start of 7:20 thus making sin hypothetical. Not only does this vary with 7:21 - "Why dost thou not pardon my transgression" - it lacks support in the original Hebrew. Literal versions (e.g. Roth, Green, YLit) support the Authorised Version. Job's question is not, "Have I sinned?", but, "What have I done to You to deserve this?" Does the punishment fit the crime? Why has Job been set up as an "object to attack" (Soncino)? Why should Job be a burden to God (not "myself" - considered an Emendation of the Sopherim - see comments on 1:5)?

Job is bemused. Why doesn't God simply pardon his transgression? He cannot understand why he has not been forgiven. He had made offerings for sin (1:5), he demanded that his friends reveal his unsuspected sin (6:24), he is unaware of any sin that may have provoked God's anger. "In a short time" (Ges - preferred over "Now" 7:21) he will be dead. Job is concerned that God will seek for him ("in the morning" is not in the original), perhaps to improve his lot, and it will be too late.

So Job ends his reply to Eliphaz and awaits the words of Bildad. Satan has not won. Job still puts his faith in God but God's inexplicable ways have stretched Job to breaking point. Job does not know that God is watching and waiting for the test to run its course so that He can state His approval of Job publicly (42:8).

## 9 CHAPTER 8 - THE FIRST CYCLE OF SPEECHES - BILDAD

---

### **Bildad's Appeal to Job**

- 8:1-7** The doctrine of retribution - God does discriminate
- 8:8-10** Go to the ancients - they have the answers
- 8:11-19** Three examples - the ancients speak through nature
- 8:20-22** Conclusion and application to Job

In introducing Bildad, Brother Mansfield has this to say, "He is noted for his vehement speech ... He does not reason but merely quotes tradition, bowing down to the opinions of others. He is a forthright declaimer rather than a reflective reasoner; more dogmatic, blunt, severe and cruel than the courteous Eliphaz, though endorsing the latter's teaching. He was a religious realist, resting upon tradition (8:8, 18:5-20). His first address is an appeal (Chapter 8); the second, a rebuke (Chapter 18); the third, an evasion (Chapter 25)."

### **Bildad's Appeal to Job**

#### **8:1-7 The doctrine of retribution - God does discriminate**

Bildad is quite appalled by Job's statements; particularly his closing remarks in which Job suggests that God may have been unfair in His dealings with him. Bildad wants Job to stop uttering words that are as a mighty wind. The

Jerusalem Bible is probably close to Bildad's feelings when it presents 8:2 as, "Is there no end to those words of yours, to your long-winded blusterings?" Job's speech had been stormy, violent in expression, overwrought and Bildad is right in attesting that it is preposterous God should be considered unjust. Bildad is so alarmed by Job's inference that he repeats the question, with slightly different words, to emphasise the seriousness of the situation.

But Bildad, despite the validity of his reaction, attempts to adapt it to fit his theology. Here lies Bildad's mistake. His theology was no different to Eliphaz's. The wicked are punished (8:13) and the blameless are blessed. Always. Therefore, for God to be just, the death of Job's children was directly related to their iniquity. Bildad is cold and unsympathetic. He believes he is being analytical and objective and at no time loses his self-control. But does his approach provide any comfort to Job? Did Job actually accuse God with perverting judgment? No. Job may have inferred such but his major problem was his confusion. As God is just, there must be a reason for what is happening. Job cannot discern it. He needs someone to sit down with him and patiently discuss his problem, to put it all in a perspective to assist Job to cope.

Bildad's attempt to be helpful only adds salt to the wound inflicted by Eliphaz. In 5:3 Eliphaz presented a thinly disguised hypothetical case of a man whose "habitation" (same as "habitation" in 8:6) was once prosperous but is now devastated. Bildad, the objective, clinical commentator, dispenses with analogies and goes straight to the point. What does Bildad provide?

"If your sons have sinned against Him, He has cast them away for their transgression" (8:4 NKJV). How comforting! Indeed Job's sons may have been sinful as Job had some concerns about them in 1:5. Bildad may have been using this possible truth as a lever to extol Job's superior character. But really, is that the way to make a person feel better. Observe the intent of 8:5-7: "Your children deserved what they got but don't you worry about that! If you are faithful, God will give you plenty more."

Bildad attempts to be cheerful. In his opinion, all Job has to do is be pure and upright (God had already declared Job to be upright - 1:1,8, 2:3), seek God (Is Bildad critiquing Job's closing comment that when "[God] shalt seek me ... I shall not be" 7:21?), implore favour of the Almighty and, in only a short period of time, Job's house would prosper in proof of his righteousness. "Better than that," encourages Bildad, "Do as I recommend and your new state of prosperity will be superior to what you experienced in former days" (8:7). The irony is that although Bildad's philosophy was wrong his cursory prophecy proved to be resoundingly correct - "So the LORD blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning" (42:12).

### **8:8-10      Go to the ancients - they have the answers**

Bildad, having promoted his theology, now becomes almost modest in his approach and appeals to the wisdom of those who have gone before. In the parenthetical 8:9 Bildad proclaims that, "We sons of yesterday know nothing; our life on earth passes like a shadow" (JB). A noble statement albeit adding nothing to the debate. It is obvious that Bildad will only select the "wisdom" which tallies with his own. All else would undoubtedly be foolishness.

As so often happens, the weaker the case the more confidently it is stated. "If the ancients support me then I must be right" - this despite the emptiness of their teachings as manifested in 8:11-19. Bildad infers, "They've studied this matter, we must accept their conclusions" - "Apply thyself to that which their fathers have searched out" (8:8 Soncino). Such sentiments should ring alarm bells. While the great Bible scholars, Christadelphians especially, deserve our earnest consideration, they do not warrant slavish deference.

Bildad has politely requested Job to hear what the ancients have to say but even in this he is being uncomplimentary to Job. He declares that the words of the ancients are instructional and well thought out. The contrast of Job to 8:10



is harsh. Bildad labelled Job's expressions as nothing more than long-winded blusterings (8:2). How easy it is to twist the knife after plunging it in.

### **8:11-19 Three examples - the ancients speak through nature**

Bildad quotes from the proverbs of the ancients, possibly the ancient Egyptians. The words, while skilfully crafted and well articulated, are delivered with a personal twist. The question Bildad is addressing is, "Why did Job once prosper?" Clearly, his present circumstances dictate that God is punishing him. So how can one justify his previous prosperity in the context of the theory of exact retribution? Bildad strives to do so by the application of ancient proverbs to Job.

Look at the rush (i.e. the papyrus of the Nile - Exo 2:3; Isa 18:2). Does it flourish except it be in the marsh? The reeds (**ahū** - an Egyptian word translated "meadow" in Gen 41:2,18) can they grow without water? Of course not. Perhaps Job knew these sayings and was groaning inwardly as he realised the direction Bildad was taking.

So, continues Bildad with unquestionable logic, these luxurious plants will wither quicker than any other plant once they are deprived of essential nutriment. You do not even have to cut them down. Remove the marshy conditions and they die, quickly. Poor Job! The application is none too subtle.

Job was once a great man, flourishing, wonderfully resplendent, and therefore in man's opinion, in the approbation of the Eternal. But God has removed His support of Job. The marsh has dried up, the waters have evaporated. Job has withered like the papyrus reed. Why? Bildad delivers the moral of the story in 8:13: "Such is the fate of all who forget God; so perishes the hope of the godless man" (JB). Job, "ungodly, impious, profane" (Ges)? How sharp are the arrows of Bildad. One will not suffice. He shoots another into Job in the form of a proverb about a spider's web.

What hope does an ungodly man have? It is like a thread (JB), a gossamer (**yakot** - signifies something fragile - Soncino, see also NIV). His confidence, the security that his prosperity seems to offer, is like a spider's home. It appears secure, but has little strength or endurance. It will collapse without warning, unable to protect its inhabitant. "Ah," infers Bildad, "Not only has Job forgotten God, he has also placed too much confidence in the prosperity he enjoyed."

The ancient sages confirm this doctrine. The real causes of Job's dilemma are being revealed almost lyrically, and Bildad is being such a good chap about the whole affair. Job does not read the situation the same way. The examples, while poetic, are puerile. The answers to Job's questions have not been forthcoming and Bildad has been hurtful with his speaking. Still, Bildad, not content with two proverbs, trots out a third.

It is almost as if Bildad is saying to Job, "Have you heard the one about the luxuriant green garden-plant?" Bildad eloquently describes this special plant, possibly a vine, that "swells with sap in the sunshine, and his branch spreads itself over his garden" (8:16 Delitzsch). This vine gives the appearance of security as it exuberantly overwhelms all before it with its intertwining and healthy development.

But what if this vine is torn from its place? It will disappear without trace - no stump, no roots. The place it strove to overwhelm and dominate would no longer recognise it. So too with Job. The greatest man of the east was now unrecognisable in his community and, by Bildad's observation, this is due to Job's ungodliness.

In 8:18 Bildad responds to Job's criticism of his comforters. The word "place" (*maqom*) is used by Job (6:17) when he compares his friends to the winter streams that dry up when beset by the summer sun. He laments that they are as valuable to him as dry river beds to a parched traveller. The essence of Bildad's response is cutting: "We are not the ones consumed in our place, you are. Furthermore, your statement of 7:10 - 'neither shall his place (*maqom*) know him any more' - has already been fulfilled in you."

Bildad concludes his citations from the ancients with expressions that are close to undecipherable. Nearly every word involved has more than one meaning and therefore numerous versions of 8:19 exist. However, it would seem that Bildad is speaking derisively of the prosperity represented by the luxuriant vine. This is all the joy a godless man has; the momentary "green before the sun." Abruptly, it is all over. He is forgotten and somebody else takes his place.

## **8:20-22 Conclusion and application to Job**

How is Job to feel after this onslaught from the wisdom of the ancients? Is Bildad implying that Job is as the wicked who were blessed with short-term well-being before being consumed by monumental calamity? Is Bildad really Job's friend? Bildad, sensing the wounding effect of his comments, now leaps to Job's mollification.

"Believe me (a loose but plausible translation - "Behold" is literally correct)," says Bildad, "God neither spurns a stainless man, nor lends his aid to the evil" (8:20 JB). A true statement but how does it fit Job, covered with sores, sitting in the rubbish tip; he whom God characterised "a perfect and upright man" (1:8). It does not enter Bildad's dogma that God can chasten the righteous; that His chastening could be an act of His disciplinary love (Prov 3:11-12; Heb 12:5-8; 1Pet 1:7). His reasoning is obtuse and not burdened with fact - a truth readily noted in his heartless reference to Job's children. They died so they must have been wicked (8:4). How does he know? He doesn't but his philosophy demanded such a conclusion.

Even now as he attempts to console Job and motivate him to a more positive outlook he has neutralised his conclusion by the conditions he stressed in his introductory remarks. Job will not be cast away if he is pure and upright (8:6). This gives Job no comfort. Job cannot comprehend his suffering as an act of divine justice. If he agreed to this assumption of his friends he would not be true to himself. Bildad despite his noble intentions only propels Job deeper into conflict.

He paints a joyful happy scene, "He will yet fill your mouth with laughing, and your lips with rejoicing" (8:21 NKJV). Bildad is still Job's friend. He says as much in his final statements. Job's enemies will be clothed in shame. Bildad does not hate Job and those who do are the wicked. Perhaps Bildad feels he must be cruel to be kind.

His patronising speech is ended. In contrast to the swirling emotions of the bewildered Job, it is beautifully crafted. Reading and studying Bildad's speech is much easier than the complexities presented by the afflicted one, yet Job has not failed. Bildad has. Much of what he says has a ring of truth but, like Eliphaz, it fails when squeezed into an inadequate theology. God does discriminate but not necessarily according to man's timeframes or methods. God will not reject the blameless but to equate suffering with rejection is unacceptable. Bildad's sentiments, while of the best intentions, are reflected by those who mocked Jesus: "He trusted in God, let him deliver him now" (Matt 27:43). They thought that Christ's grisly execution was proof God had rejected him. God answered that logic when He raised His son from the tomb. "Behold, God will not cast away a perfect man."

### **SPEECH 1 - BILDAD - TECHNIQUES**

- Harsh Start/Friendly Finish - Harshness Interspersed With "Positive" Advice
- Shocked Reaction To Job's Remarks And Demeanour - 8:2
- Straight To The Point - 8:4 - "If Thy Children Have Sinned"
- Appeal To Tradition - 8:8 - "Enquire, I Pray Thee, Of The Former Age"
- Uses Humility (Possibly False) - 8:9
- Quotes From The Fathers - 8:11-19 - Bland Stories With Simplistic Punchlines
- Attacks A Word - 8:18
- Patronising And, As With Eliphaz, Utters Generally True Statements That Are Misapplied to Job's Circumstances

## 10 CHAPTERS 9, 10 - THE FIRST CYCLE OF SPEECHES - JOB

---

### Job's Reply to Bildad

<b>9:1-4</b>	God is just - who can defy Him
<b>9:5-10</b>	God is omnipotent
<b>9:11-13</b>	God's ways are inscrutable
<b>9:14-21</b>	Man cannot stand up to God
<b>9:22-24</b>	Suffering is not always evidence of sin
<b>9:25-31</b>	The hopelessness of Job's case
<b>9:32-35</b>	Job's desire for an umpire

### Job's Attempt to Reason with God

<b>10:1-7</b>	"Why are You doing this to me?"
<b>10:8-12</b>	God's former care of Job
<b>10:13-17</b>	Job's confusion
<b>10:18-22</b>	Job's cries of despair

This particular speech of Job is not without its difficulties. Virtually every verse provides a struggle for its interpreter. How deep is Job's despair? Is Job sarcastic or genuine in the statements he utters? Are these expressions of confusion or bitterness? Many commentators, in seeking to come to grips with this speech, arrive at conclusions that lose sight of the finale of Job's drama. Job's faith is stronger than his friends. His mind is more spiritually advanced. His desire to arrive at the truth is more pronounced, more adventurous.

To appreciate this speech we need to determine Job's thoughts and moods and, of course, words on paper do not fully convey the tone of his voice nor the state of his mind. We are required to make an assessment and this has to be made in the light of the overall picture. Yes, Job is confused but strong in his pursuit of answers. He is despairing but this does not upend his thought processes. Emotions do swirl throughout his utterances but there is still logic within them.

Job's opening question, "How can a man be righteous before God?" (NKJV) is not derisive. It is another step in his earnest quest to fathom God's relationship with man.

## **Job's Reply to Bildad**

### **9:1-4      God is just - who can defy Him**

Job commences his reply to Bildad by agreeing with him. God will not cast away the perfect man (8:20) but, continues Job in repeating one of the major questions of the Book, "How can a mortal (**enosh**) be righteous before God?" (NIV - Eliphaz asked this question in 4:17). This problem is as old as the fall in Eden. How can man attain to a position in which he is acceptable and well-pleasing to God? How can he be reconciled to God? The language used is legal. How can man win in a legal dispute with God? The answer, he cannot. The difference between man and God is so vast a negative answer is demanded. As 9:3 declares, should man contend (i.e. conduct a lawsuit - Andersen) with God, man is in a hopeless position. God could ask a thousand questions that would be beyond man's capacity to answer: a fact clearly displayed by Yahweh's questions in Chapters 39 and 41.

But is it hopeless? Job believes there must be some way that man can be reconciled to God else Job would have retired hurt long ago. You cannot harden yourself against God and expect to prosper in His eyes. This is Job's message in 9:4. God's wisdom far exceeds the puny intelligence of man and His strength is incontestable. That does not mean we harden ourselves against Him. Pharaoh hardened his heart and was destroyed. Nobody can defy God and succeed. Job was not about to do this.

Job's faith was still intact but how can he secure his vindication with God? Job puts his situation in its proper context as he exclaims the perfection of God and, defeated by his weakness, requests an umpire between himself and God (9:33). Surely, in light of the wonderful saving work of Christ hundreds of years later, a far-sighted solution.

### **9:5-10      God is omnipotent**

In a soaring lyric outburst, full of figurative language, Job extols the omnipotence of God. While the description of God provided by Eliphaz (5:8-16) is reassuring, full of hope for the common man, and almost benevolent, Job's description is disturbing and powerful.

As the Creator, God has the potency to move mountains, to shake the earth, to cause the pillars of the earth (figurative language for the foundations of the earth - Job did not believe the earth to be supported by pillars - see 26:7) to tremble. This has to be sufficient evidence of God's power. No, Job takes our attention into the heavens.

The sun is subject to divine call. Only God can influence its operation (Gen 1:17-18; Exo 10:21-22; Josh 10:12). He can seal off the light of the stars. "He alone stretches out the heavens and treads on the waves of the seas. He is the Maker of the Bear, and Orion, the Pleiades and the constellations of the south" (9:8-9 NIV).

He is the great and wonderful creator.

How do we relate to such force? How do we compare to Almighty God? God's omnipotence in Creation is beyond all human understanding. Man is helpless before it. Job in virtually a verbatim repeat of Eliphaz (5:9) agrees that God's acts are too numerous to count and too meticulous to comprehend.

Even in this doxological section Job seems to find opportunity to respond to one of Bildad's jibes. Bildad (8:18) had picked up on Job's use of "place" (*maqom*) in 6:17. There Job compared his friends to wadis in summer; valueless to the parched traveller. Bildad's retort was that they were not the ones consumed out of their place, Job was. Job in 9:6 puts a stop to this unpleasant raillery by declaring that God "shaketh the earth out of her place (*maqom*)."<sup>1</sup> What value were they to God, He who can master all the forces of nature? Is this pernickety point-scoring relevant when God alone has all the points?

### **9:11-13      God's ways are inscrutable**

In 9:5-10 God's potency is manifestly grand - earthquakes, incomprehensible creative acts and possibly volcanic activity. In spite of this overwhelming evidence, God is invisible and indiscernible. God's unseen working fills Job with dread. As if startled by a sudden awareness of God's imperceptible dealings, Job proclaims, "Behold, He takes away, who can turn Him back; who will say to Him, What are You doing?" (Soncino).

We cannot question God's activity. He is above the thinking of man. God is not responsible to man. Man is responsible to God (Isa 45:8-12). He works invisibly, irresistibly and does not turn or restrain His anger without having accomplished His purpose. "The allies of the proud lie prostrate before Him" (9:13 NKJV).

"Proud" (*rahab*) is not easy to interpret in this context. It literally means, "fierceness, insolence, pride" (Ges), has allusions to Egypt elsewhere in Scripture (Psa 87:4, 89:10; Isa 30:7), is linked with the sea (26:12; Isa 51:9-10) and is prevalent in Hebrew folklore as the ocean monster of chaos defeated by Yahweh in primordial conflict so as to permit an ordered universe. Therefore, some would consider 9:13 as a reference to God's destruction of Egypt. This is unlikely as it is not reflected by 26:12 nor is the Book of Job replete with identifiable historical notations. Others are convinced that Job is referring to the mythological upheavals of the primeval world to emphasise the power of God. While there may be such an allusion in 7:12, it seems incongruous that Job would use such a reference in regard to Almighty God.

There is simply no record of belief in the instance or reality of such mythological creatures in the Old Testament. 7:12 is a maybe, but even there Job evinces no belief in Tiamat. He is using hyperbole and the language of his time to bewail his circumstances and to stress the invincible might of God.

In 9:13, in describing God's irresistible ways, Job insists that those who were once helpers of arrogance lie at his feet. What incident could this be? It could be any number that were apparent to Job and his three friends. We do not know, but his friends do not cross-examine Job on this point.

### **9:14-21      Man cannot stand up to God**

Job is convinced. The evidence is conclusive. Even if Job is innocent before God, he cannot presume to dispute with God. He is so feeble in His presence.

Job now appears to be dealing with Bildad's solution, "If thou wouldest seek unto God betimes and make supplication to the Almighty: If thou wert pure and upright" (8:5-6). The Hebrew in 9:15 is vague and numerous interpretations abound. The circumstances would favour the interpretation that Job is not necessarily questioning his innocence, more so the usefulness of Bildad's advice. Even though he may be convinced of his innocence (RSV, NEB) Job would accept God's judgment and appeal for mercy.

For Job, Bildad's advice is simplistic. Job believes that even if he did call on God and God did make some kind of response, "I would not believe that he was listening to my voice" (9:16 RSV). God is so remote that Job would not believe that He would bother to answer man. He could not believe his senses.

Is Job contradicting himself? Possibly, but he attempts to explain his reasons for this. While Andersen considers these expressions incredible and believes that Job did not actually say this as it contradicts what Job uttered elsewhere (13:15), Job is betraying the emotions he is experiencing. His speech is not perfect in its expression or consistency. It cannot be. His words change with his feelings, sometimes within a few verses. This is not to detract from Job's overall philosophy. That always remains consistent.

How taxing it is for Job. In 5:1 Eliphaz says, "Make your appeal then. Will you find an answer? To which of the Holy Ones will you turn?" (JB). In other words, Job's case does not hold up unless it is compatible with the wisdom of Eliphaz. In 8:5 Bildad states that it is simply a matter of asking God for mercy and doing the right thing. Job is bewildered. Eliphaz's wisdom is faulty but God does not appear to want to answer Job. Job believes he has done nothing wrong yet he is not vindicated by God.

Instead he feels the pain of being under the finger of God. Contrary to Job's earlier statement, God is not remote. Job feels His strength. "For He crushes me with a tempest, and multiplies my wounds without cause" (9:17 NKJV). "Tempest" is *searah* in Hebrew (used elsewhere only in Nah 1:3) and is derived from a word that is used to describe the motion and creeping of the skin of a person stricken with terror. Job was not just dispirited and wracked with pain, he was also terrified by what has happened and what could still happen. He gains no respite. The only thing he feels that God is giving him is bitterness. His sufferings seem to him to go beyond what is just.

What is the answer? "Shall I try force? Look how strong he is! Or go to court? But who will summon him?" (9:19 JB). There was no person who would be Job's advocate to take up Job's case on his behalf. Perhaps he could defend himself? No, even though he thought himself right he would condemn himself. His sufferings combined with his awe of God would blind his eyes to facts and move him to speak without proper thought. It is not that God would prove Job perverse, Job is afraid that he would be so overawed and confused by God's presence he could not carry out his defence triumphantly or even accurately.

Job feels so inadequate before God. While convinced of his innocence (9:20 - most versions) he cannot establish his righteousness. He cannot elevate himself above that of a mortal man. He has come to realise his true position before God and despises his life. He would be happy to die. Job could also be using this term to respond to Bildad's confident assertion, "Behold, God will not cast away (*mahas*) a perfect man" (8:20), and the advice of Eliphaz, "Despise (*mahas*) not the chastening of the Almighty" (5:17). "No," infers Job, "You have it all wrong. I do not despise God, nor do I believe that God despises me. I despise (*mahas*) myself (9:21)!"

## **9:22-24      Suffering is not always evidence of sin**

Job now directly touches on the principle that he and his friends were debating. It is only a brief visitation as he returns to the consideration of his case by 9:25. Nevertheless it demonstrates that Job's philosophy has been invariable since 2:10. God can give both good and evil to a righteous man. Job insists, "There is one thing - therefore I maintain - The innocent and the wicked He destroyeth" (9:22 Delitzsch).

Even in this essentially accurate observation we can witness the depths of Job's gloom. Jesus Christ spoke of his Father as a nourisher who "maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust" (Matt 5:45). Job only sees God as a destroyer. The sentiments may be similar - God is equitable in His dealings - but Job sees little hope, only destruction.

Job has directly contradicted the stanchion of the argument of Eliphaz (4:7) and Bildad (8:20). He provides clear and plain substantiation of his viewpoint but in doing so his speech becomes extreme. While his point is valid, his description of God's behaviour is a misrepresentation. The purport is this, when the scourge (a word used in Old Testament Scripture to represent a calamity such as famine, war or epidemic - Isa 10:26; 28:15,18) slays does it discriminate? No, famine will strike both good and evil, as will war and epidemic. It does not slay the wicked and spare the blameless.

But does God laugh "at the plight of the innocent" (9:23 NKJV, JB)? Does He mock their despair? Job is at his most vitriolic thus far. He is filled with bitterness (9:18). God does, in man's eyes, seem indifferent to human suffering. He does not appear to interpose to relieve suffering when He clearly has the power to do so. But while these humanistic sentiments have been in existence for decades it is almost inconceivable that Job imagines God to be chortling at the calamity of the guiltless.

Unfortunately, Job is not content to leave the matter there. His circumstances make it difficult for him to calmly dismember the principle promoted by his friends. He utters another rash statement whereby he accuses God of being responsible for wicked rulers and corrupt judges. In the ultimate sense God may be responsible and Job's question at the end of 9:24 ("if it is not he, who then is it?" RSV) could possess rare insight but Job is too vociferous, too uneven in his approach. It implies that justice cannot be found, even with God.

Job could not abide a theory that stated he was suffering as a result of sins; sins he was convinced he had not committed. But his vehement defence inflamed his spiritual pride. As Brother Sargent wrote, "The portrait of the patriarch is true to life in this mingling of good and bad. The honesty was pleasing to God, but the spiritual pride - that peril of the righteous man, which Job only revealed under stress - had to be purged."

### **9:25-31 The hopelessness of Job's case**

Job reconsiders his existing environment. His rash statements regarding God are past. He does not use such language about God again but he plummets into a self-pity that is close to irredeemable.

Remember Bildad's three examples that explained, as far as he was concerned, some of the unanswered issues that concerned Job (8:11-19). Job now uses three examples to explain his standpoint. In possible imitation of Bildad, he uses at least one that has a distinctive Egyptian identity about it.

What did Job see his life as? It is brief and flimsy. It is like the fastest of runners; the couriers who sped across the landscape with their sealed messages. His days flee away "without a glimpse of joy" (9:25 NIV). No good fortune is experienced now, nor is there any prospect of such in the days remaining. Yes, his days "skim past like boats of

papyrus" (9:26 NIV) - those speedy Egyptian boats that silently glide along the waters of the Nile. Even faster than that, his days are "like eagles swooping down on their prey" (9:26 NIV).

What can he do? "Perhaps," suggests Job, "I can take the advice of Eliphaz (5:17), forget my complaint, change my countenance, take courage and be happy." He couldn't. He was afraid. There was no guarantee of deliverance. The pain was still there. Try smiling as you ache all over, as you do not understand why, as you are told that God has condemned you as the greatest of sinners. Superficial cheerful bearing up under oppression would not eradicate the fears that filled his being.

What hope did he have? "I shall be condemned; why then do I labour in vain?" (9:29 RSV). There is no point. Why must he struggle to clear himself? Job has sunk to new depths. He leaves the door firmly shut. Perhaps he could wash himself with snow and thoroughly cleanse his hands with repeated washings. The symbology is that of moral purification ("wash" *rachats* - is used metaphorically for washing the defilement of sin adhering to man - Isa 1:16, 4:4; Ezek 16:4,9 - as well as for ritual washings throughout the Old Testament). All to no avail. God will simply dunk him into a filthy pit and Job would become so detestable that even his "very clothes recoil from" (9:31 JB) him.

Surely from this nadir of pessimism Job can only begin to climb slowly upwards.

### **9:32-35            Job's desire for an umpire**

What can Job do? To whom can he turn? Job felt he could not turn to God, because aware of his comparative minuteness he felt overwhelmed by God's greatness and authority. He was just a man. Job and God could not come together at a tribunal to resolve Job's dilemma and there was no arbiter between them.

Job could be expressing a longing for an arbiter (9:33 RSVmg, NIV, LXX, NEB). But what is Job decriing the lack of? What does he mean by "daysman" (*yakach*)? *Yakach* means "to arbitrate" (Ges) and is sourced in the word meaning "to judge, to decide." It would seem that Job is bemoaning that there is not an individual with sufficient authority "to arbitrate between us, to lay his hand upon us both, someone to remove God's rod from me, so that his terror would frighten me no more" (9:33-34 NIV - see also JB). No umpire could make God submit to his directions. There is nobody who can stand between God and Job interpreting each to the other. Job is crying out for a point of contact; a chance to meet with God or somebody who is in contact with Him.

Job's dignity is stripped away. His life is desperately incomplete as God is mute to Job's cries. If only the rod of affliction (see Lam 3:1 for similar usage) was taken away and he was no longer terrified. The so-called evidence of his guilt would be no more and he could openly speak to vindicate himself.

For one who once had it all, he would now be thrilled to be able to speak up without fear of God. He feels deprived even of this as he concludes this section with the lament, "But as it stands with me, I cannot" (9:35 NIV).

### **Job's Attempt to Reason with God**

#### **10:1-7            "Why are You doing this to me?"**



Job, as he did during his response to Eliphaz (7:11), reverts to direct address to God. An umpire is not forthcoming. A court of law is not possible. Bildad has failed him. It is to God he must plead. Even if God does not answer at least Job has not ignored the opportunity to express to God his confusion and concerns while in the extremity of his suffering.

His mood is humbler but occasionally he shows flashes of the uncharacteristic vitriol that marred his comments in 9:23-24. Job is sick; horribly stricken. Life is uncompromisingly wearisome. He will speak freely in the bitterness (*mar* - see also 3:20, 7:11) of his soul. *Mar*, in this context, means to be "sad, sorrowful" (Ges). Job takes his courage in his hands and asks God the simplest of questions, "Why?"

Job is patently puzzled. He begs God not to condemn him. He just wants to know the reason why God treats him as one would expect the wicked to be treated. 10:3 conveys his bewilderment. Does God think it good to oppress the poor; the helpless human being? Does God despise (*mahas*) the work of his hands? Bildad said that God would not cast away (*mahas*) a perfect man. Job thinks that God has done so. Worse than this, it would appear that God has a preference for the counsel of the wicked, even though Eliphaz explicitly said this was not the case (5:13).

All these questions are unworthy of God. Job is not being arrogant nor defiant but in the misery of his life he is being frank, forthright and horribly careless. Yet in the gloom of his mood, Job hits on truth. In the double question of 10:4 Job broaches an issue that for the moment gives pain but ultimately gives contentment (42:2). God is different to man. God extends well beyond the thought processes and methods of mortal man. Job seems to understand this, but God appears to be behaving like a mortal man.

Is God's life so short, He must work quickly and thoroughly in order to search out Job's faults? Job was convinced that not only was he innocent but God concurred with that verdict. There is no denying the perplexed condition of Job's mind. He is crying out for an answer. God is not defective in thought nor limited by time. Job is totally at the mercy of God. Job is unequivocal in the belief in his rectitude. "Why is God doing this to me?" protrudes out of every question and statement uttered by Job in this heart-rending section.

### **10:8-12      God's former care of Job**

Why is God doing this to Job, especially in the light of God's meticulous and wondrous care for Job in times past? This care that began with his development in his mother's womb, possibly even with the moment of his conception. Why would God want to destroy something He had lavished so much carefulness on? Surely God's intentions in creating man, creating Job, were essentially good.

Job in this short and delicate section eloquently relates the manifestation of God in his earliest moments. In his perplexity we find praise in a way that is almost unique in Scripture (the notable exception being Psa 139:13-16). Job reminds God, not that He needed reminding, "Your hands have fashioned me, an intricate unity; yet You would destroy me" (10:8 NKJV).

This is not enough detail. Job embellishes his point with analogous entreaty. "Remember," Job beseeches, "That You are like the finest of potters; carefully, skilfully working a malleable substance to produce a quality product." Such intricacy, such patience. It looks pointless, almost wanton, that God should thoroughly grind the clay vessel into the dust it originated from. Job was of the earth. He was of no great beauty, except for that which God had moulded him into. Look at the vessel now! Why?

Job communicates the birth process by vivid allusions. To be "poured out as milk" (10:10) has reference to the work of the male reproductive fluid and to be "curdled like cheese" speaks of the development of the embryo in the womb.

God has displayed extraordinary care. The care of the potter, the care of the dairy hand and now the care of a tailor and a weaver. Job was conceived, developed and as Job asks God, "Did you not clothe me with skin and flesh, and weave me of bone and sinew" (10:11 JB).

Unwittingly, Job employs the term used of him by the Satan in 1:10. God was accused of placing a wall of protection around Job. It's gone. Job is now aware of the divine superintendence he had received in that God had granted him life and favour. More than that, God's "care, oversight" (Ges - "visitation" AV) guarded (Green mg; see also Ges - "preserved" AV) his "breath" (**ruah** Ges). The Jerusalem Bible masterfully translates this phrase, "Watched each breath of mine with tender care." For what purpose?

### **10:13-17 Job's confusion**

Job appeared to have lifted himself up with his recall of how it used to be. But that remembrance fades as he returns to the present. He sinks back exhausted and dispirited. He reverts to his previous misgivings. "If" statements abound as he ponders God's methods. What was the purpose of God's meticulous preparation of Job? Look at him now.

Job draws the fearful conclusion that God was dissembling! Divine goodness was but a veil over a purpose recently manifested! From this unfortunate extrapolation Job outlines what he believes to be its implications.

As far as Job was concerned, if he sinned God would take particular note and ensure he would not go unpunished. God would not forgive until he had censured Job first. Job does not deem himself guilty but "woe unto me" (10:15) if he is. He deserves it and God will guarantee that a penalty is imposed.

But what if Job is innocent? How would that fit into this new scheme that God's early care was but a cover for the later terror. Job suggests it makes no difference to God whether he is innocent or guilty. Even if Job is right he will not lift up his head, "being full of shame (**kalon**) and conscious of my misery" (10:15 Delitzsch). **Kalon** ("confusion" AV) means "contempt, shame, ignominy" (Ges) and even if he is blameless, his condition, sitting in the rubbish tip, observed by numerous incredulous eyes, was one of public disgrace. He could not be proud nor could he cheerfully lift his head and confidently display his rectitude.

But what if he did? "And if I lift myself up, thou dost hunt me like a lion" (10:16 RSV). Job is still in terror of God's apparent hostility (see 9:34). He was sure that God was determined to destroy him.

Job is a man under siege as affliction squeezes all hope out of him. Guilty - woe is me. Innocent - the shame would still be unrelieved. What if I did raise my head - God would bring new sufferings; indicators to others that Job is guilty. His grief and God's indignation (**kaas** - see 6:2) would be increased against him. His tormentors would be like an attacking army where fresh relays of troops are constantly sent to assail the enemy. There would be no respite - "wave upon wave" (NIV), "continuously advancing troop and host" (Delitzsch), "host succeeding host" (Soncino), "You attack, and attack me again, with stroke on stroke of your fury, relentlessly your fresh troops assail me" (10:17 JB).

What is there left for Job?

### **10:18-22 Job's cries of despair**

Job expects to die soon. How he wished he was not brought to this point in time. Why is God using His power in a way that does not make sense? In 10:8-12, Job extolled the creative work of God, even alluding to his conception in 10:10, but now the baffled sufferer reverses direction and summarises his lamentation of 3:10-26.

"Why was I born," bewails Job, "Why have You brought me out of the womb" (10:18 NKJV). Job wishes he were still-born, that he never saw the light of day. Better still that he was never in existence, that nobody saw him. Maybe he could have scarcely existed before being carried from the womb to the grave.

Now that he has survived birth and is full grown with but a few days left to live, he pines for just a little respite. Just a little joy before he is swallowed up in death. There is no room in Job's disposition for light. Whereas death was portrayed as a place of rest after a life of misery (3:20-22), here he virtually exhausts the Hebrew language as he piles gloomy synonym on gloomy synonym to describe the dreariness of the grave.

The grave is the "land of darkness (*chosek* - see 3:4-5) and the shadow of death (*tsalmaveth* - see 3:5 - "poet. for very thick darkness" Ges); a land of obscurity (*ephah* - only here and Amos 4:13), the darkness (*ophel* - see 3:6 - "darkness, especially thick" Ges) of the shadow of death (*tsalmaveth*), and not any order, even the shining is as darkness (*ophel*)" (10:21-22 Green). There is no ray of hope. Will Zophar pour balm on or rub salt in the wounds of the afflicted one?

## **11 CHAPTER 11 - THE FIRST CYCLE OF SPEECHES - ZOPHAR**

---

### **Zophar's Instruction - I Know**

<b>11:1-4</b>	Job rebuked as verbose and boastful
<b>11:5-6</b>	God knows your sinfulness
<b>11:7-12</b>	God is beyond human comprehension
<b>11:13-19</b>	Repent and be blessed
<b>11:20</b>	No hope for the wicked

The opening lines of Zophar's opening speech declare the Naamathite to be the least engaging of Job's three friends. Gibson describes Zophar as "the roughest and least considerate." It seems remarkable that in Job's extremity a friend could be so bumpously off-hand.

As Brother Mansfield remarks, "Whereas Eliphaz based his words on observation and his experience of a revelation, and Bildad rested his on appearance supplemented by an appeal to the wisdom of the sages, Zophar is content with mere assumption. He is the dogmatist. He knows. Whereas Eliphaz says, 'I have seen ...' and Bildad, 'Enquire of the former age', Zophar dogmatically states in both his speeches, 'Know thou' (11:6; 20:4). Eliphaz takes the hypothetical stand that IF Job was not sinful the trouble would not have come. Bildad takes the inferential attitude that Job MUST be sinful seeing trouble has come ... Zophar declares Job IS sinful because his teaching demands it. He

is the least courteous and most drastic of the three, though this may be due to his impatience as he heard Job refute his friends' arguments. Job had logically refuted the 'law of exact retribution' in that it was obviously wrong as both the righteous and the wicked suffer (9:22) and he had appealed for further light. All that Zophar could offer was that God knew Job's sins, even though they were hidden from Job, and as God is just, Job should seek repentance."

## **Zophar's Instruction - I Know**

### **11:1-4 Job rebuked as verbose and boastful**

Zophar almost sounds apologetic as he begins his first speech. He is speaking, so it seems, only because Job, who is a man full of talk, who has uttered a multitude of words, has not only remained unanswered, he seems to have justified himself. This is preposterous to Zophar who lacks understanding. Of course Job is garrulous and emotional. One feels certain that Zophar would have behaved in much the same way if he had received the torments Job had.

He zooms in on Job's assertion of righteousness ("Though I think myself right" 9:20 JB) and verbally lambastes the discomposed Job. His assault is as much an attack on Job as his speech. Whereas Bildad opens his speech with a reference to Job's blusterings and then moves into a line of thought that attempts to push a particular philosophy, Zophar attacks Job and maintains the barrage. He accuses Job of being loquacious (11:2), disrespectful (11:3), self-righteous (11:4), opinionated (11:7), rebellious (11:13), even wicked (11:14).

But Zophar is overstating Job's words. While Job is convinced of his righteousness he does not flaunt it. He seeks answers. He realises the magnitude of God but is confused by God's dealing with him. Zophar simply asserts that Job's speaking does not make Job a better individual.

He is flabbergasted that Job believes his babble ("lies" 11:3 - "idle talk" NIV) will silence men and that his derisive talk will not be exposed as shameful. To press his point, Zophar next moves in on a word. Job in the extremity of his language claimed that God laughs (*laag* - 9:23) at the plight of the innocent. "No," says Zophar, "Your laughter Job, your mocking (*laag* - 11:3), not God's, is the problem." But even here Zophar's accusation is not vindicated. Job while despairing and disappointed with his friends has not, to this stage, mocked them.

As well as being a raver and a mocker, Zophar claims that Job said, "My doctrine is pure, and I am clean in thine eyes" (11:4). Nowhere has Job said this. True, such statements may be inferred from Job's much speaking. However, Job does not use "clean" (*bar*) or "pure" (*zak*) in reference to himself until 16:17 where he says, "My prayer is pure (*zak*)." Perhaps Zophar is mistaking Bildad's advice in 8:6, "If thou wert pure (*zak*)," as part of the speech of Job.

### **11:5-6 God knows your sinfulness**

In 10:2 Job implores God to show him what charges He has against him. Zophar wishes that God would indeed speak; that He would take Job at his word. Zophar, who considers Job to be somewhat arrogant, now presumes to speak on God's behalf. He is convinced that God would vindicate his dogma concerning Job. Yes, the secrets of wisdom would be revealed to Job. Secrets which Zophar, by his assessment, would have far more insight into than Job.

11:6 is a verse which commentators have enormous difficulty interpreting. The Revised Standard Version offers a conservative consensus which appears to be sensible as well as fitting the mood and context of Zophar's speech:

"and that he would tell you the secrets of wisdom! For he is manifold in understanding. Know then that God exacts of you less than your guilt deserves" (AV is similar - see NIV, JB for variations).

In other words, God has been lenient with Job! Job deserved worse. While there is an element of truth in that, because the wages of sin is death (Rom 6:23) and we are filthy rags before God's might (Isa 64:6), it is not exactly the most soothing concept to lay on Job at this moment in time. It is an astonishingly cruel and brutal statement from one who was counted as a friend. While the statement's dogmatism is not supported by evidence, it is, in Zophar's mind, a self-evident fact.

### **11:7-12 God is beyond human comprehension**

Zophar, after declaring Job deserved more than he received from God, continues by haranguing Job's desire for answers. Zophar's words border on ridicule - "Can you fathom the mysteries of God? Can you probe the limits of the Almighty" (11:7 NIV). Of course Job couldn't. But Job never claimed that he could nor declared a desire to do so. He merely wanted an explanation for his circumstances. Zophar has again exaggerated Job's intent. How irritating this must have been for Job.

Zophar follows with grandiloquent statements exclaiming just how incomprehensible God is. Job knows all this. Job has already declared his insignificance in God's presence (9:5-10). He does not want a lecture. He wants answers. He wants relief.

The sense of 11:10 is lost in the Authorised Version. Zophar is reiterating Job's words of 9:11-12 but maintains the style of his monologue by twisting Job's words and flinging them back at him. Job, in a tone of fear and awe, was extolling the invisible and irresistible workings of God. Zophar, while agreeing with such sentiments, uses them as a base camp from which to lay siege on Job's character: "If He passes by (*chalaph* - "cut off" AV - see also 9:11), imprisons, and gathers to judgment, then who can hinder Him" (11:10 NKJV).

From this amplification of Job's words Zophar slips into a poorly concealed attack on Job. God is so incomprehensible, so immeasurably clever, He can detect evil ("vain" - 11:11 AV) and deceit (Green) in man without having to consider it carefully or even appearing to consider it. Perhaps Zophar is attempting to alleviate Job's confusion evident in 10:12. Job could not understand how God had crushed a person He had so manifestly cared for in former times. Zophar's crude answer is that God knew all along the worthlessness of Job and He has done nothing more than delay His punitive action against Job.

11:12 is another of those verses commentators despair of. Andersen notes, "It must be admitted that the problems presented by verse 12 remain unsolved." A survey of Bible versions uncovers a plethora of variations. I believe that the "proverb" model is the most probable rendering - "But a witless man can no more become wise than a wild donkey's colt be born a man" (NIV - see also Roth, Delitzsch, RSV, NKJV). If this version is correct then Zophar has concluded his attempted rebuttal of Job's words with a crude insult. Surely he isn't calling Job a donkey? Perhaps, in giving Zophar the benefit of the doubt, he is using an everyday proverb that, although crude to our ears, was an acceptable way to describe an improbability. We might say, "Pigs might fly," to reject a suggestion and in no way be calling its advocate a pig.

However, there is no excuse for Zophar's comments. The fact he informs Job that a stupid man never gains understanding is indicative of his feeling that Job is tottering near the abyss of idiocy. Zophar's appeal demonstrates that he believed Job to be but centimetres from spiritual oblivion. Alternatively, his speech betrays his insensitivity and arrogance.

End of the lecture, Zophar next offers advice.

### **11:13-19 Repent and be blessed**

Instead of ringing in Job's ears, Zophar's words would have been stinging in Job's ears. He has, at least, suggested that Job is evil and worthless. But Zophar is convinced of his own niceness. He wants to help his poor, embittered friend. So he abruptly switches from an accusing, insulting form of speech to that of a smooth, friendly, albeit condescending, approach.

It is not merely terminology. Zophar, in his bludgeoning heavy-handed way, is attempting to provide Job with the means to recover to his former glory. But his advice is cliched and a repeat of that offered by Eliphaz (5:17-26) and Bildad (8:20-22). The advice is simple, obvious and unhelpful - "Repent, be good, say your prayers and God will restore you." To Zophar, Job's case was cut and dried. It was all because of sin. This assumption, like all Zophar's assumptions, resulted in glib, overconfident counsel.

How easy it is to ascertain the cause of somebody's personal problems and opine solutions. Especially when we are not experiencing any adversity. The cruelty of Zophar's speech is apparent when he later refers to Job's former prosperity and prestige.

Yes, Job only has to get his attitude right and stretch out his hands in prayer to God. It was Job's responsibility as the pronoun "thou" (11:13) is emphatic in the Hebrew (Soncino). He had to put his personal sin far away, and repeating the deduction of Bildad (8:4), put away the sin of his household and family. It is not that Zophar is saying, "If there is sin, put it away." No, he is saying, "If you put away the sin that is in your hand" (11:14 NIV).

It is only after Job has fulfilled these requirements that Job, according to Zophar's logic, would "face the world in innocence ("without punishable guilt" Delitzsch), unwavering and free from fear" (11:15 JB - compare 9:35). Zophar in attempting to counteract Job's despondency of 10:15 exceeds what is humanly possible. When is a man free from fear? How can man presume innocence when, in Zophar's words, God can detect sin without even trying (11:11)? Zophar in being helpful is being faintly ridiculous.

He becomes openly ridiculous when he continues, "Because thou shalt forget thy misery, and remember it as waters that pass away" (11:16). Very eloquent but quite absurd. Job dearly wanted to forget (9:27) but this was impossible. For Job to forget the death of ten children, the hurtful inappropriate counsel of his friends, the unrelieved agony of a skin disease that reduced him to scratching himself with a fragment of pottery while sitting in the local rubbish pit, simply because he was restored to health and prosperity is incomprehensible.

In fact, claims Zophar in 11:17, contrary to the gloom that saturated Job's closing remarks (10:21-22), Job's restored "life" (NKJV, RSV etc - "age" AV) will be full of light. And, repudiating Job's gloomy talk of hopelessness (9:28-30), there is hope, there is security if he removes the guilt of sins surely committed. As 11:18 concludes, "You will be protected, and take your rest in safety."

We need to pause and ponder where Job has come from. He was "the greatest of all the men of the east" (1:3). He had wealth, prosperity and status. Eliphaz alludes to this status early in his first speech, "Behold thou hast instructed many ..." (4:3-4) and Job bewails the loss of that position of honour in 29:12-17. It is the restoration of this status that Zophar leaves to last in his catalogue of positive outcomes for the repentant Job.

"Just think," invites Zophar, "Do as I say and 'many will entreat your favour' (RSV). Just like the good old days." It irked Job that he was currently the object of society's derision (30:1) and Zophar's words would have kindled strong feelings and memories. To no avail. Zophar's solution was too simple and too trite. It was based on a doctrine of exact retribution that Job had refuted in 9:22-24. Life was not that simple and all were to learn the complexities of life and the majesty of God in the closing scenes of this drama.

However, Zophar for all his failings has, in these verses, attempted to strengthen the enfeebled Job. He converges on specific areas of negativism and provides contrasting objectives for Job to aspire to. Job was burdened with shame, fear, misery, gloom, hopelessness and desolation. Zophar paints a picture that portrays an absence of shame and fear, a forgetting of previous misery, a life of light and hope, and above all, a restoration of Job's status.

Zophar should have left off speaking at this moment. Instead, he bursts the bubble with the harsh words of 11:20.

#### **11:20      No hope for the wicked**

"But" - what a lethal word! Zophar has painted a rosy picture for Job if he repents but he feels compelled to conclude with words of warning. In doing so he again places Job in the company of the wicked.

Zophar was convinced that his advice was rock solid. If Job ignored it and chose to be stubborn he would grow weary of looking for help that does not come. He was in danger of losing his intellectual and spiritual sight thus ensuring that all ways of escape would be lost to him.

The only hope for the wicked was death. Ironically, Job in his desperation longed for death (3:11-22; 6:8-10; 7:15; 10:18-22). Zophar twists this longing to again infer that Job was guilty. Job was not seeking for rebukes or clever words from his friends. Just comfort. This they did not supply.

#### **SPEECH 1 - ZOPHAR - TECHNIQUES**

- Plays The Man Not The Ball. Rebukes Job For Being:
  - Loquacious - 11:2;
  - Disrespectful - 11:3;
  - Self-Righteous - 11:4;
  - Opinionated - 11:7;
  - Rebellious - 11:13;
  - Wicked - 11:14
- Overstates And Twists What Job Said - 11:2~9:20 and 11:10~9:11-12
- Puts Words Into Job's Mouth - 11:4
- Speaks On God's Behalf - 11:5-6

- He Knows - 11:6
- Administers A Lecture To Educate Job - 11:7-12
- Abrupt Change To Being Helpful After A Vicious Opening - 11:13
- Can't Resist A final Hit Which Negates Any Previous Positive Comment - 11:20

## 12 CHAPTERS 12, 13, 14 - THE FIRST CYCLE OF SPEECHES - JOB

---

### Job's Reply to Zophar

- 12:1-5** My knowledge is not inferior to yours
- 12:6** The wicked do prosper
- 12:7-10** Let Creation teach you the wisdom and power of God
- 12:11-25** Job describes God's absolute power
- 13:1-12** Job reproves his friends as utter failures

### Job Appeals to God

- 13:13-19** Job turns to God as his friends cannot help
- 13:20-28** Job pleads with God
- 14:1-12** Man's lot is hopeless, whereas a tree has hope
- 14:13-15** Is there life after death?
- 14:16-22** Job's present state - perplexed and distressed

Job's lengthy speech in Chapters 12-14 marks the end of the first round. All three friends have had their say and, despite all good intentions, they have failed miserably. Zophar's words were strong hurtful blows, so Job counterpunches with language that could easily be construed as sarcastic, certainly ironic, in tone. He is accusing and vituperative as he labels his friends as "forgers of lies" and "physicians of no value" (13:4). He wishes that they would display their wisdom by being silent. Yet despite the brusqueness of his words and the despair that leads to the darkness at the end of this speech, his refutation of his friends and his subsequent appeal to God seems more ordered and coherent than his earlier outbursts. Perhaps, in having heard the best his three friends could offer, he is convinced that they are wrong, he is right and only God can give the answers that will vindicate him. However, Job's speech is not perfect and again he lapses into expressions that are inappropriate and possibly incorrect. It is not difficult for us to dissect his speech and detect its flaws but we must always be mindful of the horrendous physical and mental extremities of his circumstances.

### Job's Reply to Zophar

- 12:1-5** My knowledge is not inferior to yours



There is no denying the bitter irony of Job's opening words. Irony is that figure of speech whereby the expression conveys a sense quite different, usually opposite, to its strict meaning. He is bordering on sarcasm and returns scorn with scorn. He says that they are the ones with "wisdom" (**hokma**) and is honing in on Zophar's assertion that God's "wisdom" sees Job getting off lightly (11:6). "Yes", Job is saying, "You are the people with this wisdom and when you die that wisdom will die with you. The world will obviously lack with your demise." They are so different to the mortal men of Eliphaz's speech (4:21) who die "even without wisdom." Indeed, in Job's irony, his three friends were clearly a cut above the rest of humanity.

Job is clearly upset by Zophar's description of God's "wisdom," because from being a word used just twice in eleven chapters, Job utters it four times in this speech to rebuke his friends. He uses it to:

- i) ironically put his friends in their place (12:2);
- ii) acknowledge the value of the ancients (12:12 compare 8:8) as well as to put them in their correct perspective (i.e. inferior to God - 12:13); and
- iii) to declare that his friends' wisdom would best be exhibited by their silence (13:5).

"But," says Job, "I have a mind (**lebab** - noun of **labab**) as well as you; I am not inferior to you" (12:3 NIV). Job is responding to the insulting words of Zophar - "But a witless man can no more become wise (**labab**) than a wild donkey's colt can be born a man" (11:12 NIV). Job is not witless. He is not an empty man. Actually, as Job continues, Zophar has not spoken anything new or revolutionary. Any person with intelligence knows the majesty of God as described by Zophar in 11:7-12.

Despite his intelligence, despite his obvious strengths ("the just upright man"), despite his previous status before God ("who calleth upon Job, and he answereth him"), Job is now just a joke. A laughing-stock mocked by his neighbours. He is a devout man in disgrace. Zophar accused Job of mocking others (11:3) and Job, using a different expression, exclaims that he is the one being mocked. Yet, unless the tone of their expressions was mocking, the expressions themselves, while hurtful and callous, do not appear to be loaded with ridicule. Again emotions are manifesting themselves in exaggerated accusations and considerable hopelessness.

Job's despair is reflected in the truism of 12:5 which is translated rather floridly as, "'Add insult to injury,' think the prosperous 'strike the man now that he is staggering!'" (JB). Job is a man overtaken with misfortune. He's down and they still rain blows upon him. Instead of attempting to pick Job up off the street, they trample all over him.

## **12:6            The wicked do prosper**

What a contrast to the previous verses. While the just righteous man is laughed to scorn and he who stumbles and falls is trampled on, the wicked prosper. How can Zophar and his companions hold so doggedly to their theory of exact retribution? The contrast is right in front of them. A just man in absolute destitution and the criminal world, whose God is their fist, living in prosperity.

The phrase, "Into whose hand God bringeth abundantly," is quite unclear in the original and the versions are inconsistent. However, the sense appears to be that the wicked deifies his own power. His strength is his god (Hab 1:11). Whether it be that the power he has was supplied by God (NKJV) or is carried in his hand (NIV) or is his two fists (JB), the wicked has no interest in God. He only provokes God. Those that irritate God are "at ease" (Green - **battuchowth**: plural of **batach**). Such a contrast to the swelling words of Zophar to Job, "If thou prepare thine heart ... thou shalt be secure (**batach**)" (11:13,18).

Job was not in the mood for pretty word-panoramas of future bliss. He wanted answers. If he was a sinner being punished why were other patently greater sinners, who have no thought for God, living unpunished? Why were they prosperous? Where were the answers to Job's problems?

### **12:7-10 Let Creation teach you the wisdom and power of God**

12:4-6 is more than likely parenthetical as 12:7 logically continues from 12:3. The parenthetical section is an attempt to quickly hit out at the overall philosophy of Job's antagonists. 12:7 returns to the issue of the relative merits of the wisdom contained by the speakers. Zophar had professed an exalted knowledge of God (11:5-12). Job replies that his knowledge is elementary and even the lower creation could help to educate him. As Job was to discover, he would also be educated by God from the same source (Job 39). No matter who we are, all can gain lessons in the power of God. Awesome, yet simple, instruction is gained from honestly contemplating His creative works.

Indeed much can be gained from a careful consideration of God's creative works but Job's outburst in 12:7 is more designed to blunt the arrogance of Zophar than to extol the positive creative work of God. This is evident particularly when Job continues to declare the power of God later in the chapter. Virtually all reference to God's work is to its destructive side (12:14-25). Job is not breaking from his defence to a sentimental appreciation of birds and beasts. No, he is trying to impress upon the almost purblind Zophar that his knowledge is nothing special. The beasts teach the majesty of God. The birds do. As does the earth with its vegetation and small animals. Even fish are quality educators. If they know about God's majesty then surely Job does and it serves little purpose for his friends to harp on such a theme.

In 12:9 we read, "Who among all these does not know that the hand of the LORD (i.e. Yahweh) has done this" (NKJV). Some commentators dispute the use of "Yahweh" by Job here. Some advise that certain manuscripts read "hand of **Eloah**" (Gibson, Lovelock). Support for that alternative can be found in the Jerusalem Bible. However, most other Hebrew-based versions support the AV and use "Yahweh" or "LORD". While it is true that this is the only place where "Yahweh" is found in the poetical section of the Book of Job it has a perfectly sound link to 1:21 - the only other time Job uttered the Name, "Yahweh".

Job is coming to the end of the first round of speeches. All his comforters have spoken. Job has not changed. He still believes that "Yahweh gave, Yahweh has taken back" (1:21 JB). God is in control. Nothing has altered Job's overall opinion. No doubt his outlook is gloomy and biased towards considering Yahweh as a destructive force but the very distinctive use of the Name in 12:9 underlines the intractability of Job's viewpoint.

God is in control. In Yahweh's hand is the soul (**nephesh**), the principle of life, common to all living creation and the breath of all mankind. Again the feeling is that of God's power to snuff out life; to withdraw man's breath.

### **12:11-25 Job describes God's absolute power**

12:11-12 gives every appearance of being out of place. 12:13 would seem to sensibly proceed from 12:10. The New English Bible places 12:11-12 in parentheses. However, these are not necessary as Job is introducing his dissertation on the grandiosity of God. He does so by asking questions in which the answers are axiomatic. Yes, ears do test words as a tongue tests food. Wisdom is with the aged. Long life does bring understanding. Job is giving a restricted degree of approval to Bildad's assertions of 8:8-10 but he goes on to clarify his approval. It does not matter how old you are, how wise you are, how easily your words pass the closest scrutiny, "To God belong wisdom and power; counsel and understanding are his" (12:13 NIV).

Job next proceeds to strip away any credibility that the greatest of mankind may have. What are counsellors (12:17), judges (12:17), kings (12:18), priests (12:19 NIV), the mighty (12:19) the trusty (12:20), the aged (12:20), princes (12:21) and the strong (12:21 JB) compared to God?

Look again at the descriptors used of God in 12:13. With God is "wisdom" (**hokma**). **Hokma** is a wide-ranging word connoting "wisdom" and God is the source of it. By His wisdom God numbered the clouds (38:37). He alone knows wisdom in its truest sense (28:20,23). God also has "strength" (**gibbor** - a popular Bible word often used to describe a mighty warrior) and "counsel" (**etzah**). **Etzah** has the implication of planning (Strong) and is translated as "forethought" (Green). It can also carry the meaning "firmness" (NEB). Finally, Job says that God has understanding (**tebuna**) which is almost a synonym of **hokma** but has a slight difference. **Hokma** is moral wisdom - the discernment of right and wrong - whereas **tebuna** speaks more of intelligence.

Overall, Job has neatly summarised his perception of God. God knows what is right as He is the source of all wisdom. He has the might and power to perform His will. He is working to a plan and has a firm resolve to accomplish it. All His acts are derived from superior intelligence. In other words, there is intelligent purpose in what God does. He does not indulge in capricious acts. God's activities are deliberate, even if man can scarcely determine the reasons for them. This is especially so when one can only see, as Job does at this time, negative destruction.

"Behold," exclaims Job, "God breaks down," and He is so thorough that "What he destroys, none can rebuild; whom he imprisons, none can release" (12:14 JB). When God judges, nobody can stop Him. Not nature or man or the apparent permanency of man's constructions. God is unstoppable. He can cause vast droughts and massive floods. 12:15 could be an allusion to some of God's greatest works - the presentation of dry land on the third day of creation (Gen 1:9) and the overwhelming of the earth with the floodwaters of Noah's day (Gen 7:19).

How powerful and wise is God. "With him is strength (**oz**) and wisdom (**tushiya**)." Job after his fourfold description of God in 12:13 uses two additional words in 12:16. It is as if he is searching for as many words as he can to impress on Zophar that he is not the sole repository of knowledge on divine matters. Zophar's knowledge is rudimentary compared to Job's. Job sees God's strength and **tushiya**. **Tushiya** means "sound, efficient wisdom, i.e. sound judgment, wisdom that leads to practical success" (TWOT). **Tushiya** is translated as "victory" (NIV), "resourcefulness" (JB), "prudence" (NKJV), "effectual working" (Gibson), "sound wisdom" (Green, Soncino), "effective wisdom" (Roth) and "success" (NEB). Job's message is very simple; it does not matter what sort of person you are - a deceiver or a person who is deceived (12:16) - you cannot beat God.

The mightiest of men cannot stand against the will of God. 12:17-21 details men mighty in stature, power and authority. None begin to measure up to God. God has control over them as He:

- "robs ... counsellors of their wits" (JB - "spoiled" AV. Better as "stripped" NIV. According to Soncino it means to be "stripped of knowledge");
- makes fools of judges;
- controls kings ("bond" AV - **musar** means "discipline, control" Soncino. God can end a despot's rule and have him carried away as a captive i.e. bind a rope around his loins);
- leads priests (not "princes" AV) away;
- overthrows the "mighty" (more appropriately "the perpetual" i.e. men of influential status, inherited from their fathers, which they had regarded as unshakable - Soncino. See also NIV, JB);
- silences the lips of trusted advisers;
- robs the nations' counsellors, the elders, of their discretion;
- pours contempt upon "nobles" (NIV etc - not "princes" AV as it is too narrow a translation); and
- disarms the mighty.

Job's catalogue of prestigious men is comprehensive. As Brother Styles notes, Job covers the wise (12:17 - counsellors, judges), the great (12:18 - kings), the honoured (12:19 - priests, men of perpetual status), the knowledgeable (12:20 - advisers, elders) and the powerful (12:21 - nobles, mighty). God's superiority and control over them is accomplished by moral wisdom, might, forethought, intelligence, strength and effectual working.

Job next moves into a slightly more general application of God's supremacy. Nothing is hidden from God. All the deepest secrets of the wicked God can bring to light. It is not so much a matter of man attempting to "fathom the mysteries of God ... and being able to probe the limits of the Almighty" (11:7 NIV), it is the fact that God is always aware, always in control, never fooled. He is the One who makes nations great and destroys them. He is the One who makes fools out of the greatest of men so that they are out of control, groping in darkness, staggering like drunks.

Job has taken hold of Zophar's concept of God and declared it to be inadequate. To Zophar, God is large and unfathomable yet he confidently predicts how God will behave. If Job repents then, in Zophar's opinion, God will, of necessity, do certain things. In declaring this Job's accusers have initially put Job in a box labelled "Sinner." Secondly, they have tagged the Almighty as merely a reactor to man. Man is good, God is nice. Man sins, God is nasty. As Job is at pains to prove, it is not that simple.

Job is more honest with the evidence, more open in his thinking. He is virtually preaching that God is always intervening. His control can be seen in everything. Perhaps Job is overstating his opinions to indicate the shallowness of his friends' opinions, but it does indicate that Job has a faith in God's ability to manipulate events. True, the emphasis is on God's destructive outworkings but 12:23 shows a flicker of hope. Perhaps Job's faith extends to a belief in God's ability to save.

### **13:1-12 Job reproves his friends as utter failures**

Job knows all about the absolute power of God so it seems pointless for him to continue. His experience, both in seeing and hearing, means he understands the might of God. He has, at least, the same amount of knowledge as his friends and he repeats 12:3 in stressing, "I am not inferior to you." In his estimation he is their intellectual equal.

However, this is not good enough. He must know the truth. His friends have failed. Job, while adept at refuting what is wrong, is at a loss to understand what is right. He must go to God for answers. But Job seems a little forthright in his request for an audience with the Almighty - "But I desire to speak to the Almighty and to argue my case with God" (13:3 NIV - the AV is a bit conservative).

Did Job expect to convince or change God? While the expression has links to the settlement of a legal dispute, the phrase can imply the establishment of justice. Job wanted to find out exactly what was going on. In 13:23 he wants to know what his transgressions, if any, were. If God declared to him his faults, Job would at least know.

The word **yakach** ("reason" AV, "argue" NIV etc) appears in a number of places in the Book of Job and the vast majority of its uses are on the lips of Job (11 out of its 17 usages). Most stress Job's desire for the needed explanation that is not forthcoming from his friends. For example:

- "What does your arguing (**yakach**) argue (**yakach**)" (6:25 Green)
- "If only there was someone to arbitrate (**yakach**) between us" (9:33 NIV)
- "He will surely reprove (**yakach**) you" (13:10)

- "I will defend (**yakach**) my own ways before Him" (13:15 NKJV).

Cruelly, Eliphaz in the following speech picks up Job's labouing of **yakach** and casts it back at him - "Would [a wise man] argue (**yakach**) with useless words" (15:3 NIV).

Yes, Job's friends were not of value to him and he heaps reproaches on them. They were "plasterers of lies" (13:4 Soncino) and useless physicians. They attempted to plaster over Job's problems with layers of lies. Their solution was convenient but incorrect as they stubbornly clung to a theory of exact retribution that was trenchantly unsustainable. As physicians or healers (surely their intention - 2:11) they were hopelessly incompetent. As Andersen writes, "They cover their ignorance by diagnosing an imaginary illness in Job (his hidden, dreadful sin) and prescribing a worthless cure (repentance, and so on)."

If this was the best they could do, they would best display their wisdom by reverting to the silence that followed their arrival (2:13). True, Job was depressed in Chapter 3 when he uttered his opening lamentations, but the words of his friends had been extremely unhelpful, hurtful and frustrating to the tormented Job. They had not lifted Job out of the pits of Chapter 3. Job's feelings at this time could be summarised by Proverbs 17:28, "Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise: and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding."

Instead Job requests that his friends hearken to his "reasonings" (**towkachath** from **yakach** - "reproof" Soncino; "chastisement" Strong) and pleadings as he appeals to his friends to be very careful in what they are saying. It is as if the shoe is on the other foot as Job turns to accuse his accusers. Do they dare to speak on God's behalf? Zophar had certainly done so in 11:6. Job is aghast. He is concerned about this presumptuous, dangerous development. Rotherham has correctly captured the emphasis of the Hebrew when he translates 13:7-8:

"Is it for GOD ye would speak perversely?  
And for him ye would speak deceit.  
Even for him ye would be partial?  
Or for GOD would ye so plead?

"For God" stands at the beginning of the Hebrew and is thereby emphasised. They spoke on behalf of the pioneers (8:8), and from their depth of experience (4:8) but to speak on God's behalf is frightening to Job. Yet how easy it is, on matters where there is no clear Scriptural injunction, to presume what God would or would not approve.

Job in his play on **yakach** says, "I desire to reason (**yakach**) with God" (13:3), then, "You, my friends, need to listen to my reasoning (**towkachath**)" (13:6), because if you are not careful, "God will surely reprove (**yakach**) you" (13:10).

Job has clearly refuted their reasonings. They are plainly wrong yet they claim to be championing God's point of view. Job has no compunction in declaring that they are representing God with unrighteousness and deceit. Did God need them as His advocates? Job's question is meant for only one answer, "No!"

"No", is the only correct answer for the next two questions. "Would it turn out well if he examined you? Could you deceive him as you might deceive men?" (13:9 NIV). Imagine them squirming in anger and/or embarrassment as Job fires question after question at them. They have clearly overstepped the mark and Job wants them to be fully aware of their folly. "Yes," Job continues, "They would surely be rebuked." Ironically, Job is ever so slightly speaking on God's behalf but his basis is more sound and his application less specific.

The statement, "If you do secretly accept persons" (13:10) is better translated, "If ye are secretly partial" (Roth) and refers to a partiality or favouritism towards God or on His behalf. One wonders what the problem is. Throughout Scripture we are commanded to honour and worship God and the comments of some commentators on this expression seem somewhat odd (e.g. "He must reject worship based on favouritism, even when that worship is worship of Him.")

The point seems to be that partiality towards God when one does not correctly understand Him is favouritism without substance. It borders on flattery (John 16:2-3). This was Zophar's mistake in 11:6. He speaks emotionally and without evidence yet believes his opinions represent God's thoughts.

Job is not finished with Zophar as he fires two more questions at him; "Why aren't you terrified of God? Doesn't the fear of God fall on you?" Job had already confessed how frightened he was of God (7:14; 9:34) and he is astonished that his friends are so casual about God. They make Him more an object of intellectual contemplation rather than fearful subordination.

The warning is strong. They cannot dupe God, either openly (13:9) or in secret (13:10). God will deal with them. Their confidently stated maxims would be like ashes ("proverbs of ash" JB) and their "defences" (NKJV, NIV - preferred over "bodies" AV), that is the arguments they have erected to support their maxims, would be as clay. "Clay" was used by Eliphaz to describe the inferiority of man to angels (4:19) and by Job when acknowledging his dependence on God (10:9). Job is reminding his listeners that not only is their case unsound but it is man-made. It will not withstand higher scrutiny.

Therefore, it is to that higher scrutiny Job next submits himself to.

## **Job Appeals to God**

### **13:13-19 Job turns to God as his friends cannot help**

This is not the first time that Job, dissatisfied with the reasonings of his visitors, turns to God. His first was after the speech of Eliphaz (7:11), his second after Bildad's speech (10:1) and now this appeal after Zophar's oration. All his friends are, in his opinion, hopelessly ineffectual. He brusquely commands them to hold their peace and he intrepidly speaks out to God. His speech will be forthright and maybe even life-threatening. He is prepared to accept the consequences of his appeal.

He articulates his position dramatically in 13:14 as, "I put my flesh between my teeth, I take my life in my hands" (JB). The Authorised Version rendition of this verse as a question may be correct but Gibson, quoting the Septuagint, seems to think that a statement is more appropriate (see also Roth, NEB, RSV). What does it mean to "put my flesh between my teeth"? It is a parallel expression to "take my life in my hands." It is not found anywhere else in Scripture and is paraphrased a number of different ways ("neck in the noose" NEB; "in jeopardy" NIV). Essentially, Job is prepared to expose himself to death but, as he continues in 13:15, he will not, under any circumstances, despite the perceived inevitability of his sudden destruction, fail to argue his case or lose hope.

The interpretation of 13:15 is disputed. Gibson is adamant that the Authorised Version is wrong and Delitzsch wrestles with the text to determine the meaning. It is not saying that Job has placed himself entirely at the mercy of God and will do so without further discussion. The meaning is more likely the sense conveyed by the Jerusalem Bible when it translates 13:15-16 as, "Let him kill me if he will; I have no other hope than to justify my conduct in his eyes. This very boldness gives promise of my release, since no godless man would dare appear before him."

The sense does convey a degree of positiveness and faith. Job, convinced of his innocence, believes that such could save him. If he were a godless individual he would not seek divine vindication. He is not saying, "I have no hope." He is saying, "My only hope is God's recognition of my godly character." Job is also using a term that was spoken by Bildad in 8:13 - "the hypocrite's (*chaneph*) hope shall perish." *Chaneph* means to be "profane, impious" (Ges), "soiled with sin" (Strong). The hope of the profane may indeed perish with him but Job is confident that such is not his destiny as he is not a godless man.

Instead, he tells his friends (not God as 13:17 is addressed to the plural) to witness his declaration before God. There is a new note of confidence in Job's speech. Zophar began with a rebuke - "Should not the multitude of words be answered? and should a man full of talk be justified (*tzadak*)?" (11:2). Job cleverly turns this around by saying that he has ordered his cause. He has carefully prepared his case and as he continues, "I know that I shall be justified (*tzadak*)" (13:18). Job is not rabbiting on, hoping that the quantity of his words would compensate their lack of quality. He is so confident that he challenges his friends to find somebody who can advance solid arguments against his defence. He can "contend" (Delitzsch, Gibson, NKJV) with Job or "bring charges" (NIV) against him.

If anybody could prove an accusation against him and effectively refute Job's protestations of innocence he would hold his peace and die. "For now" (13:19 AV) is better rendered, "For then" (Soncino) or, "If so" (NIV). Even here there seems to be a chink in Job's confidence. In 13:18 his confidence takes on an air of superiority - "I know that I shall be justified." In 13:19 he is reluctantly admitting to the possibility, although remote, that an accusation could well stick and Job would be guilty. Such oscillation is to be expected of Job. At times the swing from hope to despair is massive. Here it is more of an errant fluctuation.

It is not surprising, with the magnitude of Job's suffering, both physical and mental, that Job's speech lacks uniformity. It rarely follows a steady pattern. His friends, with homes to return to and not even a pimple to scratch, can offer crafted, articulate dissertations.

### **13:20-28 Job pleads with God**

Job having challenged his friends now speaks directly to God. He has his case prepared. He is ready to attest to his innocence. But he still feels things are a little lopsided against him. He needs some changes to enable a fair trial. If Job's conditions are met he will not hide himself from God (13:20). Has Job hidden himself from God? It is hard to believe so. This utterance baffles most commentators, especially in the context of 13:24 where Job accuses God of hiding His face from Job.

In fact the expression goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden where, in shame and guilt, Adam and Eve hid themselves from the presence of the *Elohim* (Gen 3:8). We also witness Cain's lament that because of his crime he would be hidden from God's face (Gen 4:14). Job's outburst is not an admission of sins as blatant as Adam's and as gross as Cain's. It is more a fear that God does not look with favour on Job. His speaking is confused but Job is saying that if God grants him the conditions he requires then he will appear before God as vindicated. The barrier that seems so apparent between God and Job will be removed and harmony restored.

The conditions are virtually synonymous:

- i) Let God give Job some relief from his bodily sufferings; and

ii) May Job not be mentally tortured by God's omnipotence.

This is not the first time Job has asked for these conditions (see 9:34) but if they were granted Job would, in his opinion, be better able to present his case. After requesting two conditions, Job presents two options as his pleading takes a legal turn. In what looks like a call to a lawsuit, he says to God, "You make the choice. You can speak first or I can." Such is the desperation of the afflicted Job. But Job has overstepped the mark. God does not answer to anybody and He makes that very clear early in His opening speech - "Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me" (38:3).

Job, not waiting for an answer, proceeds to ask God a series of questions. He wants to know the magnitude of his "iniquities" (**avon**), "sins" (**chattaah**) and "transgressions" (**pesha**). He uses three words in close proximity as he covers all the angles of his possible deviation from godly ways. **Avon** speaks of, "perversity, depravity" (Ges), **chattaah** signifies, "sins of weakness" (Ges), "to miss the mark" (Girdlestone), whereas **pesha** denotes, "to revolt or refuse subjection to rightful authority" (Girdlestone), that is, "wickedness which designedly estranges itself from God" (Delitzsch).

Job is thorough. Has he been guilty of a depraved action? Has he wilfully sought to rebel against God's authority? Has he committed a gross sin of ignorance? He wants to know. Job has protested his innocence but he does not claim perfect sinlessness. Maybe he is being punished for sins he has committed but his conscience is clear. Perhaps Job considers that he is the subject of retribution for sins past. This does not mean that Job was of the same mind as his friends.

Many commentators attest that Job had always accepted the "orthodox" doctrine of exact retribution but it seems discrepant that Job, after effectively demolishing the doctrine and demonstrating a vastly different outlook as early as 1:21, should be endorsing his friends' concepts. He simply wants to know if there is any connection between sin and his present condition. God does punish specific sin but it is not a law whereby every sin will have a corresponding punishment.

But God does not tell Job why he is suffering or what, if any, his sins were. Job's next question declares his frustration and sorrow. "Why do you hide your face and look on me as your enemy (**oyeb** -the root word for "Job")?" (13:24 JB). God has failed to give him the desired respite (13:20-21) nor supplied the answers to his questions. Job feels more than rejected. He is being treated as God's enemy in spite of Job's dependence on Him (13:15-16). Job is being a bit dramatic here. This was not evidence that God was treating Job like an enemy (Psa 94:12; Heb 12:6 - Elihu picks this up in 33:10). But why is God investing such an effort on a person who is like a withered leaf or a piece of dry stubble (13:25)?

Job compares himself to two of the weakest things of nature. So weak that they are helplessly at the mercy of the lightest zephyrs. Surely Job is not worthy of such attention. Maybe, suggests Job, his situation is a punishment for perversities (**avon** - see 13:23) he had committed during his youth. Job can only recall such misconduct occurring during his youth and perhaps Job's punishment is an inheritance from that time ("possess" 13:26 AV - better rendered as "inherit" NIV, Gibson, Soncino, RV etc). We could suggest that Job's sins of his youth inspired his regular offerings on behalf of his children (1:5).

Whatever the case, Job's plea in 13:26 is reflected by the words of the Psalmist: "Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to thy mercy remember thou me for thy goodness' sake, O LORD" (Psa 25:7).

This forgiveness has not, by Job's assessment, occurred. He senses that he is like a prisoner whose feet are immobilised in stocks. He seems to be as a criminal whose steps are closely guarded. He cannot move beyond the



narrowest of boundaries set for him by God. Green translates the end of 13:27 as, "You set a limit on the soles of my feet." All three figures in 13:27 imply restrictive arrest and the impossibility of escape. Again all these analogies were picked out for special attention by Elihu (33:11) indicating that Elihu was shocked by the substance of Job's words. Has God shackled Job as decisively as Job intimates? How is Job restricted? What sort of freedom does Job desire? Freedom from God's scrutiny or freedom from his affliction?

The last verse of Chapter 13 is another of those conundrums that riddle the poetical parts of this Book. Who is "he"? Some say it is anybody other than Job. For others it refers to Job (thus addressing himself in the third person), or man in general (e.g. NKJV, NIV). The context supplied by 13:27 would have us regard "he" as Job, yet the context of 14:1 points clearly to "man". Whatever the answer, and I lean towards its application to Job, the verse indicates just how helpless man is, and certainly a man as oppressed as Job, before the might of God. He "wastes away like something rotten, like a garment eaten by moths" (NIV). In saying this Job is going beyond the language of Eliphaz (4:19). Eliphaz's allusion relates to wicked men. An allusion that is manifestly inaccurate. Job's allusion incorporates all, including the righteous, but in doing this Job is being limited in his consideration of the character of God. If Job is right then nobody has any hope. This seems to be the point of view Job advocates early in Chapter 14.

#### **14:1-12      Man's lot is hopeless, whereas a tree has hope**

Job oscillates between hope and despair and it is difficult to determine his mood; his frame of mind. Even in this chapter, as he brings this lengthy speech to a conclusion, a shaft of light juts through the gloom at 14:14-15. But the first six verses constitute a poem declaring the universal misery and brevity of humanity. 14:7-12 is a comparison with the workings of the plant kingdom. Even a tree has more hope than a man. This is a monstrous extrapolation yet it is so strikingly balanced by a later swing to hope in the resurrection. Again powerful statements of truth are in evidence.

There is no doubting the correctness of 14:1. Man born of a woman is certainly of few days and full of trouble. Such a condition was instituted way back in Genesis 3:17-19. We are born into a constitution of sin (Psa 51:5; Rom 5:18-21). We are destined to die (Rom 6:23) and our days are days of trouble. We are frail like a flower withered by the sun and insubstantial like a shadow (14:2). These sentiments are dotted throughout Scripture (Psa 90:5-6, 102:11; Isa 40:6-8; 1Pet 1:24). Job has returned to his notions of 9:25. Yet, surprisingly God opens his eyes on such a one! But even in this the despairing tone of Job is to the fore. God does not open His eyes to save. No, God opens His eyes "to scrutinize in order to punish" (Soncino). The interpretation fits the remainder of 14:3, "And bringest me into judgment with thee?"

Most modern versions render "me" as "him" citing support from the Syriac, Septuagint and Vulgate versions. But there is no reason to discard the Hebrew. The Hebrew fits Job's state of mind as he leaps from a general statement to a "Why me?" outburst. He realises that as a frail mortal man born into sin he is impotent before the Almighty. He is terrified. Besides, is it fair?

"Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one" (14:4). Some claim that this is best rendered in the form of a wish, "Would that a pure one would come from an impure!" (Delitzsch) and this may be correct but the point is Job despairs at such an event. Nobody can produce cleanness from uncleanness. No pure thing will emerge from impurity. Therefore, how can man stand before God? What prospect does he have, other than death, in a legal sitting with God as the judge?

But is Job right in saying, "Not one"? This hardly seems a satisfactory answer to his question or wish. Perhaps the Jerusalem Bible is closer to the sense when it translates the expression as, "No man alive!" Man cannot do it. Only God can bring a clean thing out of the unclean, and this He did with His Son (Rom 8:3). As Brother Thomas wrote about Jesus in "Elpis Israel", "Sin could not have been condemned in the body of Jesus if it had not existed there. His

body was as unclean as the bodies of those for whom he died" (p128). But Christ was raised by the Father and given glory (1Pet 1:21) and the Father has made it possible for the worst of men to be cleansed (1Cor 6:9-11).

Yes, the human existence is one of misery. The human mind is naturally inclined to selfishness, but God has provided a way out of wretchedness and sin. Job was still to learn that God is not only perfect, powerful, and "a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb 4:12), He is also just and merciful (42:7-8). Job while essentially correct in what he said about God was not complete in his knowledge. He uttered statements that he later acknowledged as insufficient (42:3).

Furthermore, man's days are determined (14:5). God knows our lifespans. Despite our best efforts, we live a short, frail, mortal life that is terminated at death. So why does God subject man to such close scrutiny? "Wouldn't it be better," appeals Job, "That God 'look away from him that he may rest'?" (NKJV), or as other versions have it, "Leave him alone" (JB, NIV). Job's sentiments are similar to those of the Psalmist, who after discussing the brevity and vanity of life states, "LORD make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is, that I may know how frail I am. Behold thou hast made my days as a handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity" (Psa 39:4-5).

The Psalmist concludes with a prayer, using words that are reminiscent of Job's (e.g. 7:19, 10:20, 14:6): "Look away from me, that I may know gladness, before I depart and be no more!" (Psa 39:13 RSV).

These verses accurately mirror the condition of Job's mind. He just wants to experience the satisfaction a day labourer does. Such a person works hard, toiling through the day, under the commanding gaze of his supervisor, yet he gains relief when he returns home at night satisfied he has put in a good day's effort and able to enjoy comfort and recover his strength.

Job claims he has not experienced such a cycle. He feels overwhelmed by harsh, divine scrutiny. There is no relief, no feedback, just more pain and suffering. "Man's life is hard enough as it is," implores Job, "Why overburden it with still more suffering." Surely God would attempt to ease the burdens on mankind. But Job did not realise that what he was undergoing was for the development of his character (Heb 12:10-11) and for the education and redemption of his comforters. In this Job foreshadowed the work of Christ (Heb 4:15-5:2). Job did not appreciate this and therefore his trials were even more difficult to endure.

In Job's eyes a tree was better off than a man. Cut the tree down and it will sprout again. Perhaps Job is still niggled by Bildad's reference to the luxuriant growth (8:6) that is ripped out of its place of prominence to wither and die. "No," says Job, "Trees may look dead then new life will appear." A dead-looking tree just has to get a trickle of water and it will bud and bring forth branches. "But man (**geber**) dies, and is laid low; man (**adam**) breathes his last, and where is he? ... so man (**ish**) lies down and rises not again" (14:10,12 RSV).

Job is rock bottom. What hope is there for man. Even "at the height of its power ... at its most competent and capable" (**geber** - TWOT) man is laid down. Even man created "in God's image" (**adam** - TWOT) expires, and then what? He's finished. Man (**ish** - common word for individual man) lies down and rises not. Is Job denouncing the resurrection? The commentators battle with this because in the next verses (14:13-15) Job invigorates himself with a reflection on the resurrection. Certain Christadelphian authors play around with the words in 14:12 to try and say that Job was not referring to "the" resurrection but was repudiating a resurrection in his generation. I don't think so.

In 14:11 he compares man to a lake that dries up and a river that no longer flows. His utterance in 14:12 that man does not rise is attached to one exception - "till the heavens be no more." Surely an event he did not believe possible. Surely an expression equivalent to us saying, "Not in a million years." Furthermore, he states his non-resurrection

feeling two more times - "they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep." So why is Job saying this? And why does he immediately contradict himself?

It is a telling demonstration of the tormented state of Job's mind. His physical sufferings are clearly manifested but the pain in his mind is embodied in his fluctuating emotions and confused speech. In 14:12 he has hit the bottom. To him it is all over. But in the following verses he struggles to the surface obviously realising that it is not all over. God has provided a way. Job's highs and lows are not to be scorned or even pitied.

He was experiencing what we all experience - those doubts that we will not be in the Kingdom, or that the Kingdom will ever come followed by a swing to the inexpressible joy that comes from considering the power of God to save us. Job is to be observed and admired because his ability to endure and survive extreme circumstances of life enabled him to experience the mercy of God.

#### **14:13-15 Is there life after death?**

From his lowest ebb, Job lifts his thoughts as he gathers the threads of faith scattered throughout his earlier utterances. He constructs a short, intense precis of desire, maybe even a statement of faith. Oh that God would let Job die and when His anger has past and Job's time has arrived, God would raise Job from the dead. We should not be surprised by Job's knowledge of resurrection as it is an Old Testament doctrine (Exo 3:15 with Matt 22:31-33; Psa 16:10 of the Messiah; Psa 17:15; Isa 26:19; Dan 12:2). And Job, whose sufferings have caused him to doubt his future, now says that he will, "Wait (*yahal*) till my change (*halipa*) come." *Halipa* is sourced in *halap* the word translated "sprout" in 14:7, and *yahal* is translated "trust" in 13:15 - a verse where Job is placing his hope in God's recognition of his character. Job is going beyond that statement by saying that even if he dies he will still wait in hope. He can be renewed like that sprout that brings life to an apparently dead tree.

Job still believes that God is angry with him but his readiness to face death with hope is a transformation from the earlier gloominess so evident in 7:6-10 and 10:20-22. He reiterates his belief in a time of "hard service" (see 7:1 NKJV) but his tone is less depressed than that of 7:1.

Yes, when God calls Job from the grave Job will answer Him (14:15). Job has taken his pledge in 13:22 a step further. He reaches, at the conclusion of 14:15, what is for him, his crowning argument as to why God would not cast off His creation - "You shall desire the work of Your hands" (NKJV). This is a positive development from the perplexity of 10:8-12. In those verses Job could not understand why God would destroy something He had so intricately fashioned and unmistakably cared for.

Job now moves the feeling around. There must be a purpose to God's handiwork. He does not intend to destroy man. Job believes that God will resume His care for him. If not soon, certainly after the resurrection. After His anger was spent, God would yearn after the work of His hands and everlasting kindness will prevail (Isa 54:8).

#### **14:16-22 Job's present state - perplexed and distressed**

Job reconsiders his present state. He revisits the allusion of 13:27 where God is said to keep tight, constant observation of Job, and remembers all his sins. But there is a difference. 14:16-17 is more optimistic as it follows on from a consideration of the resurrection. While commentators tend to support a gloomy interpretation (e.g. Gibson, Reichert, Delitzsch), Andersen and most modern versions agree with the New King James Version: "For now You

number my steps, but do not watch over my sin. My transgression is sealed up in a bag, and You cover my iniquity" (also NIV, RSV, JB).

Job does not believe he is without sin. Rather, the very activities he questions in 13:27 - sins (**chattaah**), transgressions (**pesha**) and iniquities (**avon**) - he admits to in 14:16-17. But the mood is different. God does watch over him but He is not the type of being who will produce a tally of every indiscretion to harm Job. No, God seals up Job's transgressions in a bag. Not so He can produce them like a conjuror to humiliate Job further. The intention is to hide those transgressions, cover them up, through mercy and forgiveness.

The word translated "sewest" (**tapal**) means to "smear or plaster over" (TWOT) and was used by Job in 13:4 when describing his friends as "plasterers of lies" (Soncino). They failed. They attempted to plaster over Job's problems with layers of sins. God, Job felt, would plaster over Job's sins, not trump them up for the world to see, as his friends seemed intent on doing. God's tenderness and mercy must soon shine through. This cannot go on. But it does, as Job spirals down into hopelessness again.

Job describes in 14:18-19 a process of decay. A process which leads him to the conclusion, "Thou destroyest the hope of man." Yes, man (**enosh** - weak, mortal man) does have a hope. Job has already declared that. But because of the discouragements, the humiliations, the privations of life, circumstances that could be attributed to divine intervention, this hope is destroyed. A mountain is an imposing majestic sight: a symbol of permanence and security (Psa 121:1) but still subject to a principle of decay. Every winter when the snows melt, the mountains are slowly eroded. It may be a slow, virtually indiscernible process, but the mountains are reduced. With earthquakes and landslides, large rocks are split off the mountains and spilt into the valleys below.

The process does not stop there. "But as a mountain erodes and crumbles and as a rock is moved from its place" we observe a further diminution of substance, "As water wears away stones" (NIV). Mountains to rocks. Rocks to stones. Stones to dust - "the cloudburst erodes the soil" (JB). Just as mountains are reduced to topsoil that is swept away in a rainstorm, so is hope reduced by permanent affliction.

Job so desperately wants to hope. He believes in the resurrection. He believes in God's forgiveness. But even these last threads that hold his allegiance to God together are frayed and wearing as he sees interminable affliction as his lot in life.

The Jerusalem Bible best conveys the sense of 14:20-21 when it translates it as, "You crush him once for all, and he is gone; you mar him, and then you bid him go. Let his sons achieve honour, he does not know of it, humiliation, he gives it not a thought."

God overpowers man. Man dies and the result is oblivion (Ecc 9:5-6). His misery alters his appearance then he is taken away by death. His sons could be achieving greatness but he does not know. He is dead. Maybe their lives are brought low, they are humiliated. He does not know. There is no consciousness in the grave.

But how do we interpret 14:22? The three schools of thought prevail:

- i) The soul lives on and experiences pain in the grave;
- ii) Job is speaking about a pre-death experience; and

iii) "Flesh" and "soul" can be linked to relatives and associates left behind to mourn him.

All interpretations have problems. i) besides being completely unsupported by Scripture would seem to contradict 14:20-21 and no amount of adjustment can rectify those shortfalls. ii) while making sense does not flow logically from 14:21. iii), a possibility, is tenuous and unsupported by Bible versions.

I support the second interpretation as it constitutes the final words of Job's lengthy speech. After he bemoans the oblivion of death, he quickly switches to his theme of 14:19. All he feels is pain.

His whole existence is now one of mourning for himself. He is being worn away. He who was once the greatest man of the east feels like topsoil being dragged away by a cloudburst of affliction. His hope is being destroyed.

Can Eliphaz lift Job out of this mire of self-pity?

## 13 CHAPTER 15 - THE SECOND CYCLE OF SPEECHES - ELIPHAZ

---

### **Job is Rebuked**

- 15:1-6**      **Eliphaz rejects Job's claim to wisdom**
- 15:7-10**    **He declares Job's experience to be inferior**
- 15:11-13**   **He rebukes Job for his ingratitude**
- 15:14-16**   **He refutes the innocence of man**

### **Doctrine of Exact Retribution Reaffirmed**

- 15:17-19**    **Listen to me and the words of the ancients**
- 15:20-24**    **The life of the wicked**
- 15:25-28**    **The foolishness of the wicked**
- 15:29-35**    **God's judgements against the wicked**

Job's lengthy response to the last of his antagonists not only demonstrated his inability to accept his visitor's reasoning, it incorporated speech that was, at times, borderline. The extremity of his physical suffering combined with the intransigence of his friends' clearly false conclusions saw Job use language that only inflamed Eliphaz.

And inflamed Eliphaz is as he now generates a two-pronged attack in a speech that no longer contains the courtesies that were part of his opening address. Eliphaz opens his assault by bluntly rebuking Job and follows it with a forthright reminder of the fate of the wicked. As far as Eliphaz is concerned, Job is wrong and must be corrected.

## Job is Rebuked

Eliphaz launches into Job using a question-and-answer approach. He fires, possibly mimicking Job's technique in 13:7-12 and 13:23-28, a series of questions and, without waiting for Job to reply, provides what he considers to be the only appropriate responses. What is becoming obvious is that Eliphaz, in losing the debate, resorts to a personal attack on Job. While carefully avoiding such in his first speech he now adopts the approach begun by Zophar.

### 15:1-6 Eliphaz rejects Job's claim to wisdom

Eliphaz has been stung by the force of Job's words and therefore holds little back as he fires off the first set of questions. The overall sentiment that Eliphaz is expressing to Job is, "Who do you think you are?" Eliphaz cannot understand how Job could lay claim to wisdom when his outbursts are so immoderate. Does a wise man "fill his belly with the east wind?" (15:2)

The east wind is that fearsome hot air, devoid of any refreshment, that blows off the desert. By implication, Job's speaking is considered to be useless, maybe even harmful (Gen 41:6; Hos 12:1).

"And don't talk to me about reasoning (*yakach* - a favourite expression of Job's - see comments 13:1-12). Your arguments are degraded by your unprofitable talk and speeches that do no good" (15:3). Eliphaz is convinced that Job's responses are merely lengthy outbursts which lack quality and set a poor example. How could Job be considered wise?

In 15:4-6 Eliphaz answers the questions of the preceding two verses. Job is accused with doing worse than the questions imply. As the Jerusalem Bible conjectures with verse 4, "You do worse; you flout piety ..." In summary, Eliphaz castigates Job for:

- Undermining the fear of God (direct contrast with 1:1,8; 2:3);
- Hindering devotion to God (15:4 see NIV, Green etc);
- Revealing his iniquity by his immoderate speech (Is this a belated attempt by Eliphaz to reveal Job's sin - a request made in 6:24 that until now was unanswered?); and
- Adopting the tongue of the crafty (15:5 see also 5:12).

Not satisfied with this, Eliphaz, in verse 6, repeats his feelings and, as he had done previously (4:10-11), uses a number of words to express his thoughts. Not content with "thy mouth (*peh*) uttereth thine iniquity," he adds the "tongue (*lashon*) of the crafty," "thine own mouth (*peh*) condemneth thee" and "thine own lips (*sapa*) testify against thee."

In saying this Eliphaz contradicts the words of 2:10 (*sapa*). Had Job's lips, tongue and mouth deteriorated since the debates began in earnest from chapter 6? 40:4 (*peh*) would indicate as such but I don't believe that Job had reached the depths that Eliphaz is accusing him of.

### 15:7-10 He declares Job's experience to be inferior

Eliphaz maintains a barrage of humiliating questions that attempt to belittle Job, particularly Job's assertions of equality (13:1-5). Eliphaz ironically asks Job if he thinks the wisdom of the ages is embodied in him. Eliphaz's sarcasm is uppermost as he asks Job if he was the first man on earth and thereby a direct recipient of divine wisdom. Perhaps Job had listened in "on God's council" (15:8 NIV) and therefore had a monopoly on wisdom (15:9).

These questions overstate Job's declarations. He had not claimed that he was the sole repository of divine knowledge. He had not even claimed superiority over his friends. He had criticised their speaking on God's behalf (13:7-8) and asserted "I have understanding ... I am not inferior to you" (12:3). The charges of Eliphaz are unwarranted.

Eliphaz answers his questions by pointing out to Job that as he was old enough to be Job's grandfather Job should accept his reasoning. Accuracy, logic and commonsense have nothing to do with it. Age bestows superiority and that's all there is to it.

### **15:11-13 He rebukes Job for his ingratitude**

It would seem that the question-answer format is preserved although this is not reflected in a number of versions. I favour the Jerusalem Bible that translates this section as:

11. Do you scorn the comfort that God gives,  
and the moderation we have used in speaking?
12. See how passion carries you away!  
How evil you look,
13. when you loose your anger on God  
and utter speeches such as these!

What moderation had they used in speaking? Eliphaz, the most courteous, was not exactly gentle, whereas Bildad was infuriatingly patronising and Zophar downright brutal. In a way so typical of human nature, Eliphaz glorifies his side of the debate, even declaring that the comfort he gives is ordained by God, while exaggerating the negativity of Job; describing Job as evil looking and angry (AV "spirit" - *ruah* - in this context refers to Job's manner. See also Prov 16:32; 25:28).

Maybe Eliphaz's "consolations of God" is a reference back to the vision commencing in 4:12. Whatever the case, Eliphaz is now guilty of the accusations levelled against Job in 15:8 of claiming unique God-given knowledge.

### **15:14-16 He refutes the innocence of man**

Eliphaz's frustration with Job is evident as he repeats the arguments of 4:17-19. It all seems so simple, so straightforward to Eliphaz, as he goes back over the same ground and, as before, mixes truth with error. Again he speaks generally and seems to be propounding a philosophy that was widely accepted: "Man is not morally clean (*zaka*) nor is he righteous (*tzadak*) before God." He has progressed the argument of chapter 4 away from the domain of physical frailty and into that of moral frailty.

The implication is that Job considered himself to be morally pure. But Job never uses **zaka** ("to be clear, clean, pure - always in a moral sense" TWOT) in his much speaking. **Tzadak** is found in a number of places (9:2, 15, 20; 10:15). His confidence in 13:18, "I know that I shall be justified" (**tzadak**), is obviously the catalyst for Eliphaz's strong response along with the words of Elihu in 34:5.

So strong was Eliphaz's reply that he repeats in 15:15 the error of 4:18. Does God put no trust in His angels ("holy ones" **qadosh** - see 5:1; 6:10)? Are the heavens impure in His sight? Eliphaz believes so. In emphasising the uncleanness of man Eliphaz pushes too far. Surely God's holy angels can be trusted and the heavens, the handiwork of God, unsullied by man, are a testimony to God's righteousness? Unfortunately, Eliphaz, in his senior role, was not alone in holding such a miserable point of view as Bildad repeats it, almost verbatim, in his final speech (25:4-5).

If the angels cannot be trusted and the heavens are unclean then man is in an appalling condition. This was Eliphaz's point. Man is in an appalling condition but to Eliphaz he is more than that. Man is detestable (Ges), stinking corrupt ("filthy" AV - "to become sour as milk" Ges, "corrupt morally" TWOT - Psa 14:3; 53:3) and drinks iniquity like water or, as the idiom infers, drinks iniquity in full gulps. One wonders if Eliphaz would apply such descriptors to himself. And clearly this language was redundant as Job had already acknowledged that man cannot bring a clean thing out of an unclean, however God could (14:4 JB).

### **Doctrine of Exact Retribution Reaffirmed**

Having believed he has put Job in his rightful, rebuked place, Eliphaz next dwells upon the theme of the destruction that overwhelms the wicked. Despite Job's logical demolition of the doctrine of exact retribution, Eliphaz seems more convinced than ever before and refuses to be shaken from what is obviously a long-held "truth."

### **15:17-19 Listen to me and the words of the ancients**

After all, Eliphaz continues, his doctrines are based on:

- His personal experience ("I have seen" 15:17 see 4:8. This could also be a reference to the revelation that begins in 4:12.);
- The wisdom of the fathers (15:18 - The Bildad approach 8:8); and
- Clear tradition unadulterated by the influence of foreigners (15:19 - perhaps Eliphaz felt Job had been contaminated by contact with foreigners).

### **15:20-24 The life of the wicked**

Eliphaz now provides a vivid description of the misery and terror that haunts a wicked man. In a style not unlike the vision of chapter 4, Eliphaz's grisly picture of a wicked man's conscience is full of foreboding. Eliphaz may lack hard data but he is a brilliant dramatist. To him "the life of the wicked is unceasing torment" (15:20 JB). Not because he is poor or afflicted. No, it is because he fears becoming poor and afflicted. The wicked is terrified that his inevitable day of darkness is at hand.

His constant dread is that "in prosperity (**shalom** - peace) the destroyer (**shadad**) shall come upon him" (15:21). In saying this, Eliphaz is having a nigger at one of Job's clear refutations of his friends' philosophy (12:6). There Job



exclaims, "The tabernacles of robbers (*shadad*) prosper (*shala* - at rest)." Job, while presenting a gloomy scenario, was essentially correct. The wicked can and do prosper. But Eliphaz in a smug play on Job's words reveals that wicked people are inevitably devoured by other wicked people. This could also be another reference to chapter 1 when marauders swooped upon Job's holdings and denuded his prosperity.

"Yes," we can hear Eliphaz sigh, "The wicked cannot escape." He is, as translated by the Jerusalem Bible, "marked down as meat for the vulture" (15:23). This unusual rendition is derived from the Septuagint and supported by the New English Bible. It best fits the flow of thought. The usual "He wandereth abroad ..." is more suited to the time period immediately after the wicked's desolation rather than, as used here, during his prosperity.

All the wicked can do is tremble as he awaits his terrifying destiny.

### **15:25-28 The foolishness of the wicked**

Why is such a destiny inevitable? Because the wicked, in an attitude of insane hostility, has deliberately set himself against *EI* and dared to defy the Almighty (*shaddai*). Surely Job has not done this? In the estimation of Eliphaz he has because Job has not responded positively to the advice of his elderly friend to commit his cause to God (5:8).

Instead Job appears to be defiant (9:22; 13:23). Rather than humbling himself before the Almighty and accepting His chastening (5:17) Job presumes to speak to Him (13:3). Job accused his friends of forsaking the fear of the Almighty (6:14 RSV) but Eliphaz sees Job as the sinner.

The wicked man is crazy. Not only does he defy God, he stupidly runs "stubbornly against Him with his strong embossed shield" (15:26 NKJV). The picture is comical and accurate but a somewhat exaggerated presentation of Job's conduct - if that's what Eliphaz is intending.

Furthermore, Eliphaz continues, the wicked's dreadful destiny is because of his gross self-indulgence (15:27). He also inhabits cities and houses that were appointed to be ruins (15:28).

Verse 28 has a number of interpretations and it can be suggested that the wicked dwelt in houses that ought to have been uninhabited (Delitzsch, JB). Perhaps they were under God's curse (Soncino). Perhaps the mere fact that those who defied God were dwelling in these houses was sufficient to say they should be uninhabited. It was better that their houses be left desolate rather than be abodes of self-indulgent haters of the Almighty.

### **15:29-35 God's judgements against the wicked**

Such a person will not be rich (15:29). How comforting this must have been to the impoverished Job. It is interesting to note just how verbose Eliphaz becomes as his speech draws to its conclusion. After commencing by accusing Job of being a wind-bag, he ends with a host of repetitions and analogies. In verse 29, Eliphaz resorts to waffle as he basically says one thing three different ways.

Yes, the wicked "will not escape from darkness" (15:30 RSV, NIV). Eliphaz effortlessly moves into an extended analogy of the wicked being like a luxuriant growth that is uprooted and quickly withers. He is not adding anything original to the discussion as he simply reiterates the analogy used by Bildad in 8:16-19. In the midst of all his verbiage about herbage Eliphaz darts in a telling blow about Job's children - "the flame shall dry up his branches" (15:30).

After finishing his metaphor-laden references of olives, grapes and palms he strikes out severely against the wicked, and thus by brutal implication against Job, with fearsome accusations of being "soiled with sin" (Strong - AV "hypocrites" - *chaneph* see 8:13; 13:16), given to taking bribes, conceiving mischief (*amal* 4:8) and preparing deceit (15:35). These accusations were not part of Eliphaz's opening speech in which he commends Job for his beneficial work (4:3-4).

Eliphaz has remained untouched by the debate except to dig his position in deeper. He refuses to accept that the wicked can prosper. He cannot escape the conclusion that Job is a gross sinner. He is outraged by Job's refusal to accept the traditional point of view. He is flabbergasted that Job has not shown due deference to his seniority by agreeing with everything Eliphaz has said.

"Who does Job think he is?"

#### 14 CHAPTERS 16, 17 - THE SECOND CYCLE OF SPEECHES - JOB

---

<b>16:1-5</b>	Job reproves his comforters
<b>16:6-17</b>	Despondency - God's treatment of Job
<b>16:18-21</b>	Job's confidence
<b>16:22-17:2</b>	Despondency - Humiliating death awaits
<b>17:3-9</b>	Appeal to God as man does not care
<b>17:10-16</b>	Despondency - His friend's insensitivity as death approaches

Job has the upper hand as far as the debate is concerned. He knows that Eliphaz is repeating himself in a futile attempt to be profound. His reply to Eliphaz is characterised by a direct rebuttal of Eliphaz as he sees no difficulty in maintaining his integrity in the face of Eliphaz's assertions, and despondency as he foresees an ignominious death in the company of mockers.

His language, while indignant, is more controlled, although he lapses into an outburst concerning God that is inappropriate and possibly wrong (16:9-14). Despite this, Job doggedly clings to two facts:

1. He is not guilty of any grave fault; and
2. God can do what He pleases, even though Job doesn't understand why God treats him the way He does.

**16:1-5****Job reproves his comforters**

In 16:2-5 Job hurls back at Eliphaz his taunts of 15:2-6. He strongly contradicts the intent and force of Eliphaz's speech and begins by homing in on one of his final statements. In 15:35 Eliphaz asserted that the wicked conceive mischief (**amal**). "That's it," exclaims Job, "I have heard many such things - these empty platitudes that irritate." We can feel his indignation rising as he bemoans, "Miserable (**amal**) comforters are ye all." Literally he calls them "comforters of trouble." Instead of increasing comfort they increase trouble.

If only they would hold their peace (13:5). He wearily asks, "Will your long-winded speeches never end? What ails you that you keep on arguing?" (16:3 NIV). There must be a limit. He has answered their arguments and if they have nothing of value to add they should keep silent.

How would it be if the roles were reversed? Job addresses this fascinating concept in 16:4. Job could, he declares, do exactly what they are doing. He could overwhelm them with sermons and shake his head at them (JB). Alternatively, he could strengthen them with his mouth (**peh** - see comment 15:6) and the "comfort, solace" (Ges, RSV, NKJV etc) of his lips (**sapa** - see comment 15:6) would relieve their grief.

Eliphaz can babble on about Job being self-condemned by his lips and mouth (15:6), but Job turns the tables by saying if he was Eliphaz he would use his lips and mouth to encourage and build. True, the words of Eliphaz were crafted, even fine speeches (NIV), but they were of no positive value to Job.

**16:6-17****Despondency - God's treatment of Job**

Perhaps Job could stop talking. No, even in silence the pain is unrelieved (16:6). After counterpunching effectively, Job now droops into despondency. Why has God treated him this way? Job is so tired and lonely (16:7). He believes God has worn him out and devastated his entire household. He craves the companionship of his family and friends (19:13-17).

He is a pitiable sight. A disfigured, emaciated little man. A man who is regarded as a witness to God's punishment. A man shunned (16:8), who feels the hostility of God. Eliphaz accused Job with being hostile to God (15:13). Job replies that God is hostile to him (16:9-14).

In verse 9 Job pictures God tearing him in anger. He visualises God as a wild beast gnashing his teeth and fixing his pitiless gaze on the hapless Job. He imagines that God hates (**satam** - "bear a grudge, cherish animosity" BDB) him and is his enemy (**tsar** - "adversary" with reference to "harassment and torment engendered by an enemy" TWOT).

And the treatment he has received at the hand of God has resulted in a corresponding attitude from his fellow men towards him (16:10). They harassed and tormented him. As verse 10 reveals they:

- gaped (**pa'ar**) at him with their mouth;
- smote him reproachfully (**herpa**) on the cheek (possibly figurative language referring to insults - I doubt whether anybody would touch the hideously afflicted Job, let alone strike him); and
- united together against him for a hostile purpose i.e. in a conspiracy (Delitzsch).

Just as Jesus who, because they considered him "smitten of God" (Isa 53:4), was:

- gaped (**pasa** from same root as **pa'ar**) upon (Psa 22:13);
- smitten on the cheek (Luke 22:64);
- a reproach (**herpa**) among his brethren (Psa 69:7, 9); and
- the subject of a conspiracy that led to his death (Matt 26:4; John 11:53).

The types are beautiful to behold but, in this instance, Job's reaction was not that of the Son of God's. Jesus knowingly, willingly and without complaint, accepted the will of God (Matt 26:42). Job, however, switches to a consideration of God, his chief harasser.

God had handed Job over to the ungodly and cast him to the wicked (**rasha** - "criminal" TWOT). **Rasha** is used by Eliphaz in 15:20. Job's retort is simple, "I am not a criminal. Those to whom God has cast me are the criminals." This does not apply exclusively to Job's three friends. The ungodly and the wicked probably refers to the town hoodlums who took great delight in mocking this once great man (30:1-15).

The cruelty of it all. Job feels he has been absolutely pulverised by God. Everything was fine with Job "but he shattered me; he seized me by the neck and crushed me" (16:12). The image is that of a powerful wrestler who pounces on his unsuspecting victim and piledrives him head first into the ground.

Verse 13 introduces another image. God is portrayed as a merciless commandant who positions his archers (see 6:4) around Job to pierce his kidneys (AV "reins") and gall. God's archers would attack the most sensitive parts of the body and the very "seat of the emotions" (Soncino).

The attack is unceasing - "He breaks me with break upon break" (Green), "He wounds me with wound upon wound" (Andersen) or transliterated **paras peres peres**. The terms are used essentially in a military sense and allude to God's punitive activity as well as the malicious, destructive activity of a conquering army breaching the walls of a city. The inference is not just to make a breach in the wall, moreso to destroy the wall (Neh 4:3; Ecc 3:3). Job sees God pounding and pounding and pounding at him. There is no respite. God is determined to destroy him, "bearing down on [him] like a warrior" (16:14 JB).

Job's description of God's attack is savage. He has likened God to a ferocious beast (16:9), a traitor (16:11), a wrestler (16:12), a malevolent leader of a troop of archers (16:13) and a remorseless warrior (16:14). Why is God like this to Job? He hasn't done anything wrong. His prayer is pure. He has not fought back. No wonder Job is despondent.

The vision of 16:15-16 is pitiful. Job is suffering and severely humiliated. He sits draped in sackcloth, the lowliest of garments, his head ("horn" AV - most translators interpret as "brow"), the crown of his body, covered in dust, his face reddened with weeping, and deep shadows, shadows of death, around his eyes. Surely, God must show him compassion. He must, feels Job, because, despite the terrible condition he is in, his hands have been free from violence and his prayer is pure (16:17). He never, as Bildad accused (8:6), claimed overall purity but he always approached God with a pure heart and a clear conscience.

Job's expressions are very similar to those of Isaiah 53:9 - "he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth" - but his submission to his suffering was not without protest (9:17, 10:7) nor was it entirely undeserved. Like his antitype, he was mortal. Unlike his antitype, he was a sinner.

## **16:18-21      Job's confidence**

Job suddenly lifts himself out of his despondency with a short burst of hope. The inference of his appeals to the earth and heaven is that he may survive his ordeal or, at least, his death will not be in vain. His emotions break out as he exclaims, "O earth, cover not thou my blood, and let my cry have no peace" (16:18). Blood that is not covered up cries for vengeance - a concept that begins way back in Genesis 4:10 (see also Isa 26:21 and Ezek 24:6-8). In other words, "I do not want the evidence of my sufferings to be hidden."

Job believes his blood, like Abel's, is that of an innocent man and God will eventually avenge the innocent blood that has been shed. Such a passion seems totally out of context. Job is back on the emotional rollercoaster his suffering has created. He has just finished calling God to task for the wretchedness of his existence, even likening God to a remorseless warrior whose sole intention is Job's destruction, and later moves into a forthright prediction of his imminent death (16:22). This beam of light in verse 18 seems very much out of place.

Furthermore, verse 19 hints at a confidence that builds on the preceding verse. Not only is there the prospect of God avenging Job's innocent blood, Job has a witness in heaven. No ifs or maybes, he has a witness and "he that vouches for me is on high" (RSV). Where is the wrestler trying to break his neck (16:12) or the traitor who turned Job over to his enemies (16:11)? Job has momentarily lifted himself out of his gloom. His friends may scorn him but he has never sought for help from them. His plea has been to heaven. His trust has always been in God (16:20).

Verse 21 is Hebraically difficult. Some interpreters say that Job is crying out for a mediator (Tennant - 9:33), others that Job is appealing direct to God (Styles). I believe Job is appealing direct to God as He is the highest authority. It is an amazing injection of faith as Job approaches the One who has cruelly afflicted him and appeals to Him as the God of justice and mercy. God is Job's friend who can save him as well as being his perceived enemy. Job is fleeing from God to God!

## **16:22-17:2      Despondency - Humiliating death awaits**

But, such conviction is short-lived as he plunges into despondency. His number is coming up. He will soon take the road of no return (16:22). No return? Such is his depression that Job unwittingly endorses the comment of Eliphaz in 15:22 - "[the wicked] does not believe he will return from darkness" (NKJV). He also contradicts his expressed hope of the resurrection (14:13). Job has returned to the nadir of 7:9-10 and 10:10-22.

## Chapter 17

Eliphaz told Job that he loosed his anger (**ruah**) on God with his rash speaking (15:13). Such fire is waning. Job's life essence (**ruah** - AV "breath") is broken. His days are cut short and now the grave awaits him (17:1). What does he have? The company of mockers who only provoke him (17:2).

## **17:3-9      Appeal to God as man does not care**

Again Job stirs himself up to appeal to God. God is the only one who can redeem Job from God's wrath. Job has jumped back to the sentiments of 16:18-21. Nobody else can help him because God has closed their minds to understanding (17:4 NIV). Because God has deprived Job's friends of the ability to understand therefore God "will not

let them triumph" (17:4 NIV). Such a statement borders on the absurd. Job is saying that God has manipulated his friend's comprehension and will punish them as a result. If this comment was meant to sting it definitely found its mark because Bildad, early in his next speech, reacts with irritation (18:3).

Verse 5 is another that evokes a variety of translations. It seems that Job is maintaining his denunciation of his comforters. Of all the variations suggested (Gibson claims the verse is untranslatable), that offered by Delitzsch and supported by Gibson makes the most sense to me:

"He who giveth his friends for spoil,  
The eyes of his children shall languish."

Those who would desert their friends, instead of shielding them, and delivers them up to whomsoever will ultimately suffer in the eyes of his children. Their shame, guilt, suffering, whatever, will be manifest. At least Job's children never witnessed the humiliation of their father. But Job was certain his friend's children would not be spared this indignity.

17:6-9 is much smoother sailing as Job provides further description of his pitiable state before rising to an expression of hope. His extreme illness has:

- Made him a byword among the people;
- Made him an object of contempt as people spit in his face (17:6 NKJV);
- Diminished his eyesight (probably through excessive weeping - Psa 6:6-8);
- Weakened his "whole frame" (**yeshurim** only found here - "members" AV, "limbs" JB, CompB);
- Perplexed upright men who cannot understand why a good man like Job is so afflicted (Is this a poke at his friends who have responded without sympathy nor ongoing recognition of Job's goodness?); and
- Aroused innocent people (e.g. Job) against the prosperity of the godless (Another jab at Eliphaz - "the company of the godless will be barren" 15:34 NIV. Wrong, says Job, they prosper to the displeasure, maybe even envy, of the godly.).

What can Job do? He hangs onto his conviction of being right. He is unmoved as he is convinced he is on the right course. In this short burst of brightness he proclaims, "He that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger" (17:9). This is a noble utterance in the midst of overwhelming gloom. It is another step in Job's education that leads up to his wonderful words in chapter 19.

But it is shortlived as he looks at his friends. Their presence reinforces all Job's negativity. He reverts to despondency.

### **17:10-16      Despondency - His friend's insensitivity as death approaches**

Job throws out a scornful challenge to his friends, "Come on, you can renew the debate but I won't find a wise man among you" (17:10). Anyway, what's the point? In three sharp phrases, Job sums up his condition: "My days have passed, my plans are shattered and so are the desires of my heart" (17:11 NIV). He is revisiting the feelings expressed in 16:16 and 17:7.

He is not helped by his friends. According to them all Job has to do is repent and light will chase away the darkness. They preach day when, to Job, everything is night (17:12). They reverse the truth (Isa 5:20) so what value do they add?

All Job looks forward to is the grave and making his bed in darkness. In a retreat to the pessimism of 9:31, Job declares, "I tell the tomb (*shahat* - AV "corruption" while supported by many versions is discredited by Gesenius and TWOT), 'You are my father', and call the worm (see 7:5 - "My flesh is clothed with worms"), my mother and sister" (17:14 JB). He has accepted his fate as one accepts their relatives no matter how delightful or loathsome they may be!

So then, where is his hope (17:15)? Where is his divine blessing? Where is the strengthening of his hands (17:9)? He predicts they will all go to the grave with him. They will sink with him in the dust (17:16).

Job's rollercoaster ride has stopped and he is back at the bottom. Confronting him is the academic Bildad who is visibly upset by the words of Job.

## 15 CHAPTER 18 - THE SECOND CYCLE OF SPEECHES - BILDAD

---

**18:1-4** Job indignantly reproved for his words

### The Doom of the Wicked

**18:5-6** The light of the wicked extinguished

**18:7-16** His fate is exact retribution for his folly

**18:17-21** The complete extinction of the wicked

Bildad's first speech was an appeal. His second is a rebuke. It is very straightforward and does not require a detailed commentary to understand it. After rebuking Job for, as he regarded it, Job's insulting remarks, he utters a lengthy diatribe on the doom of the wicked.

Bildad is openly angry with Job. His forceful speech is cluttered with vicious references to Job's manifest circumstances. Whereas Eliphaz is not as harsh and inclines more to a consideration of the mental worries of the wicked, Bildad focuses on their outward calamities.

### **18:1-4** Job indignantly reproved for his words

Bildad is incensed by Job's remarks and his short, sharp rebuke of Job is replete with allusions to Job's response to Eliphaz.

He begins with, "How long will ye lay snares for words" (RV, Gibson, Roth mg) and in doing so uses the plural "ye." Job is no longer a unique individual. He is merely part of the multitude of wicked who lay traps with their words to snare the unsuspecting. And how dare Job complain about their long-winded speeches (16:3). Bildad exhorts Job to "be sensible" (NIV) and then they could talk. If only Job would acknowledge their wisdom, and genuinely receive the accepted theology of the time, then they could work through a solution for him.

This is not possible while Job counts them as beasts and regards them as stupid (18:3 NKJV). This was how Bildad interpreted Job's words of 17:4 as only an animal is deprived of understanding by God. Job's comment that upright men are perplexed, not comprehending why Job should be so afflicted (17:8), did not sit well with his friends who thought they had all the answers. Furthermore, Job in attesting the cleanness of his hands (17:9) had, as far as Bildad was concerned, implied that Bildad and his friends were unclean.

"Does Job think we are stupid?" infers Bildad, "We know exactly who his barbs are being hurled at. How dare he state that he cannot find a wise man among us" (17:10).

Job had even suggested that God was tearing at Job in His anger (16:9). "What presumption," Bildad tells him, "You are tearing yourself in your anger." Did Job expect the laws of nature to be reconstructed for him (18:4)? The doctrine of exact retribution is, in Bildad's estimation, precisely that - a law of nature. Should such principles be changed for Job's benefit?

### **The Doom of the Wicked**

The principles are very simple and straightforward. The wicked suffer horribly, the righteous are blessed. As Job did not accept this entrenched, heartfelt tradition, Bildad believes another description of the fate of the wicked is required. Bildad adds layer upon layer as his declared destiny of the wicked incorporates:

- the wicked's light put out (18:5-6);
- losing his natural vigour (18:7);
- being entangled in self-afflicted snares (18:8-10);
- having terrors haunting his life (18:11);
- being ravaged by disease (18:12-13);
- death (18:14-15);
- the desolation of his family (18:16); and
- his name being extinguished forever (18:17-19),
- except as a horrific reminder to others (18:20) of the inevitable fate of the wicked - he who does not know God (18:21).

### **18:5-6            The light of the wicked extinguished**

Bildad's exasperation is palpable as he, in an allusion to a lamp in a tent, flings Job's words back at him, says the same thing ("the wicked's light will be darkened") four different ways as well as reinforcing the words of Eliphaz.

Job had accused his friends of inverting the truth. He claimed they taught light when it was dark (17:12). But Job, according to Bildad, had missed the point. "The light (same word as in 17:12) of the wicked (**rasha**) shall be put out." **Rasha** was used by Job in 16:11 where he alleged that God had turned him over to the wicked. Bildad was not in any way impressed by this comment. How dare Job label Bildad and his friends as wicked when it is obvious that Job is the wicked one.

The flame (AV "spark" - **shabib** - only here) of the wicked's fire no longer glows. This is in direct contrast with God's fire that destroyed Job's sheep and his servants (1:16) and, as presented by Eliphaz, consumes the tents of those who take bribes (15:34). Indeed the light will be dark in the wicked's tents (15:34) and their lamps suspended above them shall be put out. Such a symbol is used in Scripture to refer to the continuance or extinction of the household



(1Kings 11:16, 15:4; 2Kings 8:19). I am sure Job needed no reminding that his household was snuffed out way back in the opening chapter.

### **18:7-16 His fate is exact retribution for his folly**

But it is all Job's fault. Job had blamed God for the fact that "His athletic pace becomes a shuffle" (18:7 Andersen). Job was once full of vigour and energy. Now he shuffles around, horribly afflicted, because of his own schemes.

According to Bildad the wicked are hoist with their own petards. Bildad warms to this theme because in the space of three verses (18:8-10) he catalogues no fewer than six different forms of trap. It is as if Bildad has extracted every synonym from his thesaurus as he sermonises how the wicked are caught in:

1. the net (**reshet**) - 18:8;
2. the snare (**sebaka** - another form of net. **Sebaka** also used of lattice work - 2Kings 1:2) - 18:8;
3. the gin (**pah** - "bird trap" TWOT) - 18:9;
4. the robber (**sammin** - "snare" TWOT, Ges) - 18:9;
5. the snare (**hebel** - "cord, rope" TWOT "noose" RSV, NIV) - 18:10; and
6. the trap (**malkodet** - "a catching instrument" TWOT) - only in 18:10.

Job knew that Bildad was referring to his plight. His clever, almost cheeky, response in 19:6 sees Job using yet another synonym and repeating his view that God is the hunter. Bildad, of course, has no time for such sentiments. He sees the wicked living in terror, his evil conscience plaguing him (confirmation of Eliphaz's words of 15:20-24), as every step could result with his own carefully concealed snares entangling him.

The wicked is alone, exposed to wild beasts. "Calamity is hungry for him, disaster is ready for him when he falls" (18:12 NIV). And one of the distinguishing characteristics of an ensnared wicked person is affliction with a vile disease. Not just any disease, a disgusting skin disease, the "firstborn of death" (18:13). The "firstborn of death" is the most terrifying and horrible of all diseases and surely Job's revolting affliction qualified as such.

He will be torn from the tent in which he trusted (see comments on 4:21 - The tent is probably a reference to his body) and have a meeting with the king of terrors: Death (18:14). His tent will be completely plundered. Death will be absolutely final as brimstone (Gen 19:24; Psa 11:6) will be strewn so that there is not the slightest prospect of recovery (Isa 34:9-10).

So thorough will be the extermination of the wicked that his last state will be devoid of offspring. According to Bildad, God will, in repeating the almost clichéd allegory of the uprooted garden growth (8:18 - also alluded to by Job in 14:9 and Eliphaz in 15:30), ensure the total extinction of the wicked man's family (18:16).

### **18:17-21 The complete extinction of the wicked**

Yes, the wicked reaps what he sows. His terrorised life and humiliating death can only be the inevitable outcomes of his unrestrained evil. Bildad moves to his conclusion with a picture that could not be gloomier nor of any comfort whatsoever to the man Job.

The wicked will suffer the greatest indignities imaginable. His name will be eradicated. Nobody will have any positive regard for him. He will be forgotten in his homeland (18:17). Because of his wickedness he will be isolated from society (18:18). Perhaps, implies Bildad, the wicked will sit in the town rubbish dump with lepers and lunatics. He will be without posterity, "neither son and son's sons" (18:19 RV) and, like Job, he will be driven from his home.

Is there anything to gain from the wicked's desolation? "Yes," opines Bildad, "They provide an example!" "Men of the west are appalled at his fate; men of the east are seized with horror" (18:20 NIV). Shock waves will reverberate throughout the known world. It will be clear who is godless and who is good. It will send out warnings to those who do not wish to serve God (18:21).

Bildad has finished his second speech. The message of hope that concluded his first address (8:20-22) is absent. His mind is made up. Job is the worst of sinners. The evidence of God's punishment is so unmistakably manifest there can be no doubt.

Unfortunately for Bildad, Job does not agree. His conscience is clear and Bildad's sermon has missed its target. Bildad certainly stung Job with his words but he has not altered Job's position that he initially espoused in 1:21 - "The LORD gave, the LORD hath taken away."

---

## 16 CHAPTER 19 - THE SECOND CYCLE OF SPEECHES - JOB

---

<b>19:1-7</b>	Job reacts to his friend's cruelty
<b>19:8-12</b>	God is the Author of Job's troubles
<b>19:13-19</b>	Job is utterly isolated
<b>19:20-22</b>	A plea for pity
<b>19:23-27</b>	Job's confidence in his eventual vindication
<b>19:28-29</b>	Job warns his friends

Bildad's brutal academic assault on Job seems to have pulled Job into a clearer realm of thought. The impact of Bildad's vitriol, instead of launching the expected counter-attack, sees Job almost at peace with himself. Sure, he is despised, isolated and a source of revulsion, but Job is confident that:

- God is responsible for his calamities;
- His friends are wrong; and
- He will be ultimately vindicated.

If anything, his friends should be careful (19:28-29) and show pity as true friends (19:21).

For all its description of Job's rejection by all, including those who were once close to him, Chapter 19 is ordered, clear and strangely beautiful to read. His affirmation of the resurrection (19:25-26) is a moving statement of supreme faith despite extremely adverse conditions.

### **19:1-7            Job reacts to his friend's cruelty**

Job's opening reaction is a response to Bildad's opening remark, "How long till you put an end to words?" (18:2 NKJV). How long will it be before Job stops using words to ensnare the unsuspecting? Job sees it from an entirely different perspective - "How long will ye vex (*yaga*) my soul and break me in pieces with words?" (19:2). It is not Job's words that are out-of-line. It is the words of Bildad and his companions. They vex ("mentally trouble" TWOT). They break in pieces.

How long has this been going on? For Job it seems like an eternity - "ten times ye have reproached me." It is not as if Job has kept count. Rather, he uses an idiom that means "many times" (see Gen 31:7,41; Num 14:22). Yes, many times they had shamed him, and they were not at all ashamed that they had "hardened themselves against him" (AVmg - see also RSV, NKJV, JB etc).

"Anyway," continues Job, "Even if I had gone astray it's none of your business!" (19:4). Job openly resented their interference in his personal dilemma. To Job it was obviously something to be resolved with God. It is not their problem and if anything amiss was responsible then Job will have to pay the penalty. It is, in Job's opinion, not his friend's right to pronounce judgment (19:22). That right rests with God.

They had been quick to accuse Job. According to Bildad, Job had been caught in his own schemes (18:8-10). Job, while using a different word to the six employed by the erudite Bildad, exclaims in verse 6 that God had overthrown (*awat*) him, God had compassed him with His net (*masod* - "the net of the hunter" Ges).

19:6 is crucial in understanding Job's mind. The sentiments expressed are interpreted in a number of ways. TWOT states that, "Since he is convinced of his innocence, he concludes that God has perverted his rights (19:6). There is simply no justice (19:7), he contends." Reichert agrees with this conclusion. I believe that the context leads us to a different interpretation. Yes, he had been sorely afflicted (19:7-12) but he has not to this point in time been pronounced guilty by God. He is addressing the accusations of his companions, who were insistent that Job's woes were self-inflicted and a sure sign of his malevolence. Instead, Job is waiting to hear from God and he is confident that God will declare him innocent. The judgment of Job has been merely delayed. Indeed, interprets Delitzsch, if Job's friends are correct, and Job is suffering on account of flagrant sins that Job considers unproven, then God has wronged him. Perhaps this is what Job is saying.

**Awat** means to "bend, curve, pervert" (Ges) and is used by Bildad in 8:3 - "doth the Almighty pervert justice?" - and is picked up by Elihu in 34:12. The answer to Bildad's question is unmistakably "No!" Job is not accusing God of perverting his rights. He is at pains to point out that his circumstances are from God. As Andersen translates "God has made me crooked." And it is God who will ultimately vindicate Job.

Unfortunately, God does not seem to hear the cry of Job. The justice Job so vociferously seeks is not forthcoming (19:7). Job is confronted by an overwhelming divine silence. It is important to note that Job does not declare God has perpetrated an injustice. He complains that justice is slow to arrive.

### **19:8-12            God is the Author of Job's troubles**

Instead of providing the necessary justice Job is seeking, God has maintained unrelenting pressure on Job. God had:

- Cut off all Job's means of escape (19:8 - see also Lam 3:7; Hos 2:6);
- Enveloped Job in darkness so that he can only grope around uncertainly (19:8);
- Stripped him of his honour (19:9 Green, JB, Delitzsch);
- Removed Job's crown (**atara**) of righteousness (19:9 - see 31:36 for the only other use of **atara** in the Book of Job) as he was openly regarded as a sinner;
- Broken Job down as one would tear down a building with no immediate prospect of being rebuilt (19:10 - "I am gone");
- Uprooted his hope like a tree (19:10 - see also 14:19);
- Kindled His anger against Job (19:11);
- Counted Job as one of His enemies (19:11 - see also 16:9); and
- Assailed Job on every side (19:12).

The final metaphor in this section is an image of stupendous overkill. Job is parked inside his tent (**ohel** - "tabernacle") and on the outside God's armies are constructing vast siege works prior to inflicting the final overthrow. God, by Job's assessment, is being overwhelmingly thorough.

### **19:13-19 Job is utterly isolated**

Job felt the hand of God like no other of his generation. But that did not mean Job failed to consider his human relationships. The support he desperately needed to cope with the travails instigated by God was non-existent. This is not unlike the wholesale desertion of the Lord Jesus Christ when his need for supportive company was at its greatest (Matt 26:56). Christ's afflictions, along with Job's, were in accordance with God's will (Matt 26:39).

Job's catalogue of former acquaintances who now abhorred, avoided, forgot, mocked and turned against him is heart-rending.

Whereas Job's accusations against God may be overstated, because he had not received any confirmation of his perceptions, the rejection of Job by those who were previously close to him was evident and not a figment of Job's paranoia. It was a devastatingly accurate inventory because they would have accepted the orthodox theology of the day that affliction is directly proportional to an individual's sin quotient.

Job's list, essentially an expansion of 16:7, included his brethren (Psa 69:8), acquaintances (those who knew him - 42:11), kinsfolk, sojourning guests who had received his hospitality, his personal attendant, those of his family clan (AV "children ... of mine own body" 19:17), and closest friends (Eliphaz and company, perhaps). Even young children, not old enough to understand, despised him as they mirrored the attitude of their parents.

His wife is also entered on the register of deserters. "My breath is offensive to my wife" (19:17 NKJV).

Job is utterly alone. "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not" (Isa 53:4).

### **19:20-22 A plea for pity**

God has delayed His justice. Job is a total social outcast and, as he continues, he is an emaciated human being. He is a mere bag of bones as there is nothing, it seems, between his flesh and his bones.

Furthermore, Job is "escaped with the skin of his teeth." This unforgettable expression is now part of everyday vernacular and is used as a proverb to connote a narrow escape. Job has not escaped. He is very much a captive to his condition. The phrase has many interpretations with the more popular suggesting that the disease has so ravaged him that even his teeth have fallen out and all that remains are his gums.

Whatever the interpretation, Job, at the very least, expects pity from the viewing public. He cannot comprehend the absence of compassion. Twice he implores "Have pity on me" and he reverts to calling them "my friends." If only they would remember that they are friends (2:11). They came as friends to comfort their friend who had been touched by "the hand of God" (see comments in 1:5 on the use of **Tapeinosis**).

But why would they pity somebody who, by their reckoning, was being punished for sin? Job, in verse 22, in seeking their support, ironically gives them reason to withhold it. If they were acting as God, surely this is a good thing. No, it's not! In matters of final judgment, that right rests with God (Rom 12:19-21). It was their role to comfort and, if any sin could be identified, to assist in Job's rehabilitation.

Their original intentions could well have been those but they are now tracking on a different wavelength. Now they are hounding Job in order to win a theological debate. They had lost sight of larger issues, such as compassion, by becoming absorbed in petty intellectual point-scoring.

### **19:23-27      Job's confidence in his eventual vindication**

"Ah, would that these words of mine were written down,  
inscribed on some monument  
with chisel and engraving tool,  
cut into the rock for ever."

(19:23-24 Jerusalem Bible)

So they have been! Both in the Bible for us to read for our instruction and in the Book of Life (Rev 20:12) for Job's vindication. And the words that are penned in verses 25-27 shine like a halogen lamp in a dark cave.

Job's faith has progressed to such an extent that he can declare that his redeemer lives. Indeed He does as Job's redeemer is none other than Yahweh, the instigator of Job's woes. It matters not what has happened to him, he is certain that Yahweh lives and Yahweh will vindicate him. Yahweh will "rise up" (Soncino) as a witness to Job's integrity and He will do so at the last upon the "dust" (**apar** - Green, Soncino, Delitzsch).

Job, while certain he will die (19:26), is convinced of his own resurrection. He will, despite the utter destruction of his body, see God. Three times he affirms that he will see God and he expects to do so in a very real way, complete with body and eyes. Yes, it will be "in his flesh"; surely not the disease-riddled flesh that cloaked his frame but that of a regenerated and cleansed immortal being. It will not be an act played out in his mind nor will he see God only for God to dismiss him as a stranger. The expression "and not another" more literally translates as "and not as a stranger" (Green, Roth, RVmg). The inference is carried by the Jerusalem Bible with, "These eyes will gaze on him and find him not aloof." "Yes," implies Job, "God will recognise me as a friend."

What a remarkable outburst of sublime faith! He can declare his faith even though his heart sinks and his emotions are spent (19:27). He is completely wrung out. He has been through so much, more than any other of his era, yet his assurance of a redeemer and his anticipation of the resurrection is unabated. If anything, his awareness of both has been sharpened by his experiences.

## **19:28-29      Job warns his friends**

Job, invigorated by his consideration of resurrection and redemption, turns and warns his friends. Why should they be concerned? The answer is simple, "There is a judgment" (19:29). This is not questioned, nor is the doctrine of the resurrection or the concept of the redeemer. All were understood by Job's learned acquaintances. Job has not introduced new concepts, but his application of them in these verses would not have been appreciated by his friends.

As the New International Version renders, "If you say, 'How we will hound him, since the root of the trouble lies in him,' you should fear the sword yourselves." In other words, they were in danger of facing God's anger because they persisted with incorrect assertions (42:7-9). They were being advised, for their sakes, to release their pressure on Job. To be judged as being in error after the vehemence of their speech would be a source of colossal humiliation.

Will Zophar heed the warning of Job or merely heap more scorn on the afflicted one?

### **16.1 Digression - The Redeemer (Heb. "Ga'al")**

---

*Hast Thou Considered My Servant Job* - pages 72-75

Brother Klaus Papowski

Primary Hebrew Meaning

"to redeem from difficulty or danger"

- There is usually an emphasis in **ga'al** on the redemption being the privilege or duty of a near relative.
- Refers to the re-purchase of a field which was sold in time of need (Lev 25:25), or the freeing of an Israelite slave who sold himself in time of poverty (Lev 25:48).
- Such purchase of, and restitution, was the duty of the next of kin.
- As kinsman he had the right to redeem anything which had been wrongfully acquired (Num 5:8).
- As the avenger of blood (near-kinsman of one slain) he had the right and duty to pursue the murderer and exact vengeance (cp. Num 35:12-27; Deut 19:6; Josh 20:3).
- As the vindicator he had the duty to vindicate violated rights (Ruth 4:1,6,8).
- **Ga'al**, therefore, conveyed the ideas of "Judgement" and "Mercy".
- The office of the Redeemer was in existence in the time of Job, prior to the Law of Moses.
- Pre-eminently, as the redeemer of His people, God was the "**Ga'al**" (Exod 6:6; Isa 43:1)
- Job believed that his innocence gave him a right to be vindicated, and since there was no kinsman prepared to stand on his behalf, God would reveal Himself as Job's Vindicator (Job 19:25)
- Job's Redeemer is Yahweh (Isa 43:14; 49:7; 54:5). He, therefore, was correct when he said that his "Redeemer liveth".
- Yahweh has redeemed through His servant, the Lord Jesus Christ (Isa 49:6), and to that end he was exalted "to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins" (Acts 5:31).
- In Christ, "God was manifest in the flesh" (1Tim 3:16), and through him became Redeemer to both Jews and Gentiles.

- Therefore, Job could speak of his Redeemer (Yahweh) being revealed in "the latter day upon the earth". He will be revealed in the person of His son.
- As the "near-kinsman", the redeemer came to the aid of any member of the family who fell into trouble.
- Yahweh could only be described as a "Redeemer" ("Near-kinsman") to fallen man, by revealing Himself in one of the race. This He did in the Lord Jesus Christ (John 1:14; 2Cor 5:19; 1Tim 3:16).
- Job, therefore, could describe his Redeemer as then living, and yet to be manifest in the earth in the latter day. The former refers to Yahweh; the latter to His manifestation in Christ.

## 17 CHAPTER 20 - THE SECOND CYCLE OF SPEECHES - ZOPHAR

---

<b>20:1-5</b>	I am insulted and exasperated
<b>20:6-11</b>	The prosperity of the wicked is short-lived
<b>20:12-19</b>	Sin and its retribution
<b>20:20-22</b>	The wicked cannot escape from his inevitable punishment
<b>20:23-28</b>	God's vengeance on the sinner
<b>20:29</b>	Zophar's conclusion - his philosophy summarised

Zophar's response is a rambling stream of indignation. He is indignant that Job is warning them. He is indignant that Job is unmoved and refuses to accept their wisdom. He is indignant that Job fails to appreciate what they are doing for him. So his indignation bubbles over in a speech where he virtually loses self-control. He is more harsh than before, adding rudeness and coarseness to his earlier hostility. His denunciation of Job is but barely concealed. The gist of his speech that the prosperity of the wicked is short-lived and God will catch up with them is basically correct. It is, however, like most of the expressions uttered against Job, misapplied to Job's circumstances.

### **20:1-5 I am insulted and exasperated**

Job's closing warning (19:28-29) motivates Zophar to reply, quickly and sharply. The whole of Job's speech has riled Zophar. He picks up on Job's early remark, "Ten times have ye reproached (*kalam*) me" (19:3), and retorts with, "I have heard the check of my reproach (*kelimma* from *kalam*)" (20:3). How dare Job say he has been put to shame by his friends when it is they who have been embarrassed by Job - "the reproof which putteth me to shame" (RV). His understanding inspires him to reply.

What is Zophar's understanding? Verses 4-5 neatly summarise it. Everybody knows, ever since Adam was a boy, that the joy of the wicked is brief. That's all there is to it. But in case Job has missed the point, Zophar launches into a lengthy editorial.

### **20:6-11 The prosperity of the wicked is short-lived**

Even though the wicked man can reach the greatest heights and his "pride" (TWOT, NIV) mount up to the heavens, he shall perish forever like, to use Zophar's crude analogy, "his own dung" (20:7). And possibly picking up on Job's declaration of being forgotten by his familiar friends (19:14), people who once knew him will say, "Where is he?" Sort of like, "Whatever happened to that once great man Job?" Zophar's answer; "He perished because of his wickedness. He is gone like a dream, like a vision of the night."

Zophar then (20:9) cruelly reworks Job's soliloquy of 7:8-10, which was spoken when Job had plummeted to a major low, and applies it to the humiliated hypocrite.

Retribution will be swift, dramatic and premature. Even his children (what children?) will be forced to seek the favour of the poor and anything extracted by the wicked, while in his prosperity, will have to be restored (20:10).

The final picture in this section is of a man dead, cut down in his prime. "With the vigour of his youth his bones were filled, now it lies in the dust with him" (20:11 JB).

## **20:12-19 Sin and its retribution**

Having described the fate of the wicked, Zophar now proceeds to demonstrate that it is due to his sin. It brings its own punishment. There may be some foundation of fact in what Zophar is saying. If judgment is slow it could be because God is using the person's own wickedness to bring about his downfall. Or to mangle a proverb, "Time wounds all heals." Sooner or later the very pleasure of the self-indulgent will defeat him.

To illustrate this, Zophar uses a vivid, albeit coarse, image of the epicure who delights in the taste of his wickedness. He keeps it in his mouth as long as he can to savour its sweetness. "He is loath to let it go" (20:13 RSV). But when he swallows it, it converts to bitter and deadly poison; the toxic venom of a snake. The initial taste is lost and reality strikes as his body rejects the ill-gotten wealth he has ingested - "he shall vomit them up again" (20:15). Furthermore, rather than being self-induced, God makes him disgorge it. God turns the sweet food into poison in the victim's stomach.

How God does this is not explained by Zophar. Such technicalities only detract from the persistent image of a disgusting, public humiliation of a once-wealthy hypocrite.

Zophar pushes on with more viperine allusions (20:16). Zophar is vigorously summoning up the most despised of deadly creatures (Deut 32:33; Psa 140:3) to mankind to describe the conduct and destiny of wicked men. His wickedness will be changed to snake poison and it will be his executioner.

The hypocrite will not see the rivers (*pelagga* - "canals" TWOT, Soncino), floods and brooks of honey and butter (20:17). As the Jerusalem Bible paraphrases, "Streams that run with oil, or the torrents of honey and cream." The plenty he once enjoyed will dry up. He will derive no pleasure from his ill-gotten gains and he will be forced to restore what he had inappropriately appropriated (20:18).

Why? Because he had oppressed and forsaken the poor. He has taken a house to which he was not entitled. Such statements could not apply to Job. After all Eliphaz had acknowledged Job's charity way back in 4:3-4. Job also knew, and vehemently protested, that such charges could not be true of himself (29:12-17).

But such is the indignant and cynical bitterness of Zophar that all Job's previous positive attributes are now interpreted by Zophar as masquerade; an act that merely concealed an evil man, with evil intentions, whose sweet food has been turned into poison by the Almighty Himself.



## 20:20-22      **The wicked cannot escape from his inevitable punishment**

The section heading virtually says all that needs to be reported on these three verses. It is more of the same except it is complicated by the various interpretations forwarded by different commentators and translators.

What Zophar appears to be asserting is that the wicked, whose greed was once insatiable, can no longer be saved by what he has hoarded. Because nothing escaped his avarice, his prosperity will be terminated. His life will be characterised by distress (Ges - AV "strait" 20:22) and misery (TWOT - AV "wicked" 20:22 - **amal**. See comments 4:8, 16:2).

## 20:23-28      **God's vengeance on the sinner**

As Zophar marches to his conclusion he winds himself up, rattling off one graphic image after another. His message is simple; "God targets the wicked and He doesn't miss. God's judgment of the wicked is final and gruesome."

Verse 23      When the wicked is filled God will loose all His wrath on him, hurling a hail of arrows against his flesh (Psa 11:6).

Verse 24      No use running from iron weapons because the bow of bronze will shoot him through (see Amos 5:19). The word for "strike him through" (**halap**) is also used of Jael's handiwork on Sisera in Judges 5:26.

Verse 25      The wicked is severely wounded by an arrow that has thudded into him and emerged on the other side of his body ("It teareth, then cometh forth out of his body" Delitzsch, see also JB). This shaft of "lightning" (Green, "gleaming point" NIV) pierces his liver. He cannot escape. "Terrors are upon him."

Verse 26      All that is dark (**chosek** 10:21 - related to death) lies in ambush for him and a fire prepared by God (1:16; 15:34; Amos 7:4) will consume everything he has.

Verse 27      Heaven will declare the iniquity of the sinner and the earth will rise up against him. Is this a response to Job's appeal to heaven and earth in 16:18-19 or just Zophar dragging in yet another cliché to impress his point?

Verse 28      A raging flood will sweep away his possessions. They will be carried away in the Day of God's Wrath.

The vexatious Zophar has painted a gaudy yet dismal picture. Gaudy in that it is full of lurid colour - bronze arrows tipped in blood, fire, turbulent floods. Dismal in that everything relates to death.

Yet a number of the images are accurate portrayals, supported by Scripture, of what God will do to the wicked. Can such language be applied to Job? As a judgment against sin-prone mortality, yes. In the context of Job and his circumstances, no.

## **20:29            Zophar's conclusion - his philosophy summarised**

Zophar, having finished his amazing rave against the wicked (and, by virtually unconcealed implication, Job), pauses, makes an expansive gesture and declares, "Such is the fate God allots the wicked, such his inheritance assigned by God" (JB).

That's all there is to it. There is nothing more to say, and Zophar says nothing more. He does not, unlike Eliphaz and Bildad, make a third speech. While some, notably the Jerusalem Bible, unfortunately conjure up a third speech, Bildad's anaemic final effort (Chapter 25) betrays that the friends are running out of things to say. Zophar can add nothing more. He has exhausted his supply of vitriol, insults and bulldozing forcefulness and retires from the debate. Besides, as far as he is concerned, he has said what had to be said, he knows he is right and that Job is reaping what Job has sown.

Zophar's retirement could also have been caused by Job's demolition of his reasoning in the chapter that follows.

## **18    CHAPTER 21 - THE SECOND CYCLE OF SPEECHES - JOB**

---

<b>21:1-6</b>	Job appeals for a fair hearing
<b>21:7-13</b>	The prosperity of the wicked
<b>21:14-16</b>	The impiety of the wicked
<b>21:17-18</b>	The apparent immunity of the wicked
<b>21:19-21</b>	Why should their children suffer?
<b>21:22-26</b>	Some suffer, others do not
<b>21:27-28</b>	I know what you think of me
<b>21:29-33</b>	Broaden your experience and get the facts
<b>21:34</b>	Job's conclusion

At the end of Chapter 19 Job had reached a sure conviction as he was fortified by a stirring consideration of God's redemptive power and Job's anticipated resurrection. Zophar's blunderbuss of verbiage had made no impact. No dent was made in Job's faith. For once, Job, unshackled by the emotional vacillations that characterised his previous speeches, calmly confronts his friends and decisively dismembers their reasoning. In particular, Zophar's outburst receives a thorough going over. It is little wonder that Zophar retreats into a sullen and defeated silence.

This is an unusual speech. There are no soliloquies and no appeals to God. It is a chapter entirely given over to counter-attack. And it is a counter-attack laden with devastating logic and factual observations.

The only question that remains unanswered is, "Why did God bring such sufferings on a righteous man?"

## **21:1-6            Job appeals for a fair hearing**

Job directly appeals to his friends to listen to what he says and adds the rejoinder, "And let this be your consolation (*tanhum*)."  
It seems somewhat arrogant, as if Job is saying, "I will comfort you with what I have to say, whereas you have failed in your intention to comfort me (2:11)." Eliphaz considered his words to be the "consolations (*tanhum*) of God" (15:11) but to Job they were nothing of the sort (16:2). However, I believe that Job is declaring, in a non-belligerent way, that if they listened carefully to what he had to say then they would be of comfort to him (21:2 JB). He wanted to be heard. After that they can, if they so choose, mock him. "You should at least," implores Job, "Give me a fair hearing."

Job has no complaint against man. There is no reason for his friends to become so agitated. But really, suggests Job, it is not difficult to comprehend why Job may appear to be impatient. It is not that the recent events in Job's life have been distinguished by bliss and tranquillity. A little empathy might make a significant contribution in helping to console the perplexed Job.

"Just look at me and be dumbfounded. Listen to what I have to say and you will be awe-struck into silence." The words soon to be uttered by Job would be so confronting, so challenging, that they would be stunned; unable to answer. Just the thought of what was to follow - the anomaly of the prosperity of the wicked - appals Job and fills him with dismay (21:6).

## **21:7-13            The prosperity of the wicked**

Every verse in this section contains a direct assault on the assumptions of Zophar and his fellow travellers. While Job is not pursuing the reason for his own suffering, he is insistent that the wicked can prosper. This observable fact is confusing to him. Job defeats their logic but in doing so is left with the conundrum of determining what is right. They were wrong yet it also seemed unfair that he should be suffering to the degree he is.

Job has a soulmate in Jeremiah whose complaint in Jeremiah 12:1-3 ("Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper?") could well be drawn from this portion of Scripture.

Verse 7        The wicked do get old. They are not cut down in their prime as asserted by Zophar (20:11) and Bildad (8:12).

Verse 8        The children of the wicked prosper, unlike the children in Zophar's (20:10) and Bildad's (18:19) portrayals. The mournful contrast with Job's children is obvious (1:19).

Verse 9        The homes of the wicked are safe. They live without fear. Job is addressing Zophar's conclusion of 20:28. The facts also do not bear out their claim that God afflicts the wicked (Eliphaz in 15:20, Bildad in 18:14 and Zophar in 20:15,23). But, for some undisclosed reason, the "rod of God" has struck Job (9:34).

Verse 10       Eliphaz was certain that the wicked's substance would not continue (15:29) and this is reinforced by Zophar (20:8). "Wrong," contradicts Job, "You can see that the cattle of the wicked multiply." In what may be a case of hyperbole, there are no reproductive failures or miscarriages among the wicked's

livestock.

- Verse 11 Job revisits the aspect of the children of the wicked. This was clearly an issue of some poignancy to Job. He stresses that the children are like a flock (an expression of joy and divine blessing - Psa 107:41). You can see them dancing. This is not the picture perched on the easels of Zophar (20:10) and Bildad (18:19). As far as Eliphaz is concerned, the wicked conceive trouble and give birth to evil (15:35 NIV).
- Verse 12 The wicked continually enjoy the sound of music but, according to Zophar, they have but a short snapshot of joy (20:6-7). Eliphaz affirms that the music the wicked is forced to listen to is made up of "terrifying sounds" (15:21 NIV). Job sees no evidence of this.
- Verse 13 The wicked have a prosperous life and "in a moment" (i.e. without profound suffering - "in peace" NIV, JB, RSV) they go to the grave. This does not tally with the miserable portraits of the wicked in their destitution as created by Zophar (20:20-22) and Eliphaz (15:27-28).

### **21:14-16      The impiety of the wicked**

Despite this prosperity, the wicked have no regard whatsoever for Almighty God (Psa 10:4). They tell God to "Go away" (JB) as they prefer their own methods and their own learning (Psa 73:8-11; Prov 1:7,22,29). They see no reason to serve Him (Prov 30:9; Hos 13:6) and as far as the reputed efficacy of prayer, "It doesn't work for me."

Reichert calls this the "slot-machine" approach to religion. Because they cannot observe any material profit from their spiritual investment, they consider faith a waste of effort (Mal 3:14) and make no further contributions.

Verse 16 is difficult to understand and variations proliferate among the translations and commentaries. Versions faithful to the literal (e.g. NIV, NKJV) are quite unclear and not consistent with the context. The Revised Standard Version (supported by the generously paraphrased Jerusalem Bible) reads, "Behold, is not their prosperity in their hand?" The Revised Version marginal rendering also assists with, "Ye say, Lo, their prosperity is not in their hand." Therefore, whether Job is saying that the wicked hold their fortune in their hand or is saying that his friends are wrong for suggesting otherwise, Job wants nothing to do with their counsel.

Perhaps Job is attempting to address the dramatic assertions of Bildad that the wicked (by implication, Job) were ensnared by their own counsel (18:7). No, claims Job, the counsel of the wicked is not his counsel. Eliphaz is also quick to make an identical profession of attitude in 22:18.

### **21:17-18      The apparent immunity of the wicked**

For exact retribution to be empirically valid the wicked must not prosper. Job says they do. Zophar's retort was, "Not for long!" (20:5). Bildad was also certain that, "The light shall be dark in his tabernacle, and his candle shall be put out with him" (18:6).

But Job begs to differ. It can be readily observed that exact retribution is false. Job, following the popular (JB, Soncino, RSV, NIV etc) and sensible Revised Version rendition, interrogates his friends,

"How is it that the lamp of the wicked is put out?  
That their calamity cometh upon them?  
That God distributeth sorrows in his anger?  
That they are as stubble before the wind,  
And as chaff that the storm carrieth away?"

Where is the evidence? Job is also questioning another of Bildad's conclusions that emerged in Bildad's burst of eloquence in 18:10 - "The snare" (*hebel*) is laid for the wicked. "Show me," says Job, "Where God distributes sorrows (*hebel*) in His anger."

The theory of exact retribution may appear sound, but its proof is non-existent.

### **21:19-21      Why should their children suffer?**

Their response to such impertinence would be that if the wicked do not receive exact retribution in their lifetime then their children will on behalf of their ancestor. Job, in anticipating such a comment, tears it apart.

Most scholars state that verse 19 should be introduced by "You say" (RV, JB, NKJV etc). Furthermore, the friends of Job had made such statements in 5:4, 18:19 and 20:10. Job discounts such a possibility. It is a monstrously unjust suggestion that God would punish the innocent children of the perpetrator.

The wicked bear the punishment themselves. They are, along with everybody else, held accountable for their own sins. In declaring this, Job is affirming a very simple, consistent and robust divine principle - God "will render to every man according to his own deeds" (Rom 2:6; Psa 62:12; 2Cor 5:10; Rev 20:12).

And what's the point, Job continues, if the punishment is administered after the perpetrator of the sin has died? The perpetrator won't feel a thing! What do they care? What sort of punishment is that (21:21)?

### **21:22-26      Some suffer, others do not**

In this section, Job makes the obvious conclusion - some people suffer, others don't. Job has not been saying that the good always suffer and the wicked are always at ease. Such generalisations make less sense than those promoted by his friends - the righteous always prosper and the wicked always fail. Life is not that simple. To squeeze the nuances of life into such a straitjacket is to set the rules by which God is required to operate.

We have no right nor capacity to instruct God, who "judgeth those on high" (21:22) This could be a reference to angels, to men of renown or to both. God is above all and knows all. He especially knows what is best for humanity.

Job proceeds to provide the most straightforward teaching he can. It is teaching that is not only correct, it can be observed. It is not some scientific or philosophical hypothesis. It is a blinding glimpse of the obvious.

One man, he says, dies in the fullness of his strength, in all happiness and ease. His life is one of plenty (21:24 - "breasts" better translated as "milk pails." The AV rendition is a physical impossibility). Another man dies after an unhappy wretched existence. His life is distinguished by its bitterness. People are not all treated the same. People are treated differently for no apparent reason and while Job acknowledges this fact he does not pretend to understand it (3:20).

The only consistent place is the grave. In death there is no discrimination, no hierarchy. Everybody is alike. They will all be eaten by worms (21:26). The difference is that Job saw beyond the worms (19:26).

### **21:27-28 I know what you think of me**

But all along Job knew that his words would not alter his friends' viewpoint. He knew what they were thinking and that their preference was for a simplistic line of thought which could not withstand an application of the most elementary critique. Their devices (**mahashaba** - "plots" Green) were derived from a "desire to oppress" (Ges) Job. "Wrongfully imagine" (**hamas**) is a strong word meaning "do violence to, treat violently" (TWOT). It is also noteworthy that the only other use of **mahashaba** in the Book of Job is in 5:12 where Eliphaz contends, "(God) disappointeth the devices (**mahashaba**) of the crafty." If anybody was guilty of devices it was Eliphaz and his companions. Job knew their devices and was confident that God would defeat them when He vindicated Job. Job foresaw that 5:12 would be a self-fulfilling prophecy for Eliphaz.

Although they have rarely come out into the open, it is clear, opines Job, what his friends were thinking. After all, hadn't they said, "What has become of the great lord's house ... where is the tent of the wicked" (21:28 JB). Job may be overstating their actual words but the intent of Bildad in 8:22, Eliphaz in 15:34 and Zophar in 20:26 is impossible to avoid.

### **21:29-33 Broaden your experience and get the facts**

Job realising that they do not wish to listen to him (a man obviously, by their reckoning, sorely cursed by God) so he directs them to recall conversations they have had with people who have travelled. Perhaps there were conversations they had shared with Job in better times. Zophar had appealed to general knowledge (20:4) but Job crushes this with, "You obviously haven't been around much," or the more likely, "You haven't bothered to listen to those who have been around much."

The experience of travellers does not confirm their philosophy. Rather, "The evil man is spared from the day of calamity ... he is delivered from the day of wrath" (21:30 NIV). It should be noted that the "day of wrath (**ebra**)" here is not the "day of wrath (**ap**)" alluded to by Zophar in 20:28. **Ap**, in the environs of 20:28, is God's anger against sinners (e.g. Num 12:9). **Ebra** in 21:30 refers to the cruel and merciless conduct of a man against his brother (Amos 1:11). Such conduct is usually motivated by pride.

Have a look at the wicked, especially those infamous, powerful and evil despots. Who is going to openly rebuke them? Who is going to pay them back for the misery they have caused? "Nobody!" infers Job. The public shut their eyes to their crimes. The public, fearful of the repercussions for being defiant, flatter these despicable potentates. Instead of an ignominious death, so prophesied by Zophar (20:27), "he is borne to the grave, and watch is kept over his tomb

(*gadish*)" (21:32 Soncino). *Gadish* occurs nowhere else in Scripture in the sense of a tomb. It normally designates "a heap of sheaves in the field" (Ges - see 5:26). It is suggested by Reichert that, in this context, it refers to a mausoleum or an arched room, whereas Delitzsch, in keeping with the usual meaning, explains it as the eminent grave, so favoured by the wealthy and powerful, heaped high in the valley.

Both interpretations are endorsed by the following verses. In death he is treated with the utmost of respect. His funeral is a grand event, with a prominent tomb and a huge procession of mourners. It is no wonder that others are inspired to follow the example of the wicked.

These concluding thoughts do not necessarily detract from Job's observations in 21:26 although it may appear that way. It is true that some of the most evil of people are honoured in death. One only has to examine twentieth-century history to confirm this. Mao Zedong was responsible for unleashing the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution that slaughtered thousands of his Chinese countrymen yet he is venerated decades after his death in 1976. Kim Il Sung's legacy is a decimated North Korean economy yet his death was the scene of overwhelming national mourning that is still maintained in one of the few nations hanging onto Communism. Under the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, who died in 1989, Iran endured political instability, economic hardship, and a protracted, debilitating war with Iraq (estimated 1,000,000 dead and 1,700,000 wounded). Remarkably, he is still regarded as a national hero in Iran. Even Adolf Hitler, easily one of the most evil people to ever exist, has his modern-day supporters. It is almost as if notoriety is preferred to non-entity.

But as Ecclesiastes 12:5 reminds us, "Man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets." It matters not how famous one may be. In death he is the same as the crippled beggar who, frozen by an unrelenting winter night, breathes his last. 21:26 still holds, but the short-sighted fail to see past the lavish wake afforded the evil tyrant.

#### **21:34            Job's conclusion**

As for Job, the comfort (*nacham* - see 2:11) of his friends is vapour (*hebel* "vanity" throughout Ecclesiastes - same pronunciation but a different word to *hebel* in 21:17). It is a massive overdose of emptiness; completely worthless. Worse than that, their answers were dominated by "treachery" (*ma'al* - Green, CompB). Their "comfort" was driven by malice.

On that note, Job concludes the second cycle of speeches.

### 19 THE THIRD CYCLE OF SPEECHES

---

#### **Introduction**

The debate reached its pinnacle in the second cycle. The first cycle was characterised by generalities, much like verbal shadow boxing. The second cycle sees attempted solid body blows from the friends deftly sidestepped by Job and answered with his clean, crisp counter-punches. In the third cycle, the fight in the friends has evaporated.

Eliphaz cannot comprehend the persistence of Job. Surely Job would be staggering, weary from a philosophy that rejected the concept of a good man suffering. Tradition and the theology of the day had to prevail. Yet remarkably, Job was invigorated, firing out his combinations with an energy that was absent at the outset.

Bildad stammers out a lethargic, nondescript challenge that peters out in six verses while Zophar wisely decides that discretion is the better part of valour and refrains from entering the battle a third time. His earlier fearful beating was sufficient to dissuade any further heroics on his part.

Job reigns supreme. His foes now vanquished, he has the arena to himself so he utters a series of lengthy monologues. He has won the battle but he has not won the war. Nor will he by his own power.

## 20 CHAPTER 22 - THE THIRD CYCLE OF SPEECHES - ELIPHAZ

---

- 22:1-5** God is judging Job's wickedness
- 22:6-11** A description of Job's wickedness
- 22:12-20** Warning against arrogance before God
- 22:21-30** Final appeal - make your peace with God
- 22:1-5** God is judging Job's wickedness

It is all too much for Eliphaz. He starts his final assault with five verses of questions and these questions, while betraying his frustration, declare his limited thinking.

Can man be profitable unto God? The answer, as implied, is "No." Man's conduct does not affect God in a way that He needs it. The person who suffers or gains from his conduct is the man himself. Does God derive pleasure from a man, such as Job claims to be, who is righteous? The implied answer is "No" but the correct answer is "Yes." Eliphaz has placed God in a box of Eliphaz's making. God definitely took pleasure in the righteousness of Job (1:8) and there is rejoicing in heaven when a sinner repents (Luke 15:7). There are also powerful verses that declare that God has no delight in certain people (Jer 22:28; Hos 8:8; Mal 1:10). Therefore, by inference, there are people in which God derives pleasure (Isa 66:2).

"Is it for your piety that he rebukes you?" (22:4 NIV). Would God afflict a righteous man? Indeed He would and He does. Job surely wouldn't be suffering because of his fear of God? He is. However, that did not mean, as Eliphaz is saying, God cares little for human virtue.

Such a harsh, inflexible point of view leads to no other conclusion except, "Is not thy wickedness great? and thine iniquities infinite?" (22:5).

### **22:6-11 A description of Job's wickedness**

According to Eliphaz, Job's sins were infinite. They were endless. One could imagine Job's perplexed reaction to this astonishing twist added by Eliphaz. These are the words of a desperate man who wishes to scramble victory in the face of overwhelming defeat. He will prove that Job is a continual sinner even though he seemed incapable of providing examples in his previous two speeches, especially after Job had challenged them to do so (13:23). Now the examples, albeit general and lacking specifics, flow from the imagination of Eliphaz. According to Eliphaz, Job had:



- Exploited the poor (22:6);
- Ignored those in desperate need of food and water (22:7);
- Dispossessed his poorer neighbours of their land (22:8); and
- Neglected the fatherless and the widow (22:9).

There is absolutely no evidence to support these accusations. Job was sorely wounded by these words and vigorously protests his innocence in chapters 29 and 31. But Eliphaz is convinced. Job had done all this and that is why he suffers, and why he fails to comprehend what has happened to him. Not only was Job a gross sinner, he was blind to his hideous failings.

## **22:12-20      Warning against arrogance before God**

As well as being blind to his wickedness, Job, according to Eliphaz's next outburst, does not appreciate the greatness of God. Job is like those of Psalm 94:7 who say, "The LORD shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it." Eliphaz indignantly exclaims, "You said, 'What does God know? Can he peer through the shadowed darkness?'" (22:13 JB).

Job never said this, nor is there any semblance of a hint in this direction. Eliphaz conjures up an impious and irreverent Job who does not adequately regard God and is like those who told God to "Depart from us" (22:17). Perhaps Eliphaz is overreacting to Job's assertion that God cannot be taught knowledge (21:16). But Job is not deriding God. He is exulting Him as He who "judgeth those that are high." God cannot be taught what He already knows. Eliphaz in clutching at straws is perverting Job's position.

Eliphaz is incensed that Job could suggest that the wicked may well prosper despite their impiety (21:14-16) but his attempt to destroy this suggestion borders on the unintelligible. One thing is for sure, Eliphaz is convinced that he is not one of the wicked and he cites Job's words of 21:16 (22:18). Furthermore, these wicked men will inevitably meet with ruin, much to the amusement of the righteous. Such is the lot of the arrogant who tell God to go away.

## **22:21-30      Final appeal - make your peace with God**

There is no point in continuing. Eliphaz has exhausted the depth of his argument. He has accused Job of unsubstantiated evil behaviour and attributed words to him that no record affirms Job uttered. All that is left for Eliphaz to do is to give Job some words of advice. After all, he is Job's friend and he genuinely desires to see Job's glory days return. Despite his dogmatic adherence to a flawed philosophy, Eliphaz is a good man. His outbursts in this speech should be considered as aberrations. They cannot be condoned but they should not be considered to be representative of Eliphaz's normal mode of speech. He is not a malicious person but his frustration had obviously boiled over.

It seems that he now takes a deep breath and calms himself down. This is the last time he will speak to the afflicted Job so he strives to encourage and help his friend. All Job has to do is make his peace with God, listen to what God has to say and keep God's Word in his heart (22:20-21). There is absolutely nothing wrong with this advice. The fault lies not in the advice but in its courier. Eliphaz believed that he spoke God's Word and if Job humbled himself Job would be lifted up (22:23).

Verses 24 and 25 present as a puzzle especially as they are translated in the Authorised Version. The Revised Standard Version is probably closer to the mark with:

"If you lay gold in the dust,  
and gold of Ophir among the stones of the torrent bed,  
and if the Almighty is your gold,  
and your precious silver,  
then you will delight yourself in the Almighty,  
and lift up your face to God."

(22:24-26 RSV - see also JB, NIV)

There is no denying the lilting beauty and soothing symmetry of these words. If Job made God as his gold and silver and turned his total focus towards God then Job will find pleasure in God. Job will be able to lift his face rather than cower in shame. Such advice holds true in any age. It is hard to fathom its proximity to the harsh accusations thrust so crudely at Job just a few sentences earlier. Perhaps Eliphaz in noting Job's dismay at his earlier remarks decided to conclude with these palliative utterances in order to mollify Job's hurt.

Eliphaz continues by describing how this humility and devotion to God will bring Job into a special intimacy with the Almighty. God will hear his prayers. Job will be animated to perform his vows. God will shine a light on Job's path. It is, to say the least, an idyllic picture, as well as being ironical because it was due to Job's relationship with God that Eliphaz was not dealt with "after his folly" (42:8).

He concludes his speaking with a dose of conventional wisdom from his manufactured religion. The original is awkward but the message, simply put, is "God abases the proud and saves the innocent" (see RSV, JB - this is also the gist of the more literal variation favoured by NIV, NKJV, Delitzsch etc). If Eliphaz had not misjudged Job (22:5), this proclamation of forgiveness for the repentant would have been among the brightest of the words uttered by the friends. There is intrinsic truth in what was said. The only problem was that the words did not adapt to Job's situation. Eliphaz's formulated approach, besides being based on a simplistic and friable foundation, was confounded by the unique circumstances of Job's case. Job had prevented the doctrine of exact retribution from advancing beyond the status of a theory. It could not be empirically validated.

The words of Eliphaz are ended.

## 21 CHAPTERS 23, 24 - THE THIRD CYCLE OF SPEECHES - JOB

---

### **Job's Response to Eliphaz's Appeal**

**23:1-7** If only I could find God  
**23:8-9** But I cannot find Him  
**23:10-12** If I could, I would gain a favourable outcome  
**23:13-24:1** God has a purpose but Job is confounded

### **Job's Appeal to Observation - Iniquities in Others Go Unpunished**

<b>24:2-4</b>	The way of the tyrant
<b>24:5-8</b>	The plight of the poor
<b>24:9-12</b>	The exploitation of the poor by the tyrant
<b>24:13-17</b>	Sinners who work in darkness
<b>24:18-20</b>	You say, "The wicked are punished"
<b>24:21-25</b>	Reality disproves your theory

The closing appeal of Eliphaz has clarified Job's thinking and Job's response begins superbly. He would want nothing more than to be at peace with God. He is not at all reluctant to come to terms with God. But it is far more difficult than Eliphaz would intimate. God is incredibly difficult to access and therefore, in the case of Job, difficult to comprehend.

However, when we reach 24:2 we begin to encounter all sorts of problems. It is from here, until Elihu makes his entrance, that commentators struggle to come to grips with the text, especially in their overall appreciation of the character of Job. The solutions on offer are many and varied. Some sections are attributed to Bildad, a third speech of Zophar is conjured out of Job's words, the scribes are blamed for inserting the most troublesome verses, whole sections are shuffled into a different sequence, and some commentators toss their pens down, defeated by the complexities that they feel should be unravelled.

The Jerusalem Bible, arguably the best translation for extracting sense from the original, overconfidently offends in reordering the text and attributing slabs of Job's words to other speakers. This unfortunate dogmatism reflects poorly on the original text and is not supported by the majority of other versions and commentators. The solution suggested by the Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible merely rescrambles what it claims to be "thoroughly scrambled."

Rather than pursue any rearranging of the text, I believe it is better to stay with the traditional order, accept it at face value, and do the best we can with it. This approach is followed by most versions and commentators.

Should you wish to examine a critique of the radical variations it is recommended you read pages 136-139 of "Ecclesiastes and Other Studies" by Brother Sargent.

### **Job's Response to Eliphaz's Appeal**

#### **23:1-7            If only I could find God**

The charges Eliphaz made against Job were those that must, in his estimation, be laid, as Job's condition was obviously the result of overwhelming sin. Unfortunately for Eliphaz, he had no evidence. The charges were entirely speculative and palpably false. One could imagine that Job had every right, and certainly the present opportunity, to flay the words of Eliphaz and verbally bludgeon him into silence. But Job does not choose to do so. Perhaps out of respect for this venerated old man, Job ignores the charges and replies to the advice tendered at the end of Eliphaz's speech.

The advice was, in many respects, quite sound, but it seems so incredibly difficult for Job to respond to it because God's hand is so heavy on him (23:2). Yet, even though he can feel God's hand, Job cannot locate God. Eliphaz counselled Job to make his peace with God and Job has every desire to do so. Earlier he had been hesitant (13:19) and fearful that a meeting with God would only terrify him (9:34; 13:21). Now he is confident. He will:

- Go to God's dwelling, as soon as he can find it (23:3);
- Cogently argue his case (23:4);
- Listen to the answer of Almighty God, confident that He would lay no charges (23:5-6); and
- Experience total vindication at God's tribunal (23:7).

Job is certain he is right. He does not expect that he will merely be pardoned as a guilty man. He expects that he will be declared, by divine law, a righteous man. His friends have it all wrong. He does not need to reacquaint himself with God in order to remove the unrighteousness of his life (22:23). He seeks God so that all will appreciate that Job's ordeal was because or in spite of his personal righteousness.

### **23:8-9            But I cannot find Him**

But Job cannot find God. It makes no difference where he looks - north, south, east or west (probably more accurate than "forward", "backward", "left hand" and "right hand") - the search for God is hopeless. The language is reminiscent of the promise to Abram in Genesis 13:14 and possibly highlights a weakness in Job's understanding. God is not to be found wandering the earth. Man's future is on earth whereas God remains in heaven. God does not allow people into his physical presence nor, for that matter, is He required to declare the righteousness of any mortal man.

If anything, Job's desire to see God is mirrored by Philip in John 14:8; "Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us." Our Lord's response left Philip in no doubt as to how this is possible; "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9). Philip would never actually see the Father. Job would never see God nor would Job be eternally vindicated by him attesting his personal righteousness in conversation with the Father. Righteousness will be bestowed not because of law-keeping but due to the grace of God being showered on those who associate with the Sun of righteousness (Mal 4:2); the Lord Jesus Christ.

Job's understanding of his position before God was about to be clarified to such a degree that he would, by chapter 40, be more willing to declare his unworthiness than his righteousness. By way of an aside, it is disconcerting to observe how regularly the personal pronouns "I" and "my" feature in this chapter.

### **23:10-12        If I could, I would gain a favourable outcome**

This does not mean that Job was evil. On the contrary, Job did live a life that was pleasing before God. Job's rectitude is well-and-truly acknowledged from the outset. However, he had some lessons to learn and his character could only be improved by his spiritual pride, which had been so obviously inflamed by his blinkered friends, being relegated to non-combatant or, better still, non-existent service.

But, if he was not an evil person the question that needs to be answered is, "Why is Job suffering?" Job correctly supplies the answer when he says, "He hath tried (*bahan*) me" (23:10). *Bahan* "denotes examining to determine essential qualities, especially integrity ... [*bahan*] is used almost exclusively in the spiritual or religious realm" (TWOT). He is not being punished. He is being examined in the crucible of affliction. This realisation has a significant influence on the thoughts he now expresses.

Despite God seeming to deny Job the contact he so earnestly yearns for, Job comprehends that God knows everything about him; that Job's way of life has been one of undeviating service to Him. He is confident that, unlike Eliphaz's picturesque image of Job having a gold-fixation (22:24), he will emerge the fires of affliction like tried gold (23:10; 1Pet 1:7). He is certain he has not departed from God's commands and that he treasures God's words more than his daily bread.

The nagging problem for Job is that God appears to have departed from him.

### **23:13-24:1 God has a purpose but Job is confounded**

The commencement of 23:13 literally reads as, "He is one" (RVmg, Roth, Andersen). It is an acknowledgment by Job of the greatness of the unapproachable God. Sure, Job desired contact with God but He is way above man and not about to change. Man cannot oppose God (see comments on 9:12). God will perform what He has determined for Job and all the recipients of God's incomprehensible actions (23:14).

Job, in not being able to understand God's acts, seems to be responding in a way that is negative, even derogatory. It is as if he is saying, "God can do what He wants, but what He is doing to me, and others, does not make sense." Therefore, Job is terrified of God (23:15). His contemplation of God's dealings with man fills him with dismay.

The emphasis in 23:16 is on the words "God" and "Almighty." That's what really disturbs Job. It wasn't the fact that he was suffering mightily or that his friends no longer had any respect for him. It was the fact that God was the architect and executor of Job's calamity. Verse 17 bears this out amid the complexity of its Hebrew construction. The marginal rendering of the Revised Version is rightly well regarded by a number of commentators:

"For I am not dismayed because of the darkness,  
nor because thick darkness covereth my face."

## Chapter 24

Job, in his dismay, continues in 24:1 and wants to know why God does not appear to have a set time to judge the wicked. Job's affliction is part of God's decree for him and God obviously has times and days, so why are the faithful kept in the dark about them? The meaning of this verse could well be, "Why has God hidden His purpose from the righteous?"

If this be the case, Job is stepping into dangerous territory. It is not for him to call God into question, nor to infer that God is unresponsive when Job feels He should be otherwise. Job should revert to the attitude, he exhibited way back at 1:21-22, of humble submission to the wisdom of God's ways.

Thankfully, he changes direction at this point and commences his own description of the ways of the wicked. The punchline is simple - the wicked often go unpunished and nobody can provide evidence to the contrary.

### **Job's Appeal to Observation - Iniquities in Others Go Unpunished**

24:2-17 is essentially an inventory of criminal activity and the oppression of the poor. It is in some ways a revisitation and expansion of 21:7-18 where Job silenced Zophar with his observations of the apparent immunity of the wicked to judgment. Chapter 24 is, for Job, a presentation of scenarios that call for an answer but the answer is not forthcoming.

Job sees oppression and heartless indifference in rural communities (24:2-4), the absolute destitution of the poor (24:5-8), legalised violence by tyrannical businessmen (24:9-11), murderers, thieves and adulterers (24:14-16) but "God charges no-one with wrongdoing" (24:12 NIV). God has established laws, which are being openly flouted, but He seems reluctant to enforce them. Why? And, challenges Job, there is nobody who can prove his observations to be false.

#### **24:2-4            The way of the tyrant**

The tyrant is the focus of Job's initial illustration of the ongoing conundrums evident in human society when aligned with God's morality. The tyrant:

- Removes landmarks (see Deut 19:14) to illegally seize land (24:2);
- Violently rustles the flocks of others and then brazenly incorporates them into his own (24:2);
- Drives away the ass (one of the most basic possessions of ancient times) from the fatherless - a double hit as the victim is left without a father and an ass (24:3);
- Does similarly to the widow thus ensuring her penury (24:3);
- Deprives the poor of his basic civil rights (24:4); and
- Forces the poor to hide and cower in fear (24:4 - see also 30:6).

#### **24:5-8            The plight of the poor**

Job's mention of the poor inspires him to add more detail about the misery of their existence. In this, Job is speaking in a way not reflected by ancient civilisations. The poor had no recognition in society. They were merely chattels for the benefit of others, and built great monuments (e.g. the pyramids of Egypt) to the people who counted. The poor lived in hopeless degradation, ground down by extortion and oppression. They were pitiful human beings who were victimised by the ruthless.

Nobody cared. Nobody except for Job as revealed in this rare statement, for his era, of human sympathy. There is no doubt that Job's bizarre change in fortune had granted him an insight, an empathy with the poor, that was not as easily acquired while he dwelt, albeit with moral integrity, in prosperity. Job's indignation and compassion are stirred as he recalls their hunger (24:6), nakedness (24:7) and destitution (24:8).

#### **24:9-12           The exploitation of the poor by the tyrant**

Then just so no listener can misunderstand what he is describing, he narrates a series of images that combine exploiter, the tyrant, and exploited, the poor. What miserable pictures they are. He sees:

- Young children snatched from their widowed mothers and held in slavery, as payment for a debt (24:9);
- Workers toiling under immense burdens yet they are unable to adequately clothe themselves (24:10);
- Labourers producing wine and olive oil, but thirsty as none of the produce is spared for them (24:11); and
- People groaning as they die and those broken by excessive toil crying out in anguish (24:12).

Surely, the wicked should be condemned and punished. Surely, the poor will be relieved of their burdens and blessed by God. According to the logic of Eliphaz and his two companions, they most certainly should. Despite all the wrongs described by Job, God, in Job's reckoning, does not do a thing. He neither redresses the wrongs perpetrated on the poor nor does He restrain the wicked in their ways. God does not see anything unsavoury in what has happened ("folly" - see notes on 1:22), just as Job saw nothing unsavoury in what God did to him way back in 1:22.

Is this correct? Strictly speaking, no. God does care (1Pet 5:7). God finds displeasure in the outrages committed by man (Amos 2:6). Job's generalised allegation is deficient under scrutiny. But Job's hyperbole was an attempt to prove that divine disfavour is not evidenced in the mere fact that God does not appear to intervene openly and directly in a person's life.

The poor may live an unrelieved wretched life and the tyrant may never go without luxury but that does not make the tyrant blessed of God and the wretch cursed by God. Righteousness is not always manifested in wealth and ease of living.

#### **24:13-17      Sinners who work in darkness**

Job introduces a new class of sinner whose values and activities are opposite to those of the righteous. These sinners find pleasure and comfort in darkness. Men like Job do not. For Job, darkness speaks of death (10:21-22), but for murderers, thieves, adulterers and home-invaders, "deep darkness is morning to all of them; for they are friends of deep darkness" (24:17 RSV).

Daylight is poison to these sinners. It exposes their acts and reveals their true identities. They feel insecure during the day, but at night they are free to do as they please, saying, "No eye shall see me" (24:15). Clearly, they have no fear of God and constitute those of John 3:19 - "Men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil."

Why does Job mention these people? Because the conclusion he is leading to is that they manage to survive and survive well (Ecc 8:11-13). As perverse as it may sound, their success provides a role model for others. It is as if God has actually given them safety. This, of course, flies in the face of the teachings of Eliphaz.

#### **24:18-20      You say, "The wicked are punished"**

These verses are among those that rattle the commentators. Most commentators have considerable difficulty affixing these words to Job so they attribute them to somebody else or remove them from the main flow of speech. The Revised Standard Version offers a more sensible solution by prefixing "You say" to verse 18. In other words, 24:18-20 is Job's summary of his friends' sentiments and 24:21-25 is his rejoinder to them. This approach is also suggested by the Revised Version margin, Reichert, Brother Papowski and Brother Styles. However, while this suggestion is altogether logical, we should not dogmatically endorse it as it has no unambiguous textual support.

What is the fate of evildoers? According to Job, his friends say that evildoers:

- Are swooshed away like driftwood on the ocean currents (24:18 - see also 20:28; Hos 10:7);
- Are impoverished (24:18 - see also 15:23);
- Have a demise that is comprehensive: like snow melted by the summer sun (24:19);
- Are forgotten by their mothers and their names will be erased (24:20 - see also 18:17); and

- Thus, "wickedness shall be broken like a tree" (24:20 - see also 18:16; 19:10).

## **24:21-25 Reality disproves your theory**

Does Job agree with the thoughts of 24:18-20? No, but he is not stating the exact reverse of them. He never contends that the wicked always prosper and the righteous always suffer (9:22; 21:23-26). He is attempting to balance the extreme position of his friends but, in doing so, gives the impression that he adheres to a point of view that is overwhelmingly gloomy. What is certain, in the overall context of these speeches, is that Job is quite baffled by the way God has dealt with him. He knows God is right in all His ways but Job does not understand why God does what He does.

By all appearances God, as opposed to what men like Eliphaz affirm, prolongs the life of these mighty (in evil) men (24:22 RSV). The reality of Job's bitter experience and careful observation deflates the espoused popular theology. The wicked seem to rise up when, by all accurate reports, they should be cut short. It seems that God supports them and gives them the safety denied people like Job (24:23 RSV).

But surely the wicked die? Indeed they do, declares Job, but usually after they have been "exulted for a little while" (24:24). Everybody dies. We are "taken out of the way as all others." It is an inescapable human destiny. However, the evildoer's death is later rather than sooner, swift and relatively painless (this is the probable interpretation of "cut off the tops of the ears of corn" - see 5:26; 21:13). Zophar's description of the demise of the wicked (20:4-7) does not tally with Job's.

Therefore, Job concludes with a sharp challenge to his friends - "Prove me wrong" (24:25). He knows that they cannot do so. They have been unable to do so until now so it is unlikely that they can offer some last minute testimony that will put Job on the defensive. The following speech, Bildad's last, is a powerful indicator of how Job had reduced his accusers to mouthing empty platitudes. His challenge is not taken up by them.

---

## 22 CHAPTER 25 - THE THIRD CYCLE OF SPEECHES - BILDAD

**25:1-3** God's omnipotence

**25:4-6** Man's impotence

The brevity of Bildad's response and the silence of Zophar indicates that the arguments of the friends are malnourished. They are too weak to continue. Bildad does not explain why the wicked appear to prosper and makes no attempt to address Job's challenge (24:25). The friends have very much withdrawn from the action. This is reinforced by the fact that Bildad's final words are woefully anaemic. He merely restates the omnipotence of God and listlessly attacks Job's perceived confidence in his personal righteousness.

His friends' undeclared admission of defeat motivates Job to utter a series of monologues that continue until Elihu enters the discussion in chapter 32.

### **25:1-3 God's omnipotence**

It is as if Bildad makes an excursion into heaven itself as he reports the greatness of God. God has dominion and fear. He has limitless resources wherein He can establish order in the heights of heaven (25:2). He commands all the hosts



of heaven; His celestial armies which are many in number (Isa 40:26). His light illuminates the whole world. Nothing escapes His view (2:3).

What has Bildad added to the discussion? Nothing. Job would not disagree with such expressions. So what is Bildad's point?

## **25:4-6            Man's impotence**

His point is that God is so great, so majestic, so mighty, that no man can presume to be righteous before Him. Bildad has returned to one of the earlier conclusions made by Eliphaz (4:17 - later reinforced in 15:14-15). The point is valid except that Bildad has placed God in such an unapproachable majesty as to suggest that man counts for absolutely nothing in God's mind. By inferring this, Bildad is contradicting the theory of exact retribution wherein God is compelled to respond in accordance with an established formula.

In Bildad's reckoning, man is completely and utterly despised. Man (**enosh**) is a worm (**rimmah** - 25:6a). In using **rimmah**, Bildad is latching onto a word that is used on four earlier occasions, always by Job (7:5, 17:14, 21:26, 24:20). It is like Job has a fixation with worms and if the symptoms of Job's skin complaint are recorded literally then it is little wonder. **Rimmah** refers to the "maggot, worm of decay" (TWOT) and always in the context of decay and corruption. Weak, mortal man is no better than the maggots that infested the sores on Job's ravaged body.

Not content with that allusion, Bildad introduces another word from his thesaurus as he concludes his speech with "the son of man (**adam**), a worm (**tolea**)" (AV rendering without the italicised words). Weak, mortal men (**enosh**) are maggots before God. In fact, all mankind (**adam**) is like the cocoon worm (**tolea**) whose body is crushed to make scarlet dye (see G S Cansdale "Animals of Bible Lands" Paternoster Press, 1970, p236-237).

**Tolea** is used to symbolise the weakness and insignificance of man (Psa 22:6; Isa 41:14) as well as being the Hebrew word for an especially destructive and repugnant creature (Deut 28:39; Isa 14:11, 66:24; Jonah 4:7). How could Job possibly assert his innocence before Almighty God? How could anybody, including Bildad, perceive themselves to be anything more than the most disgusting of God's creation?

On this cheery note, Bildad ends his speaking and the speaking of his two companions. In this, his final hurrah, Bildad has dramatically overstated his case and placed himself within such narrow strictures that he has left himself no room to manoeuvre. The stage is now solely Job's to dominate.

## 23    JOB'S MONOLOGUES

---

### **Introduction**

The friends may well have finished but Job still has plenty to say. In what is the longest section attributed to any speaker thus far, Job derisively dismisses the words of Bildad and then utters two verbose monologues.

While there is some dispute as to how Job's final flurry should be subdivided, the text essentially indicates the way with two strategically placed breaks (27:1, 29:1). These breaks also neatly fit the flow of thought. Therefore, I believe that the larger divisions should be:

**Chapter 26** Job's Reply to Bildad;

**Chapters 27,28** Job's First Monologue - Man is clever, but wisdom is with God;

**Chapters 29,30,31** Job's Second Monologue - Job reviews his case and makes his final appeal.

The monologues are characterised by the layer upon layer of detail that Job regularly places on what are predominantly simple themes. He borders on being long-winded and overly repetitive. The first monologue is, in places, difficult to understand and commentators are compelled to make educated guesses in order to extract sense from the content. The second monologue is straightforward and revealing. In it the anguish and humiliation of Job is expressed. It provides an unprecedented and intimate insight into Job's feelings. With the debate over and Job victorious, Job now more readily talks about himself.

Overall, three clear messages are iterated in these chapters:

1. Wisdom is with God;
2. Job is convinced that he is innocent of any evil-doing; and
3. Job will not yield to his friends' opinions.

What is implicit is that, while wisdom is with God, Job does not understand its operation especially as it has been applied to his life. His situation may well contradict the philosophy of his friends but it was certainly something he did not appreciate. His sad and graphic account of his distress was not, in any way, a smug recall of a personal experience that refuted his friends. It was a personal tragedy beyond comprehension.

## 24 CHAPTER 26 - THE THIRD CYCLE OF SPEECHES - JOB

---

### **Job's Reply to Bildad**

- 26:1-4** Job's scornful reproof of Bildad
- 26:5-14** The incomprehensible majesty and power of God
- 26:1-4** Job's scornful reproof of Bildad

There is no doubt that Job has the upper hand and this is reflected in the scornful, some would say sarcastic, opening of his response to Bildad. However, despite Job's highhandedness with Bildad, he has not lost his overall perspective. All the expressions he uses reinforce his diminished status in the presence of God. He does not presume to know as much as God but he, in addressing Bildad (note the use of singular pronouns), has no hesitation in mocking Bildad's final contribution.

The general tone of his introduction is, "How did you manage to gain a reputation for providing wise counsel?" Job is simply repeating the heavy hits of 12:2 (i.e. When you die the world will be deprived of your incalculable wisdom) and 16:2 (i.e. When it comes to comforting you are total failures).

Job, as proposed by the Authorised Version, flings a series of questions at the mute Bildad:

- How have you helped him (i.e. Job) who is without power (**kowach**)? **Kowach** is used by Job to describe God's power (9:4, 23:6, 24:22, 26:12) and his own comparative puniness (6:11-12);
- How have you helped the one who is without strength (**oz** - used by Job of God in 12:16)?;
- How have you counselled the one who lacks wisdom (**hokma**)? **Hokma** is reverently attributed to God in 12:12-13 and sarcastically to his friends in 12:2 and 13:5; and
- How have you declared sound knowledge (**tushiya** - used by Job of God in 12:16 and of himself, in a demeaning way, in 6:13)?

He then delivers the ultimate insult to any person who purports to be intelligent: "Who has helped you utter these words? And whose spirit spoke from your mouth?" (26:4 NIV). He could be declaring that Bildad is not speaking under divine inspiration but the tenor of this introduction seems considerably less complimentary. Remember, it was Bildad who claimed that wisdom, and therefore his wisdom, comes from a consideration of the teachings of the ancients (8:8-10). Perhaps Job is suggesting that Bildad has read the wrong books!

Whatever the correct meaning, Job's words are definitely not designed to flatter.

#### **26:5-14            The incomprehensible majesty and power of God**

Job, while dismissing Bildad as a counsellor, still acknowledged, in the terms he used, his personal subservience to God. This seems to have prompted Job to recall the majesty and power of God. He could well be indicating to Bildad how woefully deficient Bildad's knowledge was of God's supremacy. Bildad's feeble, though accurate, attempt to exclaim the omnipotence of God, inspires Job to expand on this theme.

Job's doxology is an amazing conglomeration of cosmological expressions. It incorporates the language of the ancient myths as well as encompassing a wide range of natural elements - earth, clouds, sky etc. Free from combating his friends, now that he has verbally crushed Bildad, Job's eloquence is as gifted as his three friends at their best.

Verse 5            "The shades (**repaim**) tremble beneath the waters and the inhabitants thereof" (Sonc). The **repaim**, according to the opinions of the ancient Hebrews and Phoenicians, were the dead inhabitants of the netherworld (TWOT, Ges). The verse is figurative because Job had openly confessed to the mortality of man (7:10, 14:10) and salvation by way of resurrection (14:13-15, 19:2-26). The point is that God's presence and power reaches even into the mystical netherworld.

Verse 6            **Sheol** (AV "Hell") is exposed to Him as is **abaddon** (AV "destruction"). **Abaddon** is considered to be a synonym for **sheol** and speaks of the place of destruction. Proverbs 15:11 appears to be based on this verse. Revelation 9:11 pointedly uses **Abaddon** in reference to the abyss (see "Thirteen Lectures on The Apocalypse" p71-72 by Brother Roberts for an explanation of the abyss).

Verse 7            He stretches the north (**sapon**) over the void (AV "empty place" - Heb **tohu** - Gen 1:2 "void") and hangs the earth on nothingness. **Sapon**, in Canaanite mythology, was the meeting place of the gods (Isa

14:13). God even has control over the most sinister of forces. All powers are dependent on the true God for their existence. Alternatively, and less dramatically, the north could be a reference to the northern skies (Delitzsch). Secondly, did Job believe, as we do, that the earth is suspended in space or is he affirming some ancient tradition? While the commentators disagree with each other on this question, it is not unlikely that Job had attained a more accurate view of the universe especially when one considers the advances astronomy had made in Babylon and Egypt. This is borne out by Job's words of 9:7-10.

Verse 8 God's awesome power over the clouds is declared.

Verse 9 His throne (dwelling place - Psa 103:19) is hidden from mortal eyes.

Verse 10 This is not a particularly clear verse. The inference is that God knows the extremities or has fixed the boundaries of light and darkness. The ancient tradition refers to the boundary where the earth, surrounded by water, ends and the region of impenetrable darkness begins. There is also a possible link with Day 2 of Creation (Gen 1:6-8).

Verse 11 The pillars of heaven (i.e. the earth or the lofty mountains on which the heavens rest) tremble at the rebuke of God (Psa 29:8, 104:32).

Verse 12 God churns up the sea with His power and by His wisdom he cut **Rahab** (AV "proud") in pieces. Again Job could be alluding to the ancient myths. **Rahab** (see notes on 9:13) can be aligned with Tiamat, the monster-dragon who personifies the raging sea. While Job does not endorse such nonsense as truth, he is again resorting to exaggerated language to exclaim the greatness of Almighty God.

Verse 13 So powerful is God that His breath made the heavens beautiful ("luminous" JB) and His "hand transfixed the Fleeing Serpent" (JB). Who or what is the Fleeing Serpent? It could be another term for Tiamat, whose defeat reputedly enabled light once more to shine, or it may be a reference to another mythological creature who has eluded modern research or even, as Brother Mansfield suggests, a constellation.

Andersen calls 26:5-13 a "pastiche of phrases from several traditions." Why does Job appear to give some sort of credibility to the legends of his time? It reads somewhat bizarrely.

Firstly, Job does not endorse these myths as statements of truth. As noted earlier, he believes in the supremacy and unity of God as well as salvation through Him by resurrection. Job addresses no statement, appeal or otherwise, to these legendary creatures of power. Secondly, Job, as Christ did in Luke 16:19-31, uses the expressions and suspect beliefs of his day to teach a divine truth. The use of such language was designed to highlight the conclusion he was leading Bildad to.

This conclusion is wonderfully enunciated in verse 14:

"Indeed these are the mere edges of His ways, and how small a whisper we hear of Him! But the thunder of His power who can understand?" (NKJV)

**Job's First Monologue****Job's Conclusion**

- 27:1-6** I am right, you are wrong
- 27:7-12** God's justice will prevail
- 27:13-23** What if my oppressors are punished?

**The Excellency of Wisdom**

- 28:1-6** The ingenuity of man
- 28:7-8** The superior knowledge of man
- 28:9-11** The skilfulness of man
- 28:12-19** Wisdom - where is it? It cannot be bought
- 28:20-22** Wisdom - where is it? It is hidden
- 28:23-28** Wisdom - it is with God

**Job's Conclusion**

It may seem odd to entitle chapter 27 as "Job's Conclusion." After all, Job is only warming up as he continues for four more chapters. Chapter 27 represents Job's concluding statement to his friends. It is as if Job, having finished what he has to say to Bildad, pauses in anticipation of Zophar's customary blustery rhetoric. Zophar's silence enables Job to tidy up the loose ends of the debate and, with true debating style, to forthrightly affirm the correctness of his reasoning while leaving the final judgment to the adjudicator which is God Himself.

What follows this chapter is a series of powerful and insightful soliloquies. Job exclaims the excellency of wisdom before making a dazzling and detailed appeal that, as far as Job was concerned, totally exonerated him of any wrongdoing.

**27:1-6 I am right, you are wrong**

Job takes up his "parable" (*mashal* - "discourse" Green, NKJV, NIV etc) and swears an oath on the life of **EI**, even **Shaddai**. Elihu, and many since him, was offended by this oath (34:5). Job describes **EI** as He who has removed his right to justice and **Shaddai** as He who has made Job's soul bitter (27:2 Green, RSV). While this reveals a negative attitude in Job, such expressions may well have an element of truth. God had not responded to Job's appeal. His friends, and anybody else privy to Job's circumstances, had judged Job as guilty. His right to justice had been

compromised. This inevitably led to bitterness of soul (7:11, 10:1, 21:25). Where Job is wrong is his presumption that God should have responded when and how Job desired.

What Job is doing is adopting the last resort of a man in a trial. With this forceful oath he ironically places his judgment in the hands of the One who, in Job's perception, has removed his right to a fair trial. As he has failed to gain any response from God, Job uses the strongest measure possible to force God's hand.

He adds weight to his oath by solemnly affirming that as long as he can breathe (27:3) he will not speak wickedness or utter deceit (27:4). There was no way ("Far be it from me" JB, Delitzsch, Roth, Green) that Job would admit that his friends were right. Until the day he dies he will not concede anything that would detract from his integrity (27:5).

With a final oath ("On my righteousness" Roth, YLit), he maintains that his conscience is clear (27:6). He has done nothing amiss. These words, as translated by the Septuagint, are coincidentally picked up by the thief on the cross in his description of our crucified Lord (Luke 23:41). Job may well aver his integrity but he merely prefigured, in an imperfect way, that perfect one - the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **27:7-12      God's justice will prevail**

Job swore oaths to his integrity but his enemy did not believe him. They considered him to be the greatest of sinners and that this was confirmed by the dreadful circumstances of his recent existence. Job's enemy is not God (even though he feels God treats him as one - 13:24), nor is it the Satan. It is his accusers.

Job's relationship with them has deteriorated to such a level that he desires their punishment. He wants them to be treated in precisely the manner that they declared the wicked must be treated (27:7). If Zophar is right, in that the joy of the hypocrite is short-lived (20:5), then let the hypocrite's lot be that of his friends. Yes, the hypocrite may have a short moment of triumph, but what does it matter when God takes away his soul (27:8 - see Matt 16:26; Luke 12:20 for our Lord's agreement with this sentiment).

Perhaps the hypocrite can cry out to God for help? He can, but it is ineffective. Job's question, "Will he always call upon God?" (27:10) is packed with intent. His friends never, in the record, call on God whereas Job, in prosperity and destitution, constantly does so. Their reliance on their own experience (Eliphaz) and their own learning (Bildad) and their own opinions (Zophar) challenged their ability to seek help from God for Job. So when troubles assail them they will be at a loss as to what to do.

Job tells them to listen to what he has to teach them. He will teach them "about" (NKJV - not "by") the hand of God. And he is only doing so because, even though they know Job is right, they continue to "behave with complete nonsense" (27:12 NKJV - literally "vain with this vanity" Green).

It should also be noted that the use of plural pronouns in 27:11-12 assists us to understand that this is Job talking to his friends and not, as some believe, Zophar addressing Job.

### **27:13-23      What if my oppressors are punished?**

This section is one of the most perplexing in the Book of Job. It gives the very strong impression that Job has abandoned the position he has so doggedly adhered to, despite extreme provocation, and accepted the viewpoint of his friends. He appears to directly contradict the teaching he expounded so vigorously in chapter 21.

Because of this, some claim that this section is the voice of Zophar and others that Job is actually contradicting himself and has finally sided with his accusers. Others feel that he is summarising the arguments of his friends, while a fourth suggestion is that the sense is future; the predicted punishment, that if not implemented immediately, will ultimately occur. The opening suggestion is no longer supported with the relish it once was and lacks textual validation (see notes introducing chapters 23, 24), while the second suggestion has no contextual support whatsoever. The third suggestion is promising. It may seem artificial but Job could well be turning the theory of exact retribution back onto its professors. The final suggestion also has merit but it requires Job to recant the very arguments he used to demolish the reasoning of his friends (e.g. 21:18 is contradicted by 27:14).

While no solution is clear-cut, I believe Job is summarising his friends' arguments. He is not doing so as a memory prompt. He does so to taunt them. Job takes up Zophar's final expression (20:29) and labels them as wicked (*rasha*) and ruthless (Green, NIV - Heb *aris*). *Rasha* and *aris* are also coupled by Eliphaz in 15:20 in his graphic description of the wicked writhing in pain. Job's message is caustically simple, "If you keep on behaving the way you are, and if you are right, then you will receive all the punishments you have described in your utterances."

It is not the most charming thing Job could say, but the detail that follows indicates how carefully he had listened to what they had to say and how absurd he perceived it to be. He is also declaring that it is they, and not him, who are wicked and ruthless. They have been unrelenting in their pursuit of Job's sins. They have been, despite evidence to the contrary, unmoved in asserting their simplistic, black-and-white philosophy. If they are right in their doctrine and Job is right in his assessment of their characters then the following calamities, as extracted from their own teachings, will befall them:

- Their children will be slain or afflicted with famine, should they escape the sword (27:14 - see 5:4, 18:19);
- Their posterity will be cut off and its demise will not be lamented, not even by their wives (27:15 - see 18:17-19);
- Their accumulated wealth will be distributed to the righteous and the innocent (27:16-17 - see 22:18-19);
- Their houses are fragile, ready for destruction (27:18 - see 4:19, 8:14-15, 20:28);
- They will go to bed rich, only to awaken to abject poverty (27:19 - see 15:21);
- They will be surrounded by terrors just as a natural disaster overwhelms its helpless victims (27:20 - see 18:11, 20:25, 22:11); and
- They will be swept into oblivion, as if driven by the scorching east wind (27:21 - see 15:2,30) which they are desperately unable to avoid (27:22 see 20:24).

Their final humiliation will be marked by the scorn that accompanies their desolation. People will clap their hands and hiss. The mood is that of mocking contempt and derision (Lam 2:15; Ezek 27:36), underlying which is relief and joy at their demise. It is also the mood of the righteous as outlined by Eliphaz in 22:19-20.

## **Chapter 28 - The Excellency of Wisdom**

Brother Papowski entitles this extraordinary section of Scripture, "Job's Hymn on Wisdom." Reichert seems all overcome when he writes, "This chapter is one of the deservedly celebrated portions of the Book and one of the incomparably great poems in the Bible, and indeed world literature." Yet, according to Andersen, "Most scholars find it impossible to believe that Job ever recited this poem." They consider it quite out of place with what precedes and follows it.

If anything, the words of this poem could only belong to Job. He is the individual who is closest to the truth. He is the one who openly seeks God, while the others merely recommend such an action. Whereas Bildad declared that man is no better than a maggot (25:6), Job, in chapter 28, recognised that while man does have ingenuity, knowledge and skill, true wisdom can only be found with God. Such sentiments are, after chapters of overstated and over-rated sophistry, an accurate and refreshing blast of balance.

It is also interesting to observe the broad construction of Job's final words:

1. Accuser-focussed chapters (i.e. 26, 27) as Job completes his demolition of his accusers' reasoning;
2. God-focussed chapter 28 wherein Job beautifully expounds the superiority of divine wisdom; and
3. Self-focussed chapters (i.e. 29-31) in which Job reviews his personal circumstances and issues a final appeal.

If we, as I believe we should, interpret this in a positive way, God, along with His wisdom, is the pivot of this lengthy session. While the other chapters do present as being self-serving for Job, chapter 28 shines like a beacon. However, it would be incredibly harsh to severely criticise Job for his comments in the other chapters. After all, they follow hours of talk that portrayed Job as the worst of criminals whose biggest sin was yet to be unveiled. The fact that Job can utter chapter 28, in the overall context of what has happened to him, is nothing short of astonishing as well as being a colossal testimony to his faith.

### **28:1-6            The ingenuity of man**

The break in the flow of thought is abrupt as it is dramatic. Upon completing the gloomy picture of chapter 27, Job switches direction with "Surely," and proceeds to extol how clever man is.

Man, through his ingenuity, can extract the most precious of metals from the ground - silver, gold, iron and copper. Who or what else can do that? And it is not just a matter of scratching around like some untamed beast. Man, with his mine shafts and lanterns, "puts an end to darkness (**chosek**) and searches every recess for ore in the darkness (**ophel**) and shadow of death (**tsalmaveth**)" (28:3 NKJV). Whereas Job used **chosek**, **ophel** and **tsalmaveth** in 10:21-22 to labour the dreariness of the grave, he is now more upbeat as he uses these expressions to describe the underground man-made caverns that enrich their determined occupants.

Verse 4 is about as obscure as it gets. The versions are at odds with each other and the variations that emerge from this section of Hebrew text is nothing short of remarkable. The Revised Standard Version is as good as any and maintains contextual consistency with:

"They open shafts in a valley away from where man lives, they are forgotten by travellers, they hang afar from man, they swing to and fro."

The last two expressions probably refer to miners, suspended from ropes, swinging in the gloominess, digging for copper. All is tranquillity on the surface, but underneath man transforms the earth as he diligently seeks out that which is hidden.

### **28:7-8            The superior knowledge of man**



Man can do what no other creature can do. The "bird of prey" (RSV, NKJV etc) does not know about man's ingenious mining activities. The "falcon", despite its astonishing eyesight, cannot see them. The lion with all its power and courage does not set his foot in such places.

Only man has the knowledge to determine where precious metals can be extracted. He is more observant than the falcon and more intrepid than the lion. The most remote areas of the earth are breached in man's quest for treasure.

### **28:9-11            The skilfulness of man**

Man's dogged skilfulness is demonstrated in his determination to extract every precious object from the ground. Mountains do not bar his progress as man will crush the hardest of rocks (28:9). He cuts underground tunnels in his pursuit of the earth's treasures. Unlike the falcon of 28:7, man "seeth every precious thing" (28:10). "Rivers" is better rendered as "channels" (RSV, RV, NKJV) and usually refers to the canals of the River Nile. In this context it relates to underground mining passages and is paraphrased by some versions as "tunnels" (NIV, JB) or "galleries" (NEB).

Finally, to complete his account of man's mining operations, Job describes how man skilfully avoids the flooding of these underground galleries. The first half of 28:11 literally reads, "He dams up the rivers from weeping" (Green mg, Soncino). Both Reichert and Gibson quote from Cox who writes on this expression, "The picturesque phrase ('that they weep not') may have been a technical term among the miners in ancient times, just as our colliers name the action the water that percolates through and into their workings 'weeping', and our navvies call the fine sand which percolates through the sides of the tunnel 'crying sand'."

### **28:12-19            Wisdom - where is it? It cannot be bought**

Man can unearth precious stones and metals. Man is smarter than the beasts, ingenious in overcoming obstacles and skilful in his activity. His successes are nothing short of spectacular but is he wise? He can find silver and gold but does he know where he can find wisdom (*hokma*) and understanding (*bina*)? These questions, posed in 28:12, are the pivot of this remarkable poem. They re-emerge as a refrain in 28:20 and are answered, by Job, in 28:28.

**Hokma** is a favourite word of Job's (see notes on 12:2) and is a word that can be applied in many circumstances. However, unlike Job's almost cavalier use of the word in chapter 12, in chapter 28 it conveys the meaning of wisdom in its truest sense (TWOT) or the absolute wisdom of God (Reichert) and is moral rather than intellectual (Girdlestone). Does man know how to access this wisdom which is "specially a knowledge of the principles in accordance with which God rules and governs the world" (Gibson).

**Bina** is virtually a synonym of **hokma** with its variation being that it relates more to intellectual knowledge. This difference is not that significant and it is more than likely a poetical repetition to reinforce the point - wisdom and understanding eludes mankind.

Well, where is wisdom and where is understanding? It is impossible to buy. Man does not comprehend its value (28:13 - this interpretation, supported from the Hebrew, should be preferred over that of modern versions that have adopted the Septuagint's rendition). You cannot find wisdom in the marketplace, lovingly placed on display by a

hopeful vendor. In fact, it cannot be found in the land of the living or, in other words, it cannot be obtained from the world.

The Deep (**Tehom**), that mythical abyss below the earth from which the Sea (**Yam**) drew its water, is adamant, "It is not in me." The Sea is just as dogmatic, "It is not with me" (28:14).

But what about all the amazing treasures man extracts from the earth? Surely he has accumulated enough wealth to purchase an ample supply of **hokma** and **bina**? Not so. None of the following can achieve such a goal:

- Purified fine gold (**segor**) and silver - 28:15;
- The gold (**ketem**) of Ophir (a possible allusion to the words of Eliphaz in 22:24-25), precious onyx and sapphires - 28:16;
- Gold (**waw**), glass (**zekokit** - only here in the Old Testament - an early form of glass that was widely revered by the Hebrews as a precious substance) and jewels of gold (**paz**) - 28:17;
- Coral, crystal and rubies - 28:18; and
- Ethiopian topaz and pure gold (**ketem**) - 28:19.

While commentators differ on the exact meaning of the substances mentioned, it is obvious that Job, especially through the plethora of synonyms denoting gold, is stressing that **hokma** and **bina** cannot be bought by anything.

#### **28:20-22      Wisdom - where is it? It is hidden**

Having affirmed that wisdom is priceless, Job repeats the question, "Where is it?" One may as well know the location of this invaluable commodity. Sadly, for man, it is hidden! You can soar high in the skies like a bird on the wing and you still cannot find it. Even the powerful forces of **Abaddon** (see 26:6) and Death do not know its location although they have heard reports (JB) or rumours (NIV) about wisdom.

#### **28:23-28      Wisdom - it is with God**

If **Tehom**, **Yam** (28:14), **Abaddon** and Death (28:22) neither possess nor are able to locate wisdom, then who is powerful enough to do so? "God understands its way, and He knows its place" (28:23 NKJV), and there is a very simple reason why God understands wisdom and knows where it is - He is the Creator. "He" is emphatic in 28:23-24 (Roth, CompB). He is the Only One. His gaze extends to the ends of the earth. He is everywhere present. His knowledge, in embracing everything, undoubtedly includes the place and way of wisdom.

Job has carefully built up an image of man, followed it with an insight into man's major deficiency and then concluded with the obvious superiority of God. He next proceeds to provide a few specimens of God's wisdom - wind, water, rain, thunder. God is in all these basics, whereas man, for all his skill, knowledge and ingenuity, is conspicuously absent. Elihu (37:6-18) and Yahweh (41:24-30) both pick up on this in later speeches.

The point is sufficiently made in these examples. God has wisdom far above man's and can do what no man can do. He can order the very elements of nature. Elements which, at His command, can nourish or destroy. God has mapped it all out. From the beginning of creation, God's wisdom was there. He "did see it, and declare it; he prepared it, yea, and searched it out" (28:27). These four verbs, of themselves, are everyday Hebrew words but combine to form an impressive description of God's perfect comprehension of wisdom. God has, in the poetical terms employed, left no stone unturned. Every aspect of wisdom is known to Him.

What then is wisdom? "And he said to man, 'Wisdom? It is the fear of the Lord. Understanding? - avoidance of evil'" (28:28 JB). "Lord" is more than likely Yahweh (CompB, Gibson).

Job has reached the grand conclusion of his majestic poem. It is concise, easily understood, accurate but deficient. It appears platitudinous but Job genuinely believed it to be God's understanding. Furthermore, fearing God and departing from evil are part of the composite that is God's assessment of Job's character (1:1,8, 2:3). But if 28:28 is the sublime summation, why was Job later compelled to acknowledge his failings? He was not perfection but his character, after the horrendous trials he had to bear, was developed in a way that he had not anticipated.

The writer of the Proverbs provides us with some valuable clues. "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge" (Prov 1:7). The fear of Yahweh is the first and controlling principle. Without it knowledge is not possible. The fear of Yahweh is also the "beginning of wisdom" (Psa 111:10; Prov 9:10). It is essential for the development of wisdom. True wisdom can only be developed in God's children if they live their lives in recognition of the fact that God is watching them. But wisdom must be displayed. It is not exclusively academic nor is it limited to a departure from doing evil.

Wisdom must dwell in the heart (Psa 90:12; Prov 2:10) and is associated with redemption (Psa 111:9), joy (Prov 3:13), discretion (Prov 8:12) and humility (Prov 11:2). It cannot be partnered with pride (Prov 13:10), scorn (Prov 14:6) or foolishness (Prov 14:33).

Job's assertion of what God has decreed is not completely verified elsewhere in Scripture. 28:28 is part of the picture. Job is not wrong in his understanding. However he is lacking in his understanding and he makes the mistake of declaring his knowledge to be divinely endorsed. His description of wisdom lacks an appreciation of God's grace and the necessity for man to work for the salvation of others (Matt 22:37-40; Phil 2:4-5). It was a lesson Job had to learn before Yahweh would turn his captivity (42:10).

26 CHAPTERS 29, 30, 31 - THE THIRD CYCLE OF SPEECHES - JOB

---

### **Job's Second Monologue**

#### **Job's Past Glory**

- 29:1-6** Job's former prosperity when blessed by God
- 29:7-11** The honour that was Job's
- 29:12-17** Respected because he helped others
- 29:18-20** His anticipated security
- 29:21-25** Job - An object of universal respect

#### **Job's Present Misery**

<b>30:1-8</b>	But now - Despised by dogs
<b>30:9-15</b>	But now - Derided and diminished
<b>30:16-19</b>	But now - Dying and diseased
<b>30:20-23</b>	But now - Denied by Deity
<b>30:24-31</b>	But now - Destitute and dissipated

### **Job's Repudiation of Offences and His Final Appeal**

<b>31:1-12</b>	Job's personal integrity
<b>31:13-23</b>	Job's fair dealing with his fellow man
<b>31:24-28</b>	Job's faithfulness to God
<b>31:29-34</b>	Job's repudiation of dishonourable thoughts
<b>31:35-40</b>	Job's final appeal as an honest man

This lengthy monologue concludes the speeches of Job. It is a crucial element of the whole debate and provides insights into Job's sufferings that were hitherto unreported. He has finished answering his friends, he has affirmed his understanding of the wisdom of the Almighty and now he summarises his case for vindication. The chapters almost neatly fall into a "past-present-future" scenario as:

- He discusses his former pre-calamity estate (chapter 29);
- He outlines the abject misery of his current existence (chapter 30); and
- After he makes a final assertion of his rectitude, appeals for a better future (chapter 31).

This important speech, in which Job lays claim to the loftiest moral standards, should not be seen as totally self-righteous. His claims are legitimate. No moral indiscretion is ever identified. If anything, chapters 29-31 contain Job's declared application of 28:28 in his life. They explain, to any who cared to listen to this public utterance, how Job feared God and eschewed evil.

### **Job's Past Glory**

The startling contrasts between his former and current life are becoming dramatically apparent. Without chapter 29 we may never have fully appreciated the extremities of Job's existence. A clinical analysis of Job's situation, as presented by his visitors, is easily consumed by the emotional reality that is revealed in this final monologue.

#### **29:1-6            Job's former prosperity when blessed by God**

One of the great sorrows that overwhelmed Job was his recollection of his past glory. It was more than a remembrance of wealth and prestige as it incorporated divine care, familial joy, personal integrity and brotherly kindness. But all this is now "as in months of old" (29:2 RV); months that he so desperately longed for. It seemed like ages since Job enjoyed the circumstances that open the record of the Book of Job.

They were wonderful times. God watched over him (29:2). Not in the sinister sense of merciless supervision that fills Job with dread (13:27, 14:16), but as One who cared (10:12). God lighted his path, easing him through the darkness (**chosek**) that is now Job's lot ("he hath set darkness in my paths" 19:8).

If only he could return to the days of his "prime" (NIV, Roth, NKJV), his "autumn" days (TWOT, BDB). It was then that he enjoyed counsel and friendship with God. This close relationship was not just something he experienced on some regular interval at a religious shrine. "God's intimate friendship blessed my house" (29:4 NIV).

Those former days were highlighted by fellowship with God, a numerous family, abundant wealth (see Zophar's comments in 20:17) and remarkable productivity (e.g. olive oil pouring from normally infertile places). It's all gone.

### **29:7-11            The honour that was Job's**

Gone, along with the honour that was bestowed on him in former times. He was wealthy and highly respected. He was a rarity; a wealthy powerful man who was a source of respect rather than terror. He expertly participated in the affairs of the city and this participation was genuinely appreciated by all who observed it.

He sat as a judge in the gate of the city (Gen 19:1; Deut 22:15; Neh 8:1). In the broad market-place, by the city's gate, the court held its sessions. Job was the pre-eminent judge. The young boys, normally rowdy and brash, "stepped aside" (NIV, JB) whenever they saw him and the aged stood up in his presence (contrast Lev 19:32). The princes and rulers gathered at the gate, who were earlier chatting amiably with their fellows, were silenced by Job's arrival. With rapt attention, they hung off every word expressed by the great man (29:9-10). When they spoke it was deferentially hushed or they were so muted by his presence that their tongues nervously cleaved to the roofs of their mouths.

But when they heard his words they spoke well of Job. His words were taken back to their respective tabernacles. Not only were they utterances of superior quality, they were reinforced by Job's overtly impeccable life (29:11).

### **29:12-17            Respected because he helped others**

How impeccable was his life! It was a life given over to assisting his fellow man. It was a life, due to its selflessness, that gained him universal respect. But in his description of it Job commits the very opposite of it and focuses on himself. "I" is the prominent word and in outlining his selflessness and implied humility Job takes on characteristics that border on being selfish and proud.

However, these personality traits do not detract from the facts. Job's reputation was known to all and firmly founded on his achievements as a benefactor. In contrast to Eliphaz's scurrilous accusations in 22:6-9 and Zophar's unsubtle illustration of the hypocrite in 20:19, Job rescued the poor who cried out for help and the orphan who was without help. Those in utter despair praised Job as he brought them back from the brink. The heart of the widow, normally mournful and morose, sang because of Job's ministrations (29:12-13).

The language Job applies to himself is unwittingly the language of the kingdom age (Psa 72:12) and "pure religion" (Jas 1:27). While his sentiments are self-serving, nobody contradicts Job. His friends cannot provide evidence to the contrary. Job truly was the greatest man of the east but he was not yet perfected. That will occur in the kingdom age when pure religion will be a controlling force. At Job's present point in time, the kingdom was a hope, and, for all his magnificent conduct, Job's humility required development.

29:14 is a key verse, strategically placed in this section, which summarises Job's personal viewpoint. As far as he is concerned, he was clad in righteousness (see Isa 11:5, 59:17 for this concept's messianic allusions). He believed he was righteousness incarnate crowned with a robe and turban of justice.

Job was no ordinary philanthropist. He even cared for the disabled and took up the case of the stranger (29:16 NIV). His justice saw him save those innocents from the teeth of the unrighteous; unrighteous men he likens to fierce beasts of prey who ensnared their victims in their massive jaws (Psa 58:6; Prov 30:4).

### **29:18-20 His anticipated security**

But the dreams of this great man lay shattered. In the middle of all this genuinely compassionate activity he had been convinced that he would die as an old man, in his own house, surrounded by those who loved him. In what could be a poetical allegory of his family, he pictured himself as a majestic tree, with its roots drawing enthusiastically on nourishing waters and its wide branches soaking in the refreshing dew. These expressions almost seem to be cited in Psalm 1:3 with the punchline of the Psalm ("For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous") being confirmed in the life of Job.

Verse 20 is difficult to grasp but the implication is that Job expected to live a long life, with his honour intact and his natural powers retained until his ultimate demise. This no longer seemed possible as God "hath stripped me of my glory, and taken the crown from my head" (19:9).

### **29:21-25 Job - An object of universal respect**

These verses complete the picture of Job's well-earned position of respect that he had enjoyed. He especially returns to consider the honour he had received. In matters of debate and counsel, men took particular heed to Job's words. His decisions and pronouncements were invariably the final word. So superior were his utterances that men remained silent before them.

Even greater than that, his expressed word was as welcome as the rain on a parched ground. They were received as if they were the latter rain (*malqosh*). This rain was the eagerly awaited spring rain that was desperately needed for the coming harvest. It was also used, both literally and metaphorically, in reference to divine blessing (Deut 1:14; Joel 2:23; Zech 10:1) and care (Jer 5:24) and, if withdrawn, to divine disfavour (Jer 3:3). The people gaped, not with the reproach of 16:10, but at the refreshment supplied by Job's statements.

The final two verses of chapter 29 are rather difficult to comprehend. Verse 24 attracts a plethora of interpretations while the crucial last verse requires deft interpretation to create some sort of logical flow.

According to Brother Mansfield, 29:24 indicates that if Job "did not favour a proposition, the authors of it lost their confidence in it. His smile or nod of acceptance established a matter." Others feel that Job was so esteemed that they could not believe it when he laughed familiarly with them. Gibson writes that "when they were downcast and despondent [Job] cheered them up with his brightness." The answer lies somewhere in there with the context favouring Job's prestige rather than his alleged jolly disposition. It also seems incongruous that he should be boasting in the powerful impact of his mocking.

His prestige is strongly reinforced in 29:25. He invests himself with the highest of titles. He selected the course that his listeners should follow. Andersen states that Job is taking on the role of governor. Job sat as their chief (**rosh**) and like a king (**melek**) among his troops. Besides being powerful, regal and decisive, his balanced character saw him comfort the mourners. This was something in which his friends were tragically inept (2:11, 16:2).

Such was the former greatness of Job.

### **Job's Present Misery**

Job's response to his original affliction (1:21) is ironically detailed in chapter 29 ("the LORD gave") and chapter 30 ("and the LORD hath taken away"). The contrast in Job's existence could hardly have been more extreme and is introduced in chapter 30 by a powerful combination of two little words; "But now."

Yes, such was the greatness of Job in chapter 29, but now (30:1), and now (30:9), and now (30:16). Chapter 30, emerging as it does from chapter 29, outlines the absolute reversal of Job's fortunes. The inexplicable is explained. The unthinkable is reality. The emotions resurface as Job presents as a tragic mix of depression, outrage, scorn and fear.

### **30:1-8            But now - Despised by dogs**

Job has replaced respect from the most respected of citizens with contempt from the most contemptible. The young mocked and laughed at he who was once a figure of veneration (29:8). The humiliation experienced by Job was unrelieved and irretrievable. His human pride emerges as he describes his tormentors as the most despicable of creatures. They were lower than the dogs that looked after his flock.

The dogs alluded to by Job were not the fine, faithful fellows bouncing around at their masters' feet. Thomson writes, "The Oriental shepherd dogs ... are a mean, sinister, ill-conditioned generation, kept at a distance, kicked about and half starved, with nothing noble or attractive about them" (W.M.Thomson, *The Land and The Book*, T Nelson and Sons, 1890, p202).

Even more disgusting than that, these young men were, in Job's description, the absolute filth of society. They were useless layabouts, enfeebled by their inability and unwillingness to earn enough to survive (30:2). They were a gang of vagrants who scavenged food whichever way they could (30:3-4). Cast out by civilised folk, they lived in caves and the clefts of rocks. They were a most loathsome, appalling lot whose uncouth speech was as the braying of wild asses. As the Jerusalem Bible graphically translates 30:8, "Their children are as worthless a brood as they were, nameless people, outcasts of society." Or as Andersen puts it, "Sons of an idiot, yea sons of an unperson."

### **30:9-15**      **But now - Derided and diminished**

It is these most abhorrent of humans who sing songs about Job and make him the talk of the town. The gross indignity of it all. While Job may be painting an exaggerated picture, the shame and ignominy are very apparent and hard felt. The irony is obvious and disturbing. This is the very scum he strove to help and now they turn on him like malnourished curs. They considered Job to be loathsome. They stood aloof except when they were close enough to spit in his face (30:10).

The experience of Job was shared, and surpassed, by the Lord Jesus Christ. The language of 30:9 is mirrored in Isaiah 53:3 and, to a lesser extent, in the messianic application of Psalm 35:15, 69:12. 30:10 has certain links with Isaiah 50:6 and the records of Matthew 26:67, 27:30. However, the differences should not be downplayed. While Job did not understand the purpose of his sufferings, our Lord did. While Job was an involuntary recipient of his sufferings, our Lord was willing to do as his Father required (Matt 26:42).

How can Job respond to this onslaught? He is powerless. God has loosed Job's bow (30:11 contrast 29:20). He does not have the wherewithal to return fire. The bridle that muzzled their tongues has been cast off. They spout their insults without restraint. It is a sorry scene as there is nothing preventing the rabble and nothing defending Job.

The intensity of the assaults fielded by Job is alarming. This uncouth brood (AV "youth" - *pirha*: only here in the Old Testament - Ges. "offspring of beasts") rise at Job's right hand, which is the place of an accuser (Psa 109:6), push away Job's feet, thereby permitting him no strength or stability, and construct siege-ramps against him (30:12 NIV).

This earnest preparation opens the way for Job to be comprehensively crushed. He cannot escape or retaliate. He has nobody to support him. In repeating the language of chapter 19, he essentially sees himself as a lone victim assailed by an invading army. Verse 15 summarises Job's despair:

"Terrors overwhelm me;  
my dignity is driven away as by the wind,  
my safety vanishes like a cloud" (NIV).

### **30:16-19**      **But now - Dying and diseased**

The shameful ignominy Job experienced at the hands of those abject vermin was compounded by the revolting disease that ravaged him. While there is some confusion about this section, especially verse 18 ("It is best to admit that the text is corrupt and the true meaning of the verse lost beyond recovery," writes Gibson), I believe that Job personifies his disease as a terrifying beast.

The sheer force of the disease sees Job giving it a personality of its own. His life is trickling away. Job is smitten with unrelenting depression and fierce pain as this monster saps his bones and continually gnaws at him. The monster never sleeps. "Sinews" (30:17 - *araq*) is a poor translation and literally means "gnaw" (TWOT, most versions). He imagines that his disease has grabbed him by the scruff of the neck and thrown him into the mire.

Job feels that he is no better than the dust and ashes in which he sits (30:19 compare 2:8).



### **30:20-23 But now - Denied by Deity**

Having considered the treatment he has received from his tormentors and his disease, Job now pours out his grief at God's denial of him. This really hurt. This section is the climax of this part of the speech. The final section (30:24-31) is more of a counterpoint to the earlier portion. 30:20-23 is also a taut summary of many of Job's previous outbursts against God:

- He cries unto God but God does not hear him (30:20 compare 19:7);
- He stands before God but God takes no notice or regards Job with indifference (30:20 compare 23:8);
- God is cruel in His dealings with Job (30:21 compare 7:13-14);
- He is persecuted, maybe even hated (AV "opposeth thysel" - **hatam** Ges. "to lay snares for any one, to follow hostilely." **Hatam** is used in Genesis 27:41 to describe Esau's hatred of Jacob), of God as he feels the force of God's hand (30:21 compare 16:9 **hatam**); and
- Job felt like God was tossing him about in a fierce storm thereby breaking him and preventing any success for Job (30:22 compare 9:17, 16:12).

For Job, death is certain (30:23 compare 17:1). He is doomed to **sheol**, the meeting-place for all mankind. The expression "house appointed" combines two Hebrew words, **mo'ed** ("appointed place" TWOT) and **bayit** ("house" TWOT). The finality of Job's destiny is conveyed with the use of **bayit**. While **bayit** is the common word for "house" it tends to speak of a dwelling that is solid and durable. This contrasts with the **mo'ed ohel**, the tabernacle of the Exodus (Exo 27:21 etc), where the people met with God. **Ohel** refers to a tent, a temporary abode. The grave takes no prisoners. Meeting with God is less certain, has more conditions and is difficult to understand. Job was desperate to make contact with God but the only certitude he had was contact with death.

### **30:24-31 But now - Destitute and dissipated**

Despite the obscurity of verse 24, this section rankles with Job's indignation. The treatment he extended to the poor, the downtrodden and the afflicted is not reciprocated to the poor, downtrodden and afflicted Job. Whereas, in the previous section, he was denied by God, in this section Job is denied by his fellow man and he cannot fathom why. It was all so grossly unfair.

The Authorised Version simply does not come to grips with the early verses of this section and presents Job as continuing his complaints against God. The true sense puts Job railing against mankind and doing so through the use of questions. The Jerusalem Bible translates the Hebraically-mystifying verse 24 as, "Yet have I ever laid a hand on the poor when they cried out for justice in calamity?" The questions continue in verse 25, "Did not I weep ... was not my soul grieved?" (RV).

Yes, Job had displayed all these empathic and compassionate personality traits but what did he receive when he fell on hardship. He hoped for happiness and received sorrow. Some light? He found darkness (30:26).

The effect of this on his overall condition was palpable. The churning inside him never stops. He cannot escape his shame and suffering. His appearance is revolting. His skin is blackened, dried out and peeling, because of his disease (30:28,30). Nobody comforts him, so he resorts to weeping (30:28 JB). His body burns with fever. His only brethren and companions are wild beasts; jackals (AV "dragons") and ostriches (AV "owls"). His other brethren had dealt deceitfully with him (6:15) and deserted him (19:13). His former companions (translated "friends", "neighbours" elsewhere in Job) failed to show him kindness (6:14), mocked him (12:4), scorned him (16:20) and were incapable of pitying him (19:21). At least the jackals and ostriches were neutral in their outlook towards Job. Those wild beasts were better brethren and friends to the beleaguered Job.

It is noteworthy that jackals and ostriches are partnered elsewhere in Scripture in regard to the desolation of Zion (Lam 4:3; Mic 1:8) and the destruction of Babylon (Isa 13:21-22). It almost seems as though the language of Job is used to describe the most dire of circumstances. While the significance of these animals is determined by the context in which they are used, Job's calamity is most closely matched by the reference in Micah:

"Therefore I will wail and howl, I will go stripped and naked; I will make a wailing like the jackals and a mourning like the ostriches" (Mic 1:8 NKJV).

These desert animals, with their instinctive dolefulness, best reflected the demeanour of Job (30:31).

### **Job's Repudiation of Offences and His Final Appeal**

According to the Jerusalem Bible's footnotes, chapter 31 is "a conditional imprecation. This was required by law from an accused person pleading 'not guilty'." Andersen in providing considerably more detail calls it "an oath of clearance in the form of a negative confession."

This was a well-known procedure in ancient jurisprudence. A crime would be denied by calling down a curse on oneself if one had actually committed it. The inference was that no evidence had been produced to convict and if it is, very unlikely if the accused is correct in affirming his innocence, he will readily accept the due punishment.

The negative confession was made in the interests of the accused's public honour and it was addressed to God in an appeal against human judgment. In chapter 31 Job lists specific crimes, denying them all. He uses the form, "If I have committed X, then I should receive Y!" X is the crime; Y is the penalty. And the penalty for the crime very much reflects the crime in a retaliatory sort of way. For example, the penalty for Job committing adultery would be to allow others to commit adultery with his wife (31:9-10).

What can be noted in this final utterance of Job is that it appears to be disordered. This has led to a number of authorities (e.g. Jerusalem Bible, New English Bible) rearranging the text to make it more coherent. There is no solid textual support for this nor do the circumstances fit. This consummation of the words of Job was not carefully constructed in the chambers of an inner-city magistrate. It is Job's last emotional outburst, recited by a diseased, impoverished outcast residing in the local rubbish dump.

Such a physical context only makes chapter 31 all the more remarkable.

### **31:1-12 Job's personal integrity**

Job does not indulge in any preliminary statements and immediately launches into his confession by disclaiming the sin of lust. While this is one of the greatest weaknesses of men (highlighted by Jesus in Matthew 5:28) it is not, according to Job, part of his curriculum vitae. He had made a covenant with his eyes that they not linger lasciviously on any young maiden. Job knew that lust is sourced in one's eyes (Prov 23:33) so a deal was struck with them.

Surely Job is overstating his moral integrity? Job, anticipating this reaction, indicates that his over-scrupulous conduct was proportional to his sensitivity of what is at stake. All his actions are influenced by "What does God think about this?" He is aware that God sees his ways and counts, not just one or two or several, all his steps (31:4). The last

thing he wanted was to be cut off from God. He is convinced that God will condemn the evil-doer yet surely God can see that Job is not such a person. Why is he suffering like he is?

Job also denies all association with dishonesty (31:5). All he needs is a fair trial, a basic assessment of his integrity, and God would have no option but to declare Job to be innocent (31:6 **tumma**: AV "integrity" - see notes 2:3). God had already declared the **tumma** of Job (2:3) but Job, unaware of this, forcefully affirms that if any part of his being - feet, heart, eyes, hands (31:7) - acted falsely then he would gladly allow his prosperity to be destroyed. Ironically, Job's prosperity had been eradicated some months before.

His personal life was also characterised by his fidelity in his marriage. He had never committed adultery (31:9). The enormity of this act was not lost on Job as he recognised it as punishable under human law, and punishable by death in the eyes of God (Deut 22:22). Should Job be guilty of such "an heinous crime" he would allow his wife to become the slave-girl, with all that that occupation involves, to other men (31:10).

### **31:13-23      Job's fair dealing with his fellow man**

The sentiments of this section, replete with the ideals of compassion, fairness and equity, are easily understood in today's world. Even the most tyrannical of nations contain people who espouse such causes in the anticipation of a better society for mankind. But for such to be found in Job's day is nothing short of remarkable. Job professes a humane ethic that was in severe undersupply in the ancient world.

For example, slaves in the ancient world were precisely that; slaves, people owned by men. The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible records, "Legally the slave was a chattel. He was a commodity that could be sold, bought, leased, exchanged or inherited. In sharp contrast to the free man, his father's name was never mentioned; he had no genealogy, being a man without a name ... The female slave, like the male slave, was treated as a commodity. She was leased for work, given as a pledge, or handed over as part of a dowry. In addition to her routine duties as a maidservant, she was subject also to burdens peculiar to her sex." But Job regarded his manservants and maidservants differently. He would never deny them their justice. It did not matter whether they were male or female, they would all be treated equally. Job's behaviour was out of context with his social environment.

Why? Because his servants were as much the handiwork of God as Job was (31:15 see also 10:8-11)! What a magnificent sentiment! It is one that is lost on most people today. How, declares Job, could he stand before God if he was guilty of mistreating a slave (31:14; Eph 6:9)?

Furthermore, as far as Job was concerned, he was never guilty of parsimony despite the unsupported claims of Eliphaz in 22:6-9. These claims deeply distressed Job as this is the third time he has addressed them. Job attributes such conduct (e.g. exploiting the poor, neglecting the fatherless and the widow, ignoring the hungry and thirsty) as the sole domain of the wicked (24:2-12) and most definitely absent from his outlook on life (29:12-17).

However, should any doubt still be flickering, Job reiterates his defence. He has:

- Never been insensitive to the needs of the poor (31:16);
- Never allowed a widow's eyes to become tired as she waited for relief (31:16);
- Never been selfish with his food, especially towards orphans (31:17);
- Always cared for orphans and widows (31:18);
- Always clothed the vagrant and the needy (31:19-20); and
- Never raised his hand to exploit the fatherless even though he could do so without fear of reprisal (31:21).

Should anything other than that listed above be the case then, says Job, "Let my shoulder fall from its socket, [and] my arm be shattered at the joint" (31:22 JB). That way Job would be incapable of ever lifting his hand against the defenceless again. Worse than that, divine disfavour and Job's destruction would be entirely justified (31:23). Job would make no excuses.

### **31:24-28      Job's faithfulness to God**

When Eliphaz declared that Job should make God his treasure (22:24) he was probably inferring that Job placed far too much confidence in the immense riches he had previously possessed. Job seems to have interpreted Eliphaz's comment as such and therefore denounces any allegiance to the lures of material wealth (31:24-25) or the attractions of idolatry (31:26-27). While it is true that Job used his wealth to assist the fatherless and the widow it was not, for Job, a source of pride or security. He did not gloat in his riches. Job is adamant that he had not been spoiled by his former prosperity.

Nor had Job allowed himself to be even secretly enticed to worship the sun and the moon; two of the popular deities of the ancient pantheon that corrupted many including the Jewish nation (Deut 4:19, 17:3; Jer 8:2; Ezek 8:16). The strange expression, "My mouth has kissed my hand" does not mean the somewhat picturesque "blew them a secret kiss" (JB) as such a practice was unheard of in Bible times. To touch the mouth with the hand was more than likely an act of homage. By way of an example, the ancient historian Tacitus records that the Syrians saluted the rising sun by kissing their hand (Delitzsch).

While the preceding expression is somewhat obscure, 31:28 is crystal clear. Job rightly assessed idolatry to "be an iniquity worthy of judgment, for I would have denied God who is above" (NKJV).

### **31:29-34      Job's repudiation of dishonourable thoughts**

Job seems to lose direction in this section - not in its content, moreso in its format and flow of thought. He is drawing to the conclusion of the lengthiest uninterrupted speech in the Book of Job and in doing so makes his most forceful of assertions to his personal integrity. He begins each segment with the mandatory "if" statement, as befitting a conditional imprecation, but the anticipated apodosis does not follow. Instead he drops into editorial comment to show that the "if" statements do not, in any way, apply to his circumstances. He also fails to adequately conclude this section, choosing rather to launch into a desperate plea for a hearing with God (31:35).

These aberrations in what was, up until now, one of Job's more ordered and coherent efforts are symptomatic of the feelings firing up Job's final flurry. While some commentators blame a perceived faulty text and the Jerusalem Bible pursues its unfortunate practice of relocating a number of verses, I believe the text accurately reflects the demeanour of Job. He is convinced of his innocence. And while he is sincere in the presentation of his claims, he appears to be tired and emotional, maybe even relieved as he approaches the end of his defence.

Job is so sure of his rectitude that his first "if" statement in this section addresses the prospect that he may have found pleasure in the discomfiture of his enemies. However, instead of attaching the requisite penalties, should the statement be true, Job openly denies any suggestion of personal vindictiveness. He never allowed such a sin to pass his lips (31:30). What an astonishingly confident assertion! Surely even the most spiritual man of the Old Testament would have experienced a fleeting surge of pleasure at the failure of a sworn enemy. Not according to Job; a man whose conscience was either wonderfully clear or totally dead. Of course, the latter suggestion is extremely unlikely to be correct.

The next "if" statement relates to Job's hospitality (31:31). If they could find one who had not been satisfied by Job's hospitality then ... again he interrupts, this time with a solemn affirmation that "no stranger had to spend the night in the street, for my door was always open to the traveller" (31:32 NIV).

Finally, he addresses the sin of hypocrisy. If he had dissembled like Adam, or concealed his sin as men normally do (opinion is divided as to whether 31:33 has links with the conduct of Adam in Genesis 3 or is a general statement of man's customary behaviour), because he feared what others would think then ... again, no penalty is specified. This time he does not even reach a conclusion as he leaps into a new line of thought that is highlighted by an impassioned plea to God.

It is interesting to note that 31:33-34 indicates that Job did not consider himself to be sinless, while declaring that he was not afraid to expose his sins to those around him. He was prepared to live in broad daylight; open to the scrutiny of all. This approach to life would have contributed to the inability of his accusers to reveal Job's hidden sin - the sin, by their reckoning, that was responsible for all Job's woes.

### **31:35-40      Job's final appeal as an honest man**

Job breaks away from his defence and places his final appeal. While Job betrays an emotion-sourced fatigue that sees him lose the continuity of his presentation he still maintains its legal phraseology.

He cries out for one to hear him and affixes his solemn signature on the attestation of his innocence. "Desire" is a poor translation of **taw**. **Taw** being the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet was shaped like an "x" in the Hebrew text. Job uses **taw** ("mark" TWOT) in the sense of a man's signature, signing off his case before God. But unlike any case before or after, Job recognises that the Almighty is the judge to whom he appeals and the prosecutor who is indicting him.

"Adversary" (**ish rib** - literally "man of my strife" Stg) is a purely legal term which in our terminology would be "prosecutor" (NKJV). "Book" is a bland translation of what is better rendered as "indictment" (RSV). Job is unafraid of such a document as he would bear it as proudly as a king does his crown (31:36). Job is confident, possibly to the level of being belligerent, that God's indictment would contain nothing to incriminate him. He is more than capable of giving a full account of his steps (31:37).

Unfortunately his prosecutor has lodged no indictment and his judge has refused to hear his case. Job has followed the judicial process of his day but God, who does not operate within man's strictures, has not played His part. The prosecutor was meant to state his case and then the defendant his. Job was defending a legal vacuum. But there must be some sort of charge to account for the diabolical reversal of his fortunes, so therefore Job makes his last challenge to God. Job realised that God was supreme and he acknowledged that God, and only God, had the right to bring any charge against him as his friends had failed to produce any evidence to reinforce their theories. As far as Job was concerned, God was the ultimate tribunal to which he could place his appeal.

Even though his final appeal is lodged with Almighty God, Job cannot resist the temptation to provide just that extra little piece of supporting information. He concludes with a sincere denial of him ever exploiting the land. Should he have illegally seized land or obtained its produce by fraudulent means or failed to pay his workers then let his land be full of brambles and smelly weeds ("cockle" AV - only in 31:40 - **bosha** "stinking or noxious weeds" TWOT). He would willingly accept the curses placed on Adam (Gen 3:17-18) and Cain (Gen 4:12).

"The words of Job are ended."

## 27 ELIHU'S MONOLOGUES - INTRODUCTION

---

From out of nowhere a new character enters the picture; Elihu, son of Barachel the Buzite, of the clan of Ram. Where he came from is not entirely clear, where he went is unstated. His input is abrupt, controversial and observably different to what has gone before. In fact, a number of commentators question the validity of Elihu's contribution or declare it to be a later interpolation designed to spice up the text. It is easy to leap from the end of chapter 31 to continue at the beginning of chapter 38 with no discernible break in the story.

Opinions of the value of Elihu's comments are so diverse that they basically cancel each other out. By way of example, the next digression outlines some divergent Christadelphian viewpoints. The commentators are even more extreme.

Is Elihu really part of the overall design of the Book? I believe that there is no doubt that he is. To accept divine inspiration of the Bible and to then discredit six chapters is dangerous. Yes, he arrives abruptly, has his say and then disappears from sight. However this is not unprecedented for the Book of Job as the Satan follows the same pattern. Job's wife undergoes similar treatment even though she must have been present for the duration of the saga if only to keep Job fed.

What value does Elihu offer? He must be examined in the context of an adjudicator. He is not one of the debaters. He provides the human commentary on what has been said in chapters 3-31. Hence, unlike the others, he more readily quotes from their speeches. While Elihu gave the human estimate, it is the LORD from chapter 38 onwards who provides the divine appraisal. Elihu's opinions are not perfect but, as we will see, they are usually correct.

It should also be noted that there is no need for the LORD to comment on Elihu's perspective. The real issues revolved around the spiritual pride of Job and the dogged incorrectness of Job's three antagonists. The LORD's silence on Elihu is no more striking than the absence of any final showdown with the Satan.

There is no denying the different style exhibited by Elihu. Scholars have questioned Elihu's pomposity as well as Elihu's linguistic variations from the rest of the Book. If anything, these characteristics only confirm that Elihu was different. He is not required to talk in the same way as the others. He is not required to think as the others do. He is Elihu, a younger man who is full of opinions, and therefore entitled to respond as Elihu. The real problem lies in determining the value of Elihu's intervention.

As a general introductory overview I would suggest that Elihu's contribution:

- 1) Is predominantly constructive with a view to helping Job;
- 2) Is the bridge between Job's self-justification and the LORD's intervention;
- 3) Is not perfect otherwise there would be no need for divine comment;

- 4) Is essential for the overall flow of the Book; and
- 5) Epitomises a human perspective on the issues under discussion and does so with a significant chunk of spiritual enlightenment.

However, his manner of speaking befits the youngest player in this drama and tactful diplomacy is not one of his strong points. His anger, especially in the early portion of his contribution, only inflamed his language to a degree that makes many a reader feel that he must be wrong.

The broad division of the Elihu chapters is as follows:

<b>Chapter 32</b>	Elihu is Introduced;
<b>Chapter 33</b>	Elihu's First Speech - Elihu's Address to Job
<b>Chapter 34</b>	Elihu's Second Speech - God Does Not Pervert Justice
<b>Chapter 35</b>	Elihu's Third Speech - Righteousness Does Profit
<b>Chapters 36,37</b>	Elihu's Fourth Speech - Adversity is Remedial and God is Omnipotent

### **27.1 Digression - Elihu: Mixed Emotions**

---

Before we begin our commentary on the speeches of Elihu it is timely to state that regardless of what is written not everyone will agree. Although Elihu is undoubtedly a spectator of the speeches that precede his monologues, his abrupt insertion into the story, his undiplomatically expressed opinions and his unresolved departure from the text opens up a range of viewpoints. Elihu is an enigma. Many interested people when they learnt that I was studying the Book of Job invariably sought my opinion on Elihu or stridently expressed their own. Below is a sample of the diverse Christadelphian viewpoints on Elihu.

- "Enlightened but deficient" Brother K.Papowski, *Hast Thou Considered My Servant Job*, K.Papowski, 1992, p1
- "It is conceivable that the young man Elihu could be the satan of the book of Job ... Elihu was no friend of Job, and is not subject to ultimate redemption, as were the companions of Job" Brother G.E.Mansfield, "Logos" magazine, March 1998, p179
- "I read the Book of Job through in one sitting and came to the conclusion that Elihu is a stinker" A sister in conversation with the author
- "[We subscribe to the view] of Elihu filling an essential place in the book, contributing an explanation of the problem discussed that is correct and in keeping with the teaching elsewhere in the Scriptures" Brother J.Carter, "The Christadelphian" magazine, 1950, p358
- "It is impossible not to feel that in these things Elihu is speaking the truth; hence he does not incur the censure of God, as the three friends do" Brother F.T.Pearce, "The Christadelphian" magazine, 1950, p357

- "Without Elihu's preparation, Job might very well have found his interview with God to be catastrophic" Brother C.Tennant, *The Book of Job*, The Christadelphian, 1991, p30
- "Whilst we may take warning to ourselves from the obstinacy which springs from the self-confidence of age in the three, we can take equal warning from the boastful presumption which springs from the self-confidence of youth in Elihu ... There is little difference in principle between the error of the three and that of Elihu" Brother R.T.Lovelock, *Job*, The Christadelphian, 1957, p76-77,79
- "Elihu is not mentioned in the epilogue because he merits no rebuke and is not, like Job and his friends, in need of reconciliation" Brother L.G.Sargent, *Ecclesiastes and Other Studies*, The Christadelphian, 1965, p134
- "Yes Elihu's theory was a great advance on that of the others and expressed some divine truths. This suggests he was all head and no heart, and that prejudice blinded him to the proper application of truth" Brother H.P.Mansfield in Unpublished Bible margin notes
- "Elihu was quite clearly inspired by God! He spoke for God. This was quite a revelation to me when I saw it" A brother in correspondence to the author
- "Elihu is in fact the **mediator** in the case, such as Job desired" Brother C.C.Walker, *Job*, The Christadelphian, (Second Edition) 1955, p17
- "As typical of Christ, *he* was the resolution to all Job's problems. His speeches produced a true self-realization within Job, rather than compounding his agony, as the words of his friends did ... Elihu is indeed God's representative" Brother D.Heaster, *Beyond Bible Basics*, The Christadelphian Advancement Trust, 1999, p735

## 28 CHAPTER 32 - ELIHU'S MONOLOGUES - ELIHU IS INTRODUCED

---

**32:1-5** Elihu is Introduced

### Elihu Introduces Himself

**32:6-10** Though young, I will express my opinions

**32:11-14** Job is unanswered

**32:15-22** I have no choice, I must speak

### **32:1-5** Elihu is Introduced

Elihu is introduced by a paragraph of narrative prose. This paragraph does not represent the opinions of Elihu but is an inspired appraisal of the current situation. What are revealed are the reasons for the silence of the friends and the intervention of Elihu.

The three said no more to Job "because he was righteous (**tzadak**) in his own eyes" (32:1). While justified in his own sight he was not justified before God. This is declared by the LORD to Job in 40:8 - "Wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be righteous" (**tzadak**)? If anything, this indicated Job's failing as well as the inability of the friends to



address it. Their blinkered logic was defeated and they were incapable of dealing with this obvious issue. This infuriated Elihu.

Job thought he was right rather than God (32:2) and the three had no answer. Therefore, they had condemned God (32:3). The Authorised Version, among others, reads "condemned Job." However, other works such as the Jerusalem Bible, Rotherham, the New English Bible and the Companion Bible follow what is considered to be the most ancient reading of "condemned God." The Sopherim (see notes on 1:5) had emended "God" to "Job" out of a misplaced reverence. What this change is saying is that the one who is doubted by the debating parties was God. Job's self-righteousness and his antagonists' ineptitude led to the conclusion that God had made a mistake. Job's character was exceptional but that did not justify him before **Elohim**. Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, while they condemned Job, in retiring from the argument were implying that God was unjust in his dealings with Job.

These were the factors that outraged Elihu "the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the kindred of Ram." Elihu is the only character in the Book of Job who attracts such a detailed identification. The names are eminently noble: Elihu means "God is he" or "He is God" or "God himself" while Barachel equates to "Blessed of God" or "God blesses." There is no clear reason why such detail is supplied but it does seem that Elihu was related, through Nahor, to Abraham (Gen 22:21). Regardless of his ancestry, anger is attached to him four times in this brief introduction. His youthful frustration boils over into the outburst that follows.

Does this mean that Elihu was a disrespectful young upstart? No. His respect for his elders is acknowledged by the inspired narrator (32:4). He only spoke when everybody else had run out of things to say. He had waited and waited for their profound intellects to decipher the riddle of Job's suffering. Instead they had all failed. While we cannot condone Elihu's rage, we can easily understand the reasons behind it.

### **Elihu Introduces Himself**

As a result of his anger, Elihu's self-introduction is not much more than a repetitive rave. He is intent on letting his hearers know that he needs to speak out and spends more time than what appears necessary to explain why.

### **32:6-10            Though young, I will express my opinions**

Elihu had, out of respect, given the aged men the first say. He calls them **yashish** - a word that is only found in the Book of Job. Its only other usages capture Elihu's dilemma:

- 1) 12:12: Job affirms that wisdom is with the aged;
- 2) 15:10: Eliphaz asserts that his age gives him superiority over Job; and
- 3) 29:8: Job marvels how that in his former life even the aged gave him honour.

It was this overwhelming attitude of his era that resulted in Elihu being afraid to intervene. He had been trained to hold back. Yes, he was reluctant, but now he will tell them what he knows. He was not, as the Authorised Version infers, merely venturing an opinion. Rather he was going to declare his knowledge (32:6).

Elihu is almost apologetic for interfering because it had always been his standard that "Old age should speak, advancing years should utter wisdom" (32:7 JB). But now he realises that the aged do not have a monopoly on knowledge and that anybody who is a living, breathing being can develop sound judgment (32:8). The expression "inspiration (*neshama*) of the Almighty" is simply a reference to "breath" (see 33:4). It relates to the breath received by men and women from the Almighty. Elihu is not, I believe, claiming divine inspiration.

It is Elihu's realisation that age does not automatically bestow wisdom that emboldens him to ask for a hearing from his senior companions.

### **32:11-14      Job is unanswered**

Elihu begins to repeat himself. His venturing of his viewpoint was not the cultural norm of his day. His role was to remain silent and learn from those who are much older than him. He is reversing tradition and in doing so is in danger of sounding pompous and patronising. His youthfulness is on display and his speech, with its repetition and forthrightness, merely highlights it. But he has good reason to speak. Their words had been disappointing. He genuinely yearned to be educated by them but they had failed him. This frustration had been reinforced by their inability to effectively respond to Job's words.

A number of variations exist for verse 13. Literal versions (e.g. Roth, Green) convey the sense that Elihu feels the three smugly considered, even though they could not defeat Job, that they surely possessed wisdom and God would eventually vindicate them (see also RSV, NKJV). Elihu sees no need to adopt a similar attitude towards Job, especially as Job had not directly spoken to him. Therefore, his reply will be couched in different terms (32:14).

### **32:15-22      I have no choice, I must speak**

This section adds nothing tangible to the debate. Many a reader is irritated rather than educated by Elihu's bombast. He states that he is "full of words" (32:18 RSV) and nobody questions that comment. He seems more focussed on his rage rather than on addressing Job's situation. While this may appear superfluous to the overall message, it does give us an insight into Elihu. His discourse will follow but we are presented here with a younger man who is frustrated, disappointed and bursting with words. His inner nature compels him and he feels like he is choking on the rush of words that are trying to force their way out.

He must speak. He likens himself to a wineskin that has no vent (32:19). After the initial stage of fermentation, wine was transferred to wineskins that were normally made from whole goat hides, the neck and feet being tied. An opening was usually left to allow for the escape of gases formed by the on-going fermentation. Without that opening the wineskins would absorb enormous pressure and occasionally burst. That was why it was ill-advised to place new fermenting wine into an old pre-stretched wineskin (Matt 9:17). Elihu had to gain relief by uttering his knowledge.

He contrasts vividly with the others who "have been nonplussed, baffled for an answer, words have failed them ... they are silent and have abandoned all efforts to reply" (32:15-16 JB). While there is no doubt he is labouring the point, he is correct in declaring that more has to be said. The discussion has definitely not ended. Elihu's contribution, despite his wordy introduction, will play an important part.

Furthermore, Elihu states that he is going to be totally impartial (32:21). He will not show partiality to any "man" (*ish* - a common word for man but usually as a great man) nor will he give flattering titles to "man" (*adam* - mankind in general). This undiplomatic outburst (is Elihu accusing the others of such conduct?) was not in keeping with his times

nor does it seem to be justified. However, his desire to be impartial before God confirms the sentiments expressed by Job in 31:13-15.

His introduction is concluded. Now he must make a contribution or withdraw.

## 29 CHAPTER 33 - ELIHU'S MONOLOGUES - ELIHU'S FIRST SPEECH

---

### **Elihu's Address to Job**

- 33:1-7** Why Job should listen to Elihu
- 33:8-13** Elihu recounts Job's presumptions
- 33:14-22** God speaks to man in many ways
- 33:23-30** God does save
- 33:31-33** Elihu's challenge to Job

### **Elihu's Address to Job**

Elihu now specifically addresses Job and what quickly comes to our attention is the fact that Elihu is focussed on what Job said in his adversity. Elihu, unlike the others, does not call into question Job's former life. He does not seek the elusive causative sin as the others constantly did. However, he is seriously concerned with some of Job's comments that came to light during the preceding debate.

#### **33:1-7 Why Job should listen to Elihu**

Elihu returns to the courtesy that began the debate and also addresses Job, as none of the others had done, by name. In attempting to convince Job of the absolute sincerity of his utterances, Elihu, possibly to ameliorate an early concern of Job expressed in 6:25, becomes repetitive and his words redundant. He uses three synonyms for "words" and an unusual eloquence when he says, "Behold now, I have opened my mouth, My tongue speaketh in my palate (**hek**)" (33:3 Delitzsch - see also Roth, JB, RVmg).

It could be that Elihu, in his wordiness, is striving to establish some sort of rapport with Job. Job in asserting his sincerity and innocence, while under enormous provocation, said, "Neither have I suffered my mouth (**hek** - "palate" AVmg) to sin" (31:30). "I also", infers Elihu, "Will speak the honest truth. In my sincerity, wisdom will be spoken."

Should Job not believe Elihu's claims, a challenge, reminiscent of Job's in 24:25, is thrown out to him - "Refute me if you can. Prepare your ground to oppose me" (33:5 JB). This does not mean that Elihu is declaring himself to be infallible, or that he believes he is inspired by God. He is placing a great deal of confidence in the quality of the knowledge he is about to share. As suggested in 32:8, Elihu is merely indicating that as a man, created and enlivened by God, he is on the same footing as any other man. As we read in 33:6, Elihu claims no special endowment over the others - "Lo! I am like thyself toward **God**, From clay have I been nipped off even I" (Roth, see also RSV, RV, Green). However, he does claim the right to express his opinions.

Elihu, in saying this, is also addressing Job's terror (**ema**). In reference to God, Job had said, "Let not his fear terrify (**ema**) me" (9:34) and, "Let not thy dread (**ema**) make me afraid" (13:21). Zophar also plays on this theme in 20:25. "Don't worry", reassures Elihu, "I am a man just like you, so you need not be terrified by what I have to say" (33:7). One wonders if this comment was even necessary, let alone reassuring. If anything, it could be imagined that Job was drumming his fingers and thinking, "I wish he would get on with it."

The word translated "hand" (**ekep** - only found in Job 33:7) means "pressure" (TWOT) and is translated that way by a number of versions (e.g. RV, RSV, Soncino, Delitzsch).

### **33:8-13 Elihu recounts Job's presumptions**

Finally, Elihu begins to discuss Job's statements. It is important to note that it is Job's words that are to be called into question. Elihu only deals with what he has heard or thinks he has heard. He does not hypothesise. It is also Job's words that are questioned by Yahweh (38:2), repented of by Job (40:5) and, as a result of that repentance, are the basis for divine approval (42:6-7). While it is true that the others addressed Job's comments, their ventures into the realm of speculation merely condemned them. Elihu sticks to the knowns although, as we will see, he is not literally correct with some of the expressions he attributes to Job.

According to Elihu, Job had said, "I am clean (**zak**) without transgression (**pesha**), I am innocent (**hap**) neither is their iniquity (**avon**) in me" (33:9). This verse is used by Elihu's detractors to claim that he was a young upstart who misrepresented Job.

Job only uses the word **zak** in reference to his prayer (16:17). It is Zophar who directly accuses Job with saying "My doctrine is pure (**zak**)" (11:4), and Bildad who infers that Job is not "pure (**zak**) and upright" (8:6). Elihu could have attributed the comments of Zophar and Bildad to Job. But, while **zak** is not a regular part of Job's vocabulary, he does assert his innocence in a number of places (10:7, 16:17, 23:12, 27:5-6). Elihu's recall of Job's statement, while imperfect, could essentially be sound.

Again, Job never says that he is without transgressions (**pesha**). 7:20, 13:23 and 14:17 strongly suggest that Job acknowledged he had committed transgressions and sought God's forgiveness. However, Job does deny ever committing **pesha** in the sense of personal vindictiveness (31:30). Elihu has possibly granted a broader meaning to Job's proud boast and in doing so is probably addressing an arrogance that unchecked could lead to Job's spiritual downfall.

**Hap** is unique to 33:9 in Scripture. It means to be "pure, in a moral sense" (Ges). Job never directly claimed to be **hap**, but decrees like "I have made a pact with my eyes, not to linger on any virgin" (31:1 JB) adds substance to Elihu's observation.

Job also recognised that he could have committed iniquity (7:21). So what is Elihu linking **avon** (see notes on 13:23) with? Again, chapter 31 appears to contain the salient sections because it is there that Job denies **avon** in the contexts of infidelity (31:11), idolatry (31:28) and hypocrisy (31:33). Job's specificity has again been generally applied by Elihu.

Is Elihu being unfair in his accusations against Job? While the record does not strictly correlate Elihu's citations with the original spokesman, the essence of Job's self-justification is captured by Elihu. Elihu has not quoted verbatim but

he has not acted inappropriately. Job did not believe that he was sinless but his attitude saw him decline into an unfortunate self-righteousness.

His self-righteousness meant that Job had to call God's treatment of him into question (33:10). This time Elihu's quoting of Job is relatively precise. The first part - "he findeth occasion against me" - is not entirely clear and could be an overstatement of Job's feelings. The second part - "he counteth me for his enemy" - is a solid citation of 13:24 (see also 19:11, 30:21). Verse 11 is a direct quotation from Job's statements in 13:27.

Elihu's reaction to Job's words is simplistic, almost banal, but accurate. He tells Job, "You are wrong" (33:12 JB, Andersen) and that "God is greater than man." While Job may not have willingly embraced the opening judgment, he had already affirmed the greatness of God in virtually every speech he uttered. However, if Job really believed that, "Why," queries Elihu, "Has Job sought to strive (*rib*) against Him?" (33:13). Elihu is possibly alluding to 31:35 where Job called the Almighty "the man of my strife" (*ish rib*). Yahweh lends credibility to Elihu's criticism of Job when He asks Job, "Shall the one who contends (*rib*) with the Almighty correct Him?" (40:2 NKJV).

And why did Job express displeasure at the apparent silence of God to his questions (13:22, 19:7)? Elihu is shocked by the sound of Job's words. How could Job expect God to reply in accordance with Job's requirements? After all, God speaks to man in many ways.

### **33:14-22      God speaks to man in many ways**

According to Elihu, because God does not always speak to man in the way he expects, man fails to notice when God is communicating. God uses one method with no result and follows with another unsuccessful method. It is not God's fault if man fails to perceive when God is speaking to him.

Elihu continues by outlining two forms of divine communication. The first is by dreams (33:15-18), the second is through pain and suffering (33:19-22). Job was subject to both experiences. This prompts some commentators to align Elihu's style of speaking with the heavy-handed approach of the others. But, there is a difference. Both communication channels are used by God elsewhere in Scripture and notably in the Pentateuch. Elihu was being factual rather than spiteful.

God speaks through dreams (*halom* - Gen 20:3-7, 31:24; Num 12:6) and visions (*hizzayon* - 2Sam 7:17), when man is in a deep sleep (*tardema* - Gen 2:21, 15:12). Eliphaz (4:13) claimed that God spoke to him in a vision (*hizzayon*) during a deep sleep (*tardema*). It is obvious from the content of Eliphaz's vision that this was not the case. In 7:14, Job complained that God plagued him with dreams (*halom*) and terrifying visions (*hizzayon*). Maybe Elihu is suggesting that God did this to Job for a reason. God was not indulging, as Job hints, in some sort of malicious prank to aggravate a tortured man.

Man may not normally notice God's message but he finds it very difficult to ignore a disturbing dream. He awakes terrified from the warnings it contains (33:16 RSV). Such dreams, sent by God, are intended to turn man away from evil-doing and to "make an end of his pride" (33:17 JB). Man is stopped from pursuing paths that will lead to his death (Prov 16:25). His trip to "the pit" (*shahat*) is delayed and his life is not subject to an early termination by the sword. In summary, divinely sent dreams, according to Elihu, halt man in following sins of self-importance and deliver him from an untimely death, whether it be natural or violent.

Elihu emphasises "the pit" (**shahat**) in this chapter (33:15,22,24,28,30). He is more than likely responding to Job's sentiments as expressed in the only other two places **shahat** is found outside chapter 33 in the Book of Job. In 9:31, Job declared that, regardless of how vigorously he ceremonially cleansed himself, God would simply dunk him into a filthy pit to ensure that Job remained detestable. In 17:14, Job describes the pit (AV "corruption") as his father such is the intimacy of his relationship with it. Elihu now attempts to impress on Job that God is communicating with Job in order to keep him from a premature entry into the pit.

God does this through visions, while man is in a deep sleep, and through the infliction of pain and suffering, while man is awake. This is not a soothing concept to lay on the horribly afflicted Job, especially when the detail of God's chastening includes general pain, "strife in his bones" (33:19 RSV), anorexia, emaciation, rotting flesh and a near proximity to death. All these symptoms were Job's symptoms (7:5, 19:20,27, 30:17,30 etc) as well as being the reasons for the others to consider Job as a giant of sin.

Elihu sees Job's affliction in a different light. It was part of God's chastening and therefore for Job's benefit. "Chastened" (33:19) is **yakach** in the Hebrew and a popular word in the Book of Job (see notes on 13:1-12). Elihu uses **yakach** in 32:12 (AV "convinced") when criticising the three friends. His point is that God reproves, convinces and corrects through the use of pain and suffering. The three misunderstood this legitimate concept (Heb 12:5-12) and were therefore unable to effectively address Job's dilemma.

The term "destroyers" (33:22) is a curious one translated from a common word that means "die, kill, have one executed" (TWOT). In this context it could mean "killers" (Ges, Andersen) and have reference to angels who are commissioned by God to slay men (Delitzsch, Gibson - see Psa 78:49; 2Sam 24:16). Brother Mansfield interprets it as "manslayers" in reference to the afflicting disease or illness. Verse 22 parallels with verse 18 and neither interpretation detracts from the overall argument.

### **33:23-30 God does save**

God not only speaks to man, He is also prepared to save him. He can do so by way of a mediator between Himself and man. Such a concept is critical to an understanding of how God saves fallen man (1Tim 2:5-6). The use of a mediator is also another way that God speaks to man. Elihu's understanding of this concept sets him apart from the others and places this section as the most advanced and profound of all his comments. Those who interpret Elihu in a wholly negative way are not supported by the depth of spiritual insight displayed in these verses.

However, verse 23 is not easy to decipher. Who is the mediator suggested by Elihu? A number of commentators claim that he is an angel, whereas Brother Papowski aligns him with Christ. Brother Mansfield believes that Elihu is promoting himself as the mediator. I believe that Elihu could be referring to anybody who could fulfil the role of a mediator between God and man. He is not being specific as he does not precisely identify who the mediator is. However, his description of the mediator narrows the field down to a very special kind of person. This individual possesses the following characteristics:

- He is a messenger (**malak**). There are many instances where **malak** refers to human messengers (1:14), including humans who served as God's messengers (2Chron 36:15-16; Hag 1:13);
- He is an interpreter (**lis**). **Lis** is a strange word that usually conveys the aspect of scorn (16:20) but, in this context, has the sense of an interpreter (Gen 42:23), a negotiator (2Chron 32:31) and a God-commissioned speaker (Isa 43:27). It is he who makes plain the message of God to men;
- He is one among a thousand. Elihu is possibly addressing Job's concern in 9:3. There Job declared that should man contend with God, man is in a hopeless position. God could ask a thousand questions that would be beyond man's capacity to answer. Elihu is informing Job that while Job could not negotiate with God, God appoints special agents who can;
- He is one "who would declare to man what is right for him" (Andersen). He can provide instruction on the correct means to remedy sin or disease; and

- He is one who is gracious to the sinner. In other words, he approaches God on the sinner's behalf. He asks God to "Deliver him from going down into the pit: I have found a ransom" (33:24).

Clearly, all these characteristics were perfected in the Lord Jesus Christ and one can only marvel at the detail Elihu provides here. He knew what was required and he knew that it included a ransom - "a covering by shedding of blood, or the price of expiation, or atonement" (CompB). While Elihu would not have been fully conversant with the details of the saving work of Jesus Christ (1Pet 1:10-12), his remarkable understanding of the work of the mediator has confirmatory correspondence with the Apostle Paul's description, in the Epistle to the Romans, of Christ's work.

"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;  
Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ:  
Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;  
To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and a justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

(Romans 3:23-26 see also Romans 5:18-21)

Elihu has identified how Job can be saved. God will not necessarily deal directly with man. God can operate through a mediator who can speak on his behalf, can represent the sinner to him, is a specially selected individual and knows what is right. Should Job receive God's salvation through the work of this mediator then:

- His flesh will be restored to that of a young child's (2Kings 5:14);
- God has listened and responded favourably to his prayers (33:26; 2Kings 20:5; Psa 28:6; Jer 33:3) as well as being admitted (as a man whose righteousness has been restored), in a spiritual sense, into God's presence (Psa 11:7);
- He will be full of joy and singing (33:27 RV, RSV, Delitzsch, JB, Roth. AV "looketh upon") as he publicly recounts his salvation; and
- He will confess his sin so that a huge burden is lifted off his mind (Psa 32:3-6).

Furthermore, God is patient in His dealings with man. While man has difficulty perceiving God's message, despite the number of ways it is expressed (33:14), God continues with man in order to save him - "Behold, God works all these things, twice, in fact, three times with a man, to bring back his soul from the Pit, that he might be enlightened with the light of life" (33:29-30 NKJV). The idiom "twice, in fact, three times" is a statement indicating thoroughness and perseverance. It is another example of ascending enumeration designed to provide emphasis (see notes on 5:19).

What has Elihu offered Job? He has provided a clear and accurate portrayal of how God can work. He has also indicated where he believed Job was wrong. He has encouraged Job to humble himself before God by acknowledging personal sin and God's righteousness. There is no doubt that Elihu has been fairer and more accurate than the others and that this section demonstrates the higher spiritual plane in which Elihu inhabits. His solution is not based on a philosophy that reduced Job's former prosperity to a disaster waiting to happen. His advice that Job's disease and nightmares were God's ways of communicating with Job appears to be logical. However, it seems a simple way to explain why Job was so horribly afflicted. As an explanation it may be correct, but is it sufficient?

### **33:31-33 Elihu's challenge to Job**

This short section is repetitive and a little confused. Elihu instructs Job to hold his peace and listen (33:31) but to interrupt if he has anything to say (33:32)! To Elihu's credit, he would like Job to speak up because "I want you to be cleared" (NIV). This was not the spirit that ultimately motivated Job's three friends.

However, should Job keep silent, Elihu bids him to stay silent (a somewhat redundant piece of advice) so that he can teach Job some wisdom (*hokma* - the discernment of right and wrong - see notes on 12:13). *Hokma* was not with

the three (32:7-9) so Elihu gives the impression that he knows best. This could be true even though it sounds ever so much like the cockiness of an opinionated younger man.

- 34:1-4** Elihu's appeal to the wise
- 34:5-9** Elihu's rebuke of Job's assertions

#### **Elihu Defends the Justice of God**

- 34:10-12** God never does wrong
- 34:13-15** God is all-powerful
- 34:16-20** God's justice is superior
- 34:21-30** God does not answer to anybody

#### **Elihu's Condemnation of Job**

- 34:31-33** The correct response to God
- 34:34-37** The incorrect response of Job

After a probable pause at the conclusion of his first speech, Elihu, receiving no response from Job, proceeds to address what he perceives to be Job's greatest problem. It wasn't so much that Job justified himself. It was that Job justified himself rather than God (32:2). He considered that Job had been impious in that he had charged God with being unjust. Elihu feels that he has prepared Job for what he is about to say as he declared in his previous speech that suffering may be an act of divine chastening (33:19).

In this speech, Elihu's main thrust is that injustice is completely inconsistent with everything we know about God. However, Elihu's manner has a cold, detached quality and seems, in some instances, to overstate or misquote the words of Job. Elihu's themes are essentially correct but in expressing them he betrays that he is not the inspired spokesman of the Almighty.

#### **34:1-4 Elihu's appeal to the wise**

Elihu addresses the gathered throng by calling them "wise men" (34:2). While a number of commentators exclude Job and the three from this group, it is possible that Elihu is linking back to Job's insult of 17:10, "For I cannot find one wise man among you", in a bid to show that he was different to the occasionally belligerent Job. Furthermore, Elihu's inference is that wisdom will be displayed by listening to him.



He continues in verse 3, showing how carefully he had listened to the debate, by echoing Job's words, "Doth not the ear try words? and the mouth taste his meat?" (12:11), and throwing out the challenge to his audience to test what is being said and to choose what is right (34:4; 1Thess 5:21).

### **34:5-9 Elihu's rebuke of Job's assertions**

Elihu represents Job's position with a pastiche of identifiable citations and possible inferences drawn from Job's utterances. The dogmatism displayed in this section stretches the credibility of Elihu's words and leaves him open to censure from a number of Bible commentators (e.g. Andersen).

For example, Job may not have directly said, "I am righteous" (**tzadak** 34:5 also 9:15, 10:15, 13:18) but this is clearly implied in 23:10 and 27:6-7. There is no disputing that Job accused God with refusing to give him justice (27:2 also implied in 9:20-21). However, the statement that Job believed "in spite of my right I am counted a liar" (34:6 RSV) is clearly an exaggeration. Job never said that God accused him with being a liar even though it may be hinted, albeit tentatively, in 9:20 and 16:17.

Elihu also placed the utterance, "My wound (**hes**) is incurable, though I am without transgression", on the lips of Job. Nowhere does Job directly say this. Again, such an expression can be compiled from a variety of sources. **Hes** should be rendered as "arrow" (YLit, NIV, Delitzsch, RVmg) and is translated as such in 6:4. It is there that Job likens God to an archer firing poison-tipped arrows (Job's disease?) into his body. The same style of language is also recorded in 16:13 where Job's savage description of God includes Him as a malevolent leader of a troop of archers. The aspect of incurability, while never stated, could be construed from 17:11.

Finally, Elihu repeats his accusation of 33:9 that Job considered himself without transgression (34:6 see notes on 33:9). This is an overstatement of Job's words as it contradicts the instances where Job acknowledges transgression (7:20, 13:23, 14:17). There is the possibility, however, that Job's demeanour, when pushed by the intransigence of his erroneous antagonists, conveyed a sense of being without transgression.

For all we know, Elihu could be supplying a fair assessment of Job's negative feelings towards God. He has not quoted Job verbatim but the sentiments summarised do reflect Job at his lowest, most pressured, moments. However, the rebuke that follows is particularly harsh. His description of Job in 34:7-8 and the proceeding justification in 34:9 does not enhance objective discussion. Perhaps it is a portrayal of a worst-case scenario designed to shock Job into realising how seriously flawed Job was in the presence of Almighty God.

In verse 7 Elihu adjusts Eliphaz's words of 15:16 (replacing "iniquity" with "scorning" Heb. **la'ag**) to declare that Job satisfies his thirst with "impious speech" (Ges). I believe Elihu is linking back to one of Job's more extreme statements; "(God) will laugh (**la'ag**) at the trial of the innocent" (9:23). In what is one of his most bitter outbursts, Job attributes a cruel injustice to God (see notes on 9:23). Elihu's harsh rebuke can be justified but what follows, on a literal reading, is groundless.

Elihu's indignation with Job sees him affirming that Job goes "in company with the workers of iniquity and walketh with wicked men" (34:8). This appears to be untrue. Job specifically dissociates himself from "workers of iniquity" in 31:3 and it is obvious, by all accounts, that he did not keep company with evildoers. However, Job's occasional rashness of speech coupled with his perceived arrogance in spiritual matters could see him beginning to walk in step with those who are wicked (Prov 2:10-13). Eliphaz certainly thought that this was the case with Job (15:5).

34:7-8 has a vein of legitimacy running through it but what do we make of 34:9? Did Job say, "It profiteth a man nothing that he should delight himself in God"? Yes, Job did in 21:15 but he was paraphrasing the attitude of the wicked. Job could have been heading in that direction (9:31, 10:3) but Elihu, in this instance, is being unfair in his use of Job's words. Elihu was concerned that Job's cogitations were leading to an outcome whereby Job considered it useless to try and please God. He deals with this in chapter 35 but, at the present, he is concentrating on a general vindication of God's justice.

## **Elihu Defends the Justice of God**

### **34:10-12      God never does wrong**

Having rebuked Job for charging God with injustice, Elihu now expands on this accusation. This short section establishes the premise that God does not pervert justice. In doing this, Elihu:

1. Answers Bildad's rhetorical questions, "Doth God pervert judgment? or doth the Almighty pervert justice?" (8:3);
2. Addresses Job's fear that he has been wronged by God (19:6); and
3. Declares a number of truths which are reiterated by the Apostle Paul in his Epistle to the Romans.

As Elihu exclaims, it was out of the question ("far be it" - same as "God forbid" 27:5) that God should commit iniquity (34:10). This truth is repeated in Romans 9:14 - "What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid." Elihu continues by saying that God is entirely fair and will repay man according to his work (34:11 NKJV). Again, this theme, not uncommon in the Scriptures, is recounted by Paul in Romans 2:6 - "Who will render to every man according to his deeds." Finally, Elihu proclaims that God only conducts Himself in truth (34:12). Romans 2:2 echoes this irrefutable proposition - "But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth."

Why does Paul allude to the words of Elihu? I believe that Paul's frequent referral to Elihu's themes indicates just how valid they are. The words of the three friends are only clearly cited in one location (1Cor 3:19 - see notes on 5:13), whereas Elihu's are scattered throughout Romans.

While it is true that Elihu's expressions are sometimes harsh and even appear to misrepresent Job, his religious viewpoints are essentially correct. Another possible reason that Paul quotes Elihu could relate to the context of Romans. Paul is attempting to prove to the Roman believers that God does not limit his judgment to Jews or people who adopt a Jewish pattern of religious life (Rom 2:8-11). One of the best ways to establish this fact was for Paul to take his readers back to the sayings of an ancient who was, most likely, not a Jew and who did not adhere to the Law of Moses.

### **34:13-15      God is all-powerful**

God is so supreme that He is accountable to nobody. His supremacy is displayed in how He keeps the earth and its inhabitants in existence. Who else has this sort of power (34:13)? God only has to withdraw his "spirit (*ruah*) and his breath (*neshama*)" and everybody would perish (34:14-15).

The sense being conveyed by Elihu is that of God's benevolence. It is not that God wants to destroy all mankind. It is that God chooses to maintain mankind even though He has the power to destroy human existence.

**Ruah** and **neschama** are interchangeable terms and Elihu could be using both as a form of emphasis. However, the other places in the Book of Job where they are found together could reveal other reasons for 34:15 as well as demonstrating the advanced understanding Elihu had in divine matters. He may be establishing a contrast to the terrifying image of divine judgment described by Eliphaz - "By the blast (**neschama**) of God they perish, and by the breath (**ruah**) of his nostrils are they consumed" (4:9). It is also possible that Elihu is showing Job that his solemn oath that "All the while my breath (**neschama**) is in me, and the spirit (**ruah**) of God is in my nostrils; My lips shall not speak wickedness" (27:3-4) stands for little in the sight of He who controls **neschama** and **ruah**. Elihu acknowledged such in 32:8 and 33:4.

### **34:16-20      God's justice is superior**

Elihu now ceases from addressing the gathered bystanders and fires questions directly at Job. This is evident in that the verbs are now singular (Andersen). Rotherham indicates this change and the New English Bible hits on the sense of verse 16 with, "Now Job, if you have the wit, consider this." Elihu's patronising tone grates on the reader and most likely grated on Job.

Elihu's shrill questions to Job personalise much of what has been said already. The essence is, "How dare you call into question the justice of God!" Delitzsch captures Elihu's mood with,

"Would one who hateth right also be able to subdue (AV "govern")?  
Or wilt thou condemn the All-just?  
Is it becoming to say to a king: Worthless One!?  
Thou evil-doer! to princes?" (34:17-18).

In other words, we treat mortal dignitaries with respect (i.e. Job in 29:25) yet these mortals are only in position through the permission of the Almighty. Surely, God is worthy of much greater honour. This honour is based on two unassailable truths:

1. God is no respecter of persons (34:19; Rom 2:11) because they are all "the work of his hands" (see 31:15 for similar sentiments from Job). Elihu could be alluding to Job's protest in 10:3, that God despised the work of his hands (i.e. Job himself), even though Job does shift ground to a beautifully positive recognition of God in 14:15.
2. God is all-powerful and everlasting whereas man is dependant on God and short-lived (34:20). The phrase "The mighty are taken away without hand" (RV) means with "no human hand." This is echoed in Daniel 2:34 and 8:25 where it refers to the kingdoms of men being overwhelmed by divine intervention.

### **34:21-30      God does not answer to anybody**

Mortal man may question the judgments of God but they do so in opposition to the fact that God knows everything. He is completely aware of all the circumstances in whatever case is at hand. There will also come a time when God will openly crush those who refuse to follow His way. These are Elihu's themes in this section and they are not presented to ridicule Job or to elevate himself (as Zophar does in 11:5-11). His intention is to declare the righteousness of God.

Elihu also cleverly addresses a number of the issues raised by Job. He is no longer adopting his accusatory "You said" tone. Instead he is systematically considering Job's remarks. What also becomes clear in all Elihu's speeches is that he does not question Job's former life. He deals exclusively with Job's words and attitudes as they emerged in the debate with his three friends.

Verse 21 God sees everything; a fact acknowledged by a puzzled Job in 31:4.

Verse 22 Up until now Job was the only speaker to use "darkness" (**chosek**) and "shadow of death" (**tsalmaveth**) together (3:5, 10:21, 12:22, 24:16-17, 28:3). In 24:16-17 Job states that home invaders, and by implication from the context, murderers, adulterers and thieves have no fear of God because the darkness is their friend. Elihu, with this in mind, reminds Job that, regardless of what such people may think, nobody can hide from God (Psa 139:11-12; Isa 29:15; Jer 23:24). Is Paul drawing on Elihu in 1Corinthians 4:5 - "Who will bring to light the hidden things of darkness"?

Verse 23 The Authorised Version is difficult to comprehend on this verse. While a number of interpretations abound, the most logical and literal would be that God "knows all the time what a man is doing and can punish him whenever He thinks fit without a formal enquiry" (Reichert - see also RV, Green, Roth). Such news seems to make redundant Job's desire to plead with God (16:21) at God's tribunal (23:7). If anything, it confirms Job's gloom in 9:32. There is also a possible link between 34:23 and Romans 9:20.

Verse 24 God breaks in pieces mighty men "without investigation" (RSV - Heb. **heqer** "searching, inquiry" TWOT - AV "without number" is incorrect). Elihu is confirming Job's words of 9:10 that God does great things "past finding out" (**heqer**).

Verse 25 Elihu reintroduces a word favoured by Eliphaz (4:19, 5:4, 22:9) with "they are destroyed" (**daka** - literally "crushed"). Job uses **daka** in 6:9 when he seeks death from God as a solution to his suffering. The crushing Elihu refers to is the destruction of evil to be replaced by a new order (Isa 66:18). This event will occur unexpectedly; "in the night" (1Thess 5:2).

Verse 26 God's judgment of these mighty men will be public (Psa 58:10; Isa 66:24). Despite their high station they will be treated as "criminals" (Heb. **rasha** - AV "wicked men"). Elihu's far-sighted view was probably designed to challenge Job's myopia of 9:22 - "He destroyeth the perfect and the wicked" (**rasha**).

Verses 27-28 God will crush those who had turned from Him, had no regard for Him and who failed to help those crying out in need. As Elihu suggests in his comments, "If God can hear their cry in heaven then surely the mighty men on earth can!" If anything, Job should have taken some comfort from this summation because Job had not departed from God and had, when he was able, relieved the sufferings of the poor (29:12, 31:16-22).

The first part of verse 29 is readily discernible. God answers to nobody so no explanation is required when God is silent. God may give the impression that He is hiding His face (i.e. withdrawing His favour) so that Job cannot behold God (23:8-9), but God is under no compulsion to show His favour when man feels he deserves it.

The rest of verse 29 along with verse 30 is virtually unintelligible. The Hebrew is obscure and a number of variations are suggested; none with an attached high degree of confidence. The Septuagint offers one of the more understandable renditions with:

"... whether it be done against a nation, or against a man also:  
causing a hypocrite to be king, because of the waywardness of the people."

Such an angle whereby God will allow a godless man to reign, giving the people what they deserve, is confirmed in other parts of Scripture (2King 21:9; Hos 13:11; 2Thess 2:11-12). However, it is at odds with other interpretations and is rejected by Delitzsch as being Hebraically inconsistent.

### **Elihu's Condemnation of Job**

This concluding section of Elihu's second speech demonstrates the confusing split personality of Elihu's words. It is this that divides commentators into entrenched camps of interpretation.

Elihu's general advice and religious comments are generally sound. He possesses a perception of God that is significantly higher than the three. They see God as right but in a petty and exacting way. Their conception is of God as a small God, responding to every little nuance of mankind. Elihu presents God's righteousness in a more noble and wider setting. His general comments also skilfully evaluate the words of Job and, at times, express his agreement with Job.

However, when Elihu directly confronts Job the whole tone of the text changes. He becomes blunt, dogmatic and exaggerated in speech. A number of his accusations are insupportable and rank alongside some of the more defamatory ones uttered by the three.

### **34:31-33      The correct response to God**

The obscure Hebrew of 34:29-30 continues into these three verses. This results in some interesting lines of thought in various versions and commentaries, but, I believe, Elihu is outlining how Job should respond to God. Job should not question God's justice. Instead he should:

- Acknowledge "I have been proud (*nasa* - a common word meaning "lift" that can contextually relate to exaltation - Hos 13:11), I will not do evil" (34:31 Delitzsch); or
- Seek understanding with "If I do wrong, tell me about it, if I have been unjust, I will be so no more" (34:32 JB - Elihu could be endorsing Job's words of 10:2 and 13:23).

Elihu's advice is certainly commendable. Job had lifted himself up. Job had questioned God's justice. Job did need to humble himself before the Almighty. This is precisely what Job did (40:3-5). Elihu is not, as some suggest, aligning himself with the philosophy of exact retribution as promoted by the three. He is not telling Job to hunt for the mystery sin that had allegedly caused Job's affliction.

As Elihu continues, "In such a case (i.e. where understanding is sought by the repentant), do you think he ought to punish him, you who reject his decisions?" (34:33 JB). The obvious answer is, "No." God takes into consideration the

overall demeanour of a man and will "look to him that is poor and of contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word" (Isa 66:2).

### **34:34-37      The incorrect response of Job**

Again Elihu addresses the bystanders with flattering terms (34:34 - see also 34:2,10) in a way that declares that Job lacks understanding and wisdom. As Gibson paraphrases, "All thoughtful and unprejudiced persons must agree that Job's words were not marked by wisdom." The language that follows is extraordinarily severe. According to Elihu:

- 1) Job had spoken without knowledge (**da'at** - 34:35) despite Job's assertion in 13:2. Elihu also places Job within Job's definition of a wicked man (21:14) which contrasts with Elihu's self-assertion of his own knowledge (33:3). However, the statement that Job spoke "without knowledge" is affirmed by Yahweh in 38:2 and Job himself in 42:3.
- 2) Job's words were without wisdom (**sakal**). **Sakal** refers to "an intelligent knowledge of the reason" (TWOT - i.e. insight). It can also mean to "act circumspectly or prudently" (TWOT).
- 3) Job should be placed on trial (**bachan** - AV "tried") to the end "because he answers like wicked men" (34:36 RSV). This is opposite to Job's confidence that he would be acquitted should he go to trial (23:10).
- 4) Job has added rebellion (**pesha** - see notes on 13:23) to his sin (**chattaah** - see notes on 13:23). In other words, he has added wilful revolt to his sins of weakness. Job's rebellion could be interpreted as his defiant attitude that had been superimposed on his original questioning of God's justice.
- 5) Job has behaved derisively ("clappeth his hands" 34:37). This can be supported by Job's remarkable outburst in 27:13-23 wherein Job scornfully summarises his friends' arguments. It seems more than coincidental that 27:23 is the only other place in the Book of Job where clapping hands are mentioned.
- 6) Job multiplieth his words against God (34:37). It is interesting to note that Job accused God with multiplying his wounds without cause (or possibly "for no reason" - 1:9 see notes on 2:3) (9:17). Maybe, in a play on Job's words, Elihu had 9:17 in mind when he made this accusation.

Is Elihu right? It can be observed that some of Elihu's accusations against Job are endorsed by God, acknowledged by Job and are in response to Job's expressions. Therefore, it is wrong to reject this harshly spoken section. But, it is harshly spoken and its dogmatism does not allow for the fact that God eventually affirmed that Job had the better of the debate with his three friends (42:7).

Overall, Elihu's second speech contributes to the process of bolstering the spiritual education of Job. While its expression is, at times, savage, its content is more than satisfactory. It is not a speech based on the words of the friends but it consistently draws on Job's utterances. Elihu does not question Job's pre-affliction life as he confines his criticisms to Job's conduct during the debate. He shows Job that his negativity about God's justice contradicts everything there is to know about God. On the contrary, God cares for His creation by allowing His spirit to prevail and by exercising His perfect justice impartially. God sees absolutely everything, knows everything and is accountable

to nobody. Nothing turns Him aside from exercising judgment except lowly penitence that stems from a recognition of the supremacy of the Almighty.

- 35:1-3** Elihu's summary of Job's complaint
- 35:4-8** Elihu's answer to Job
- 35:9-13** Why God does not always answer prayer
- 35:14-16** Elihu's final rebuke of Job

### **35:1-3 Elihu's summary of Job's complaint**

Elihu uses this speech to deal with the two questions, both of which have been raised before, that Elihu feels summarised the errors of Job's spoken words. One question was clearly a problem that Job had to resolve. The other was a misquote and therefore not a fair recollection. The two complaints Elihu had against Job were:

- 1) Job said that his righteousness exceeded God's; and
- 2) Job said that there was no profit in being godly.

While it is true that Job never directly declared that his righteousness exceeded God's (35:2), God did attribute such an attitude to Job - "Will you even put me in the wrong? Will you condemn me that you may be justified?" (40:8 RSV). Job had implied this in a number of places (e.g. 9:17, 19:6, 27:2). There is little doubt that Job made such utterances while in extreme circumstances but Elihu felt, quite rightly, that Job should still be held accountable for them.

However, the same cannot be said for the second complaint (35:3). As outlined in our comments on 34:9, Job did say that there was no profit in godliness (21:15) but he was paraphrasing the attitude of the wicked (Mal 3:14). Job could have inferred as much (9:31, 10:3,15) and such expressions are not exclusive to wicked men (Psa 73:13), but Elihu could be charged with unfairly attacking Job in this instance.

### **35:4-8 Elihu's answer to Job**

Having summarised Job's complaints, Elihu proceeds to answer them. Not only that, he will deal with Job's companions (35:4). I believe that these companions are Job's three friends rather than the wicked of 34:8 because he draws heavily on the preceding speeches in his answers. What Elihu says is solid and logical but nothing they didn't already know. Their problem, and we should partially include Job in this, was that their knowledge was not necessarily accompanied by understanding. Elihu's words are but the beginning of Job's advanced education. It took the words of Yahweh to really drive Job's understanding into a higher realm (42:5-6).

Elihu commences his response with a general statement of the correct perspective that Job should adopt. All four shared Elihu's opinion of 35:5 that God's greatness is declared in the heavens (Job in 9:8-10, Eliphaz in 22:12, Bildad

in 25:5 and Zophar in 11:8). What is noteworthy is that only Elihu and Yahweh make mention of "clouds" (**shahaq** - Elihu in 35:5, 36:28, 37:18,21 and Yahweh in 38:37). 38:37 appears to be the divine endorsement of 35:5 as both "heavens" and "clouds" are referred to.

In verses 6 and 7, Elihu declares that God is not hurt by our sin nor is He profited by our righteousness. This view is essentially an enhanced restatement of Eliphaz's in 22:2-3 and is alluded to by Job in 7:20. It is also affirmed by Yahweh in 41:11 which, in turn, is cited by the Apostle Paul in Romans 11:35.

The person most hurt by sin is the sinner himself (Prov 8:36, 9:12) and the righteous man, in God's eyes, profits from his righteousness (Prov 8:35). God experiences no material benefit, although He does gain pleasure in the righteous disposition and conduct of His servants (Isa 66:2). This is an improvement on the dismal picture drawn up by Eliphaz in 22:3 - "Is it any pleasure to the Almighty, that thou art righteous?" (see notes on 22:3). The paradox is that the truly righteous man considers himself an unprofitable servant (Luke 17:10).

Elihu concludes this section with the obvious statement that if anybody is affected by somebody's conduct, it is those around him (Prov 14:34) - "Your fellow men are the ones to suffer from your crimes, humanity is the gainer if you are good" (35:8 JB).

### **35:9-13      Why God does not always answer prayer**

In 24:12 Job described a scene wherein the poor cried out in affliction but God did not appear to regard him. Job was probably alluding to his own situation as he also complained that he could not find God (23:8-9, 30:20). It is this aspect of unanswered prayer that Elihu now addresses - "they cry out (**shawa**) by reason of the mighty" (35:9). Up until now only Job had cause to use **shawa** (19:7, 24:12, 30:20,28) and it is possible to cry to the Lord and obtain no answer (Psa 18:41; Hab 1:2). Why is this so?

Yes, people do cry out to God when their life takes a turn for the worse but their cry can be entirely self-motivated as they perceive God as merely a way to escape a nasty situation. They can lack respect for God their maker (Isa 51:13; Ecc 12:1; 1Pet 4:19) even though He has the ability to make them sing songs in their darkest hour (35:10). This occurs as an outcome of an on-going trust. It is not the result of some sort of spontaneous and temporary conversion when life has become difficult (Psa 42:8; Acts 16:25).

This is Elihu's point in 35:11. God has made us higher than the beasts (**behema**) and the fowls (**op**). Therefore, man should not respond in an instinctive animalistic way. It is interesting to observe that the only other place **behema** and **op** are found together is in Job's sarcastic tilt at Zophar in 12:7. Perhaps Elihu, in harking back to that unfortunate segment of Job's words, is attempting to elevate Job to loftier themes. Job's outburst in 12:7 was the product of a battered pride reasserting itself. Elihu continues by warning that God does not answer prayer sourced in human pride (35:12). The reason for the cry may be genuine but the attitude of the petitioner is inadequate.

Elihu's stance is very simple. God does not answer prayer if its origin is human pride or human vanity (35:13). Why should He answer prayer if it is mere motion of the lips unaccompanied by any feeling of a humble trust in God? It is not that God is deaf to prayer as Job appeared to have asserted (19:7). The reality is that God chooses the prayer He will respond to - "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (Jas 5:16).

Elihu has said nothing wrong. However, the question that needs to be asked is, "Do Elihu's criticisms in this section apply to Job?" Andersen believes they do not and Brother Mansfield hints agreement with that. Brother Styles feels



the criticisms do not address Job's need which is, "Why had the affliction started in the first place?" I believe that while Elihu may have understated the quality of Job's character (Is Job really an evil man as suggested by 35:12?), his clever use of language, which linked his comments exclusively with the words of Job, indicates a depth of understanding that is not apparent on a cursory reading. Elihu was not perfect, nor was he divinely inspired, but he was the connection Job needed to bring Job even closer to God.

### **35:14-16 Elihu's final rebuke of Job**

Elihu's conclusion in this his shortest speech is somewhat obscure. However, the gist appears to be that Elihu is admonishing Job because he has become impatient. He has told Job in the preceding section that God does not answer the prayer of the proud or the insincere. Therefore, Job's complaints that God does not respond to him (13:24, 19:7, 23:9, 30:20) and that Job cannot find God (9:11, 23:3,8) are evidence that Job is at fault.

The New English Bible translates the beginning of 35:14 as, "The worse for you when you say, 'He does not see me!'" Elihu's solution is, "Humble yourself in his presence and wait for his word" (35:14 NEB). This line of reasoning may sound initially harsh but it is not lacking Scriptural support (Isa 30:18). Elihu's message to Job is that God's righteousness must be exalted and not Job's or anybody else's (Mic 7:7-9). According to Elihu, Job has misunderstood God's lack of response as indifference when, in fact, God is holding back His anger (35:15). God chooses His own time to punish and to bless. Human righteousness does not invoke instantaneous divine praise nor does wickedness avail immediate chastisement.

However, because Job has become impatient, "Job doth open his mouth in vain (*hebel*); he multiplieth words without knowledge" (35:16). This is the only place outside of the words of Job that *hebel* is used in the Book of Job. Job had proclaimed that his life was now vanity and without purpose (7:16, 9:29). He had also declared that the comfort of his friends was completely worthless and nonsensical (21:34, 27:12). Elihu turns this back on Job. Job's desperate, and understandable, need for a rapid fix of his situation had motivated his descriptions of his life and his friends. That is why Job spoke without knowledge (34:35, 38:2, 42:3). It is Elihu's viewpoint that if Job more comprehensively understood God's ways he would not have expressed such opinions.

### **Adversity is Remedial**

- 36:1-4** Elihu introduces his final speech
- 36:5-15** "God is mighty" - His justice declares this
- 36:16-21** Therefore, He should be feared

### **God is Omnipotent**

- 36:22-25** "God is powerful" - Who can accuse Him?

- 36:26-33** "God is great" - He is beyond our comprehension
- 37:1-5** The thunder of God's voice
- 37:6-13** God causes the winter
- 37:14-18** "God is wonderful" - Lay this to heart
- 37:19-24** "God is awesome majesty" - Elihu's final appeal

Elihu's final and longest speech has two distinct elements. The first (36:1-21) contains Elihu's concluding remarks that relate specifically to Job. Job's dilemma (i.e. Why does God do this to me?) is not addressed as Elihu places his attention on the outcome rather than the cause of Job's suffering - "He delivers the afflicted by their affliction, and opens their ear by adversity" (36:15 RSV). Rather than concentrate, as the three friends do, on why Job has been afflicted Elihu declares where affliction will lead Job to. This first section is characterised by the standard fare of solid but unspectacular advice, a degree of vanity on Elihu's part and some observations about Job that appear to be harsh. However, his outcome focus can only be commended and should be copied by disciples especially when confronted by tribulation. This aspect alone demonstrates that Elihu's words are clearly superior to those of the three.

This superiority is readily observed in the second part of Elihu's final speech (36:22-37:24). Its lofty themes and praise of the Almighty affirm Elihu's desire to "ascribe righteousness to my Maker" (36:3). His words undoubtedly accomplish the transition from the words of mortal men to those of Yahweh. Elihu says nothing that could be considered to be new but the quality of his expressions and his overwhelming awe of the wisdom and omnipotence of God illuminates his final doxology. It is as good an introduction that any mere man could utter for God.

## **Adversity is Remedial**

### **36:1-4 Elihu introduces his final speech**

Elihu begins his final speech by seeking a little more patience from Job as he still has things to say that will vindicate God (36:2). His purpose for speaking is neatly summarised in 36:3 - "I will ascribe righteousness to my Maker". It is as if Elihu wants to be very sure that Job appreciates that only righteousness can be attributed to God. Elihu's sentiments are vehemently reflected by Paul when he writes, "What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not!" (Rom 9:14 NKJV).

However, Elihu, for all the purity of his motive, betrays a vanity that borders on arrogance. He may be justified in believing that the knowledge he espoused had come from afar because his words are above those of the three. He considers that his knowledge is sourced from divine things. He feels he is unlike the man of 28:13 as he believes that he knows the value of wisdom and where to find it.

But can he justify saying to Job, "He that is perfect (*tamin*) in knowledge is with thee", especially as he attributes an almost identical description to God Himself - "The wondrous works of him which is perfect (*tamin*) in knowledge" (37:16)? While it is true *tamin* means "complete" it also "represents the divine standard for man's attainment" (TWOT). Elihu has made a very impressive assessment of himself. As Gibson writes, "It is impossible to acquit Elihu of overweening arrogance when he makes this claim for himself."

### **36:5-15 "God is mighty" - His justice declares this**

While appearing to reflect some of the thoughts of the three, the outcome of Elihu's wisdom is superior. He does convey the impression that the wicked will not prosper whereas the righteous will. However, Elihu's emphasis is significantly different to that of the three friends of Job. He does not teach retribution as the reason for affliction. Instead, affliction of the righteous is for their benefit. It is another process intended to bring them even closer to God. The righteous are not sinless (36:9-10), rather they are genuine servants of God who appear to be treated unjustly. Elihu, in this section, draws his argument to a viewpoint that is not only correct, it also contradicts the philosophy of the three and some of the observations of Job.

Elihu declares that God is "mighty (**kabbir**), mighty (**kabbir**) in strength and wisdom" (36:5). When used of God, **kabbir** emphasises that "only God is the source of true might (Job 36:5). In his hand is abundance of power (Isa 17:12), justice (Job 34:17), and provision (Job 36:31)" (TWOT). As such God does not despise (**mahas**) the work of His hands (Job's assertion in 10:3).

Nor, in contradiction of Job's comments of 21:7-9 and the general sentiment of those under tribulation (Jer 12:1-2), does God keep the wicked alive. Instead He gives "justice to the afflicted" (36:6 Green). Elihu doesn't place a timeframe on the execution of God's judgments. Unlike the three, he does not place God's reactions close to the initial action. In other words, God's desolation of the wicked and His exultation of the righteous can occur later rather than sooner. The ultimate delivery of God's justice is still to take place (Psa 72:4; Isa 11:4; 2Pet 2:9). Regardless of when God acts, the point is that God never takes His eyes off the righteous (36:7).

The second half of verse 7 is particularly difficult to decipher. The less literal translations produce quite diverse interpretations (e.g. NEB, JB, NIV). The Septuagint along with some Latin versions (Knox, Douay) places the action in the future - "but they shall be with kings on the throne: and he will establish them in triumph, and they shall be exalted" (36:7 LXX). This exaltation will not, as Elihu continues, necessarily be without some preceding trauma.

For the remainder of this section Elihu expounds his theory, the correct theory, that affliction could be part of God's chastening of His servants. This discipline is described as the righteous being "bound (**acar**) in fetters, and ... holden in cords (**hebel**) of affliction" (36:8) Elihu has again drawn on the words of Job to create this image. In 12:18, Job extols God's power in that He, among many other things, "girdeth (**acar**) the loins of kings" (**melek** - same word as in 36:7). God can end a despot's rule and have him carried away as a captive. Elihu builds on Job's comment by saying that God can do the very same thing to the righteous. In 21:17, Job seeks proof that "God distributeth sorrows (**hebel**) in His anger" (RV). Elihu takes this to another level when he says that God binds the righteous in affliction in order to develop their character. It is not an act that is necessarily sourced in anger.

This bondage of distress prepares the righteous to receive enlightenment from God. This enlightenment is not pleasant because God will show them "their transgressions (**pesha**), that they are behaving arrogantly" (36:9 RSV). What normally would have been rejected is now ready to be received because their affliction has humbled them. Should the righteous respond as desired they will "complete their days in prosperity and their years in pleasantness" (36:11 RSV). Of course, if they are unmoved by God's methods they will "perish by the sword, and they shall die without knowledge" (36:12).

Elihu's message is sound but its application to Job is again impeded by Elihu's perception that Job considered himself to be without transgression (**pesha** - see 33:9, 34:6). As Job has already acknowledged his **pesha** in a number of speeches (7:20, 13:23, 14:17) Elihu seems to be overstating Job's words. Again, it is interesting to observe how Elihu repeats terms used by Job to convey a different intent. Elihu has again quoted from 12:18 when he said, "He openeth also their ear to discipline (**musar**)" (36:10). **Musar** is used by Job in 12:18 to refer to God's chastening of wicked kings. Elihu, reflecting the observation of Eliphaz in 5:17, says that God can chasten anybody. Unlike Eliphaz, Elihu's opinion led to a correct conclusion.

Elihu also restates his theme of "without knowledge" (34:35, 35:16). This theme, one that is endorsed by Yahweh (38:2, 42:3), in the context of 36:12 indicates that the unrepentant will die without really understanding the basics of God's justice. These basics are summarised by a neat play on words when Elihu says, "Those who obey will serve (**abad**) and be rewarded, those who obey not will perish (**abar**)" (36:11-12). This dichotomy is expanded by the Apostle Paul in Romans 2:7-9.

While the righteous will open their ears to instruction, the hypocrites will not cry out when they are bound (**acar** - see 36:8). Instead they will "store up anger" (36:13 Roth - see also Rom 2:5). Elihu again visits the popular usage of **chaneph** ("hypocrite") in the Book of Job (8:13, 13:16, 15:34, 17:8, 20:5, 27:8, 34:30) but adds the twist of "in heart". Elihu's reference is not to the overtly godless man but to the outwardly righteous man who when disciplined by Yahweh responds with anger, hardheartedness and pride. According to Elihu. "Their soul (**nephesh**) dies in youth and their life ends among the sodomites" (36:14 Green). Green's very literal translation captures the devastation of the life of the spiritual hypocrite. **Nephesh** can have the meaning of "reason" or "mind" (see notes on 2:6) and this is feasible in the context of 36:14. A spiritual hypocrite can be spiritually dead long before he actually dies and the life he lives is no more edifying or righteous than that lived by the male prostitutes who worked in the pagan temples.

Verse 15 sums up Elihu's position on how God saves through the means of affliction - "He delivers the afflicted by their affliction, and opens their ear by adversity" (RSV). It is God who saves, if the afflicted take advantage of the situation God has placed them in. Their ears will be opened.

Job went beyond Elihu's prediction. Job's ears were already opened. Job's adversity resulted in his eyes being opened also (42:5).

### **36:16-21      Therefore, He should be feared**

Elihu next applies his observations of the previous section directly to Job. The problem we have is attempting to determine what exactly Elihu is saying. The original Hebrew is extraordinarily vague (this can be evidenced in the almost unintelligible translations preserved in literal versions such as Green's and Rotherham's) and commentators are compelled to interpret the passage from the base of how they regard Elihu as a person. Andersen gives up ("the problems are insoluble") and supplies four variations, none of which he is prepared to recommend. Gibson claims that "the whole passage is one of the most obscure to be found anywhere in the book." The following is a best guess.

Verse 16      In summary, we can opine that Elihu is telling Job that God would have led Job out of his distress and comforted him

Verse 17      But Job had taken on the opinions of sinners in his judgment of God - that God does not deal justly. Because of this, God was not ready to release Job from His judgment of him.

Verse 18      Job should also be aware that because he has perceived God in a lesser light, Job is susceptible to greater errors of judgment (e.g. mockery - see Delitzsch, RVmg, Reichert, Green), especially through his anger. Job should not allow the severity of his affliction to turn him aside from God.

Verse 19      Job cannot save himself. Riches and physical strength will not provide him with the means of escape (Psa 49:6-7). Elihu infers that Job should direct his whole trust towards God. Attached to this trust would have to be attitudes of remorse and repentance.

Verse 20 Furthermore, Job should not desire the darkness of oblivion as he had in the early words of his distress (3:3-7). He shouldn't seek the sudden catastrophe that can overwhelm a large collective of people.

Verse 21 Finally, Elihu implores Job to not turn to the iniquity of rebelling against the chastening hand of God. God should be feared and revered but Elihu rebukes Job because Job seems more inclined towards rebellion because of his affliction rather than submission in response to his affliction.

As stated at the outset, this section is overly ambiguous. The above interpretation attempts to fit the section in accord with the context of Elihu's character, while not deviating significantly from the original Hebrew text. Elihu's opinions of Job are harshly expressed, but his overall message is essentially correct. Job did repent (42:6) so there is good reason to believe that his affliction had created in him an element of rebellion against God. Elihu was also justified in castigating Job for seeking death from God (not suicide) as an easy way out of his problems. God's desire is for His servants to trust Him and to endure regardless of the adversity that confronts them (2Cor 1:8-10, 12:8-9; 1Pet 1:5-7). However, despite whatever criticisms are made of Job, we must not lose sight of the fact that it is Job's endurance that earns him his commendation in the New Testament (Jas 5:11).

### **God is Omnipotent**

In these final expressions of Elihu he concentrates more on the omnipotence of God rather than the incompetence of man. His overall message is that God cannot be compared to anybody and He cannot be called into question. He is so overwhelmingly superior. This is the crowning glory of Elihu's speeches as it lacks the earlier brashness of the youthful orator and replaces it with an awe of God that is both sincere and proper. This awe is reinforced by a gathering storm that proves to be a physical manifestation of the power and majesty of the Almighty.

### **36:22-25 "God is powerful" - Who can accuse Him?**

"Behold, God is exulted by His power; who teaches like Him?" (36:22 NKJV). God is the greatest teacher and beyond comparison. Life's lessons are best sought from Him rather than from the philosophies of man (8:10) or the objects of His Creation (12:7-8). Nor, it can be implied, does Job need to teach others about God (12:7). God's teaching was experienced by the greatest of their days (e.g. Nebuchadnezzar - Dan 4:32) and His power lifts God way above man (Rom 13:1).

The rhetorical questions continue to flow (36:23) as Elihu declares that nobody can tell God what to do (Isa 40:13-14; Rom 11:34; 1Cor 2:16) and nobody can successfully accuse Him of doing wrong (see notes 34:10-12). Instead, man should turn his mind to praising the works of God; "a theme that many men have sung" (36:24 JB).

All men, Elihu continues, behold (*nabat*) the workings of God and do so, as *nabat* in this context implies, with "pleasure and astonishment" (Delitzsch). Mortals, with their finite minds and a feeling of being overpowered, can only contemplate God's works from afar (36:25). If anything, Elihu is reworking Job's grand expression of 26:14.

### **36:26-33 "God is great" - He is beyond our comprehension**

Verse 26 encapsulates the thrust of Elihu's final speech. His point is that, while we know about God and we marvel at God's power and handiwork, we are limited in our comprehension - "God is great" (*saggi*). This unusual word is only found on the lips of Elihu in the Bible (36:26, 37:23 "excellent") and its root word, "*saga*", is only uttered by Elihu (36:24 "magnify") and Job (12:23 "increaseth"). Elihu could be endorsing Job's viewpoint of 12:23 that simplistically stated summarises as "God is in control". Nothing is hidden from God. All the deepest secrets God can bring to light. He is the One who makes nations great and destroys them. He can make fools of the wisest of men. On the other hand, man can never fully know just how great God is. God transcends man in power, ability and knowledge. His existence alone is beyond man's reckoning - "the number of his years is past computing" (36:26 JB).

As Elihu speaks a storm is surely and demonstratively forming. Elihu latches onto this physical event and uses it to conclude his consideration of the supremacy of God. His language is poetic, beautiful and, at times, difficult to understand. The variations among Bible versions reveal the ambiguity of the original text but the overall message, that the marvels of nature testify to God's greatness, is undiminished. God's power and control are exhibited even in matters as small and delicate as the raindrop. While it is true today that we can explain weather patterns and phenomena with a detail that was not possible in Elihu's time, we still cannot, as much as we try, control the weather. Only God can do so. To spend a moment contemplating this surely fills us with wonder at the omnipotence of the Almighty.

It is important to note that Yahweh makes considerable reference in His opening speech to His manifest power in the weather. I believe that this is a divine endorsement of the validity of Elihu's closing words.

Verses 27-28 God forms the rain that He can send as a shower or a downpour.

Verse 29 Who can understand how God spreads the clouds (38:34-35) or the "noise" ("crash" Delitzsch, "crashing" Roth) of His "tabernacle" (*sukka*)? *Sukka* has a number of contexts to interpret it and here, as in Psalm 18:11, the emphasis is that of God dwelling in the thick clouds of the skies. In observing the gathering clouds Elihu could sense the overpowering majesty of God.

Verse 30 One only has to look to see how God lightens up the canopy of the sky as He sends forth lightning. The second half of this verse defies precise interpretation. A suggestion, among many, is that the rain God controls supplies the water that covers the bottom of the sea. God expands on the aspect of His control over the sea in 38:8-11.

Verse 31 God uses the elements of the weather to both judge (38:22-23) and bless the nations (38:26-27).

Verses 32-33 He has control over lightning in both His hands (Roth, Delitzsch, NKJV) and can direct it to hit where He wants it to. Even the cattle in the field, who know not God, understand the power and venom an electrical storm contains. An alternative rendering of the second half of 36:33 is "who is jealous with anger against iniquity" (RSV). This is supported by a number of modern versions and commentators (e.g. JB, Andersen) but further variations exist elsewhere (e.g. NEB, LXX). The "cattle" rendition is supported by literal translations (e.g. Green, Roth), as well as the New International Version, and does not detract from the overall sense of the passage.

### **37:1-5 The thunder of God's voice**

There is no break between the chapters except for that provided by Elihu's exclamations at the tremendous storm that crashes in around them. The tense of his words is present and the term "Hear attentively" (37:2) is reputedly plural (Andersen) as Elihu utters his outburst for all who are present. The expression is literally "Hear with hearing" (**shama shama** - "Hear! oh hear!" Roth, Delitzsch) as the awe-struck Elihu earnestly implores his listeners' attention.

He has no doubt that the voice of God is in the breathtaking spectacle of the storm. It is so awesome that the articulate Elihu repeats the reference to God's voice some five times in five verses, three times in 37:4, and he uses three different and uncommon words to describe God's thunderings:

- **rogez** (37:2 - elsewhere used by the LORD in 39:24 "rage") meaning "trouble, turmoil, wrath, rage" (TWOT);
- **hegeh** (37:2) meaning a "rumbling, growling, moaning" (TWOT); and
- **ra'am** (37:4-5 - elsewhere used by the LORD in 40:9) meaning "to thunder" (TWOT), "to rage, to roar" (Ges).

The effect makes his "heart leap from its place" (37:1 JB) as unrestrained lightning strikes are pursued by enormous peals of thunder. Indeed, in echoing the words of Eliphaz (5:9) and Job (9:10), God "does great things which we cannot comprehend" (37:5 NKJV).

### **37:6-13            God causes the winter**

God's power and presence are not merely evident in the sensations of a terrifying electrical storm. He has all the weather under His control, even the numbing bitterness of winter. The winter, more than any other season, demonstrates that man can be rendered powerless by adverse weather. God sends the snow, commanding it to fall on the earth (see also 38:22), as He does "the downpour of rain, yea, the downpour of his mighty rains" (37:6 Roth). This verse is not talking about raindrops or gentle showers but the early and latter rains that straddle the destructive snowfalls of winter.

The result of this sees Him bring "all men's strivings to a standstill" (37:7 JB). The farmers are driven indoors and are compelled to suspend all their vocational activity. This, among many things, displays man's utter dependence on God. All men who are forced into shelter by God's power do so acknowledging, whether ignorantly or knowingly, their insignificance before Him. To remain defiantly and foolishly outdoors rapidly reduces one's life expectancy. Even today, in our technologically advanced society, man is consistently thwarted by the elements. How effective is man in a severe hailstorm, or a hurricane, or a blizzard? His analysis of satellite images may predict a hurricane's ferocity and flightpath, but man is powerless to stop it. Even the animals realise that it is best to bunker down for the winter (37:8).

Man cannot stand in the face of the whirlwind that God has released from its "chamber" (**cheder** - AV "south" is inaccurate) or the icy blasts that hurtle in from the "north" (**mezarim** - "scatters" Reichert, "those that scatter" Ges). These winds were exceptionally destructive as they conveyed intense cold (37:9). God merely breathes and ice appears; the waters freeze over (37:10 - also referred to by the LORD in 38:29).

"Also He loadeth the clouds with water, He spreadeth far and wide the cloud of His light" (37:11 Delitzsch). The Authorised Version does a major disservice to 37:11 by thoroughly confusing it. The allusions being made are to moisture-laden storm-clouds and their accompanying sheet lightning that illuminates the whole sky. God is in total control of these unstoppable (by man) natural phenomena (37:12).

What are God's purposes in all this? Elihu supplies three reasons in 37:13:

1. for "correction" (**shebet** - "rod" Roth - 9:34, 21:9) i.e. to correct those who are astray from or defiant of God (Exod 9:18-25; 1Sam 12:18-19);
2. to nourish the "land", even where man does not dwell (38:26-27); and
3. to despatch mercy. God used destructive natural forces on a number of occasions to bring victory for His people (e.g. Josh 10:11; Judg 5:4; 1Sam 7:10). Similar language is also used of the future when the LORD will show His greatness to an unrepentant world (Ezek 38:22; Rev 16:18).

### **37:14-18 "God is wonderful" - Lay this to heart**

Elihu now addresses Job directly by name as he moves towards his final appeal. He concentrates on Job only. He instructs Job to "hearken" (an expression only used by Elihu in the Book of Job - 33:1, 34:2,16, 37:14), to "stand still", and to "consider". The request to stand still is designed to encourage Job to place his trust in God and to warn him against backsliding. Job needed to consider where he stood in the context of the wondrous works of God. Now is not the time to debate or to justify. Now is the time, as the elements swirl around them, to meditate on divine things.

Similar language was used by Moses to the children of Israel as they stood on the west bank of the Red Sea ("stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD" Exod 14:13) and by God in the Psalms:

"Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations,  
I will be exalted in the earth!" (Psalm 46:10 NKJV)

As soon as Elihu ceased from speaking Job was to feel the power of the words of Psalm 46:10. God was exalted in Job's sight. Job did understand his true position. And Job, as Moses and the Israelites so marvellously experienced at the Red Sea, received the salvation of the LORD.

Elihu follows up with a string of questions not unlike, but in a reduced way, what God did when He eventually spoke. Again Elihu directs Job's attention skywards as he reviews God's workings in the clouds. Earlier messages reappear - "Can Job explain how God controls the clouds?", and "Has Job really contemplated God's power in the lightning flashing around them?" (37:15).

"What about how God can balance the clouds, hanging them on nothing across the sky?" "Balancing" (**mipilas**) is unique to 37:16 and while it is not entirely clear it seems to refer to the miracle of the clouds, heavy with moisture, poised unsupported in the sky. This marvellous phenomenon was also referred to by Job in 26:8.

Elihu continues by asking Job to ponder the heat of a summer day in which Job's clothes stick to his sweaty body as the sultry south wind saps all the energy out of his being. This is how Thomson describes the stultifying effects of the Middle Eastern siroccos that Elihu is referring to in 37:17 - "The sensation of dry hot clothes is only experienced during the siroccos; and on such a day, too, one understands the other effects mentioned by the prophet, - bringing down the noise and *quieting* the earth. There is no living thing abroad to make a noise. The birds hide in thickest shades; the fowls pant under the walls with open mouth and drooping wings; the flocks and herds take shelter in caves and under great rocks; the labourers retire from the fields ... No one has energy enough to make a noise, and the very air is too weak and languid to stir the pendent leaves even of the tall poplars. Such a south wind with the heat of a cloud does



indeed bring down the noise and quiet the earth" (W.M.Thomson, The Land and The Book, T Nelson and Sons, 1890, p537).

What a contrast to the winter ice of 37:6-13! However, the message is unchanged; man is powerless against the operations of nature. God is in command. He can alter the weather at His Will.

The questioning continues in 37:18 - "Can you beat out (*raqa* - "spread out" AV) the expanse with Him, hard like a mirror" (Green)? *Raqa* is the root word for *raqia* that is translated throughout Genesis 1 as "firmament". Elihu is taking Job beyond a consideration of the clouds, rain, hail, lightning, wind and snow to the grand panorama of the sky itself which he likens to a vast mirror that has been handcrafted by God. Only one conclusion can be drawn from all this - Man cannot, in any way, match the marvels of Almighty God.

### **37:19-24 "God is awesome majesty" - Elihu's final appeal**

As God is the mighty Creator of heaven and earth (37:18), then what can a human being say to Him (Prov 30:3-4)? Man is incapable of saying anything that can correctly call God into question as he is enveloped in darkness; the darkness of ignorance (Ecc 2:14). How puny is man's knowledge in comparison to God's yet, "Shall it be told him that I would speak?" (37:20 RV). Job had expressed a desire to speak to the Almighty and to reason with Him (13:3, 31:33) but it seems that Elihu is here referring to his own unwillingness to verbally challenge God. Such a presumptuous act would surely lead to his destruction.

Elihu's speeches end quite differently to the way they began. He is no longer the agitated younger man blustering his way through a wordy, apologetic introduction. There is now a tranquillity in his speech as the impact of his considerations of Divine ways and the physical manifestation of God's awesome majesty has calmed him. He has not been silenced by withering debate or by debilitating affliction. He has been silenced by his observations.

He witnesses a storm around him, but what if the storm is abated and the skies return to their azure splendour? God's glory would still be on display - "now no-one can look at the sun, bright as it is in the skies after the wind has swept them clean" (37:21 NIV). This gold ("fair" AV - literally "gold") sun is revealed when the north wind blows away the rain (Prov 25:23) but its brightness is too powerful for the naked human eye. It all points to one conclusion - "With God is awesome majesty" (37:22 NKJV).

The Jerusalem Bible accurately and beautifully captures the closing comments of the speeches of Elihu:

"he, Shaddai, is far beyond our reach.  
Supreme in power, in equity,  
excelling in justice, yet no oppressor—  
no wonder that men fear him,  
and thoughtful men hold him in awe" (37:23-24).

Zophar asked in 11:7, "Canst thou by searching find out God?" Elihu's answer is, "No, it can't be done" (Rom 11:33; 1Tim 6:16). In summarising his observations of God, Elihu uses terms that are familiar to Job:

- "excellent in power" (*koah* - 9:4,19, 23:6, 24:22, 26:12);
- "and in judgment" (*mishpat* - 9:19,32, yet Job appears to query God's judgment in 14:3, 19:7, 27:2);
- "and in plenty of justice" (*tzadaqa* - used by Job in 27:6 to avouch his righteousness);

- "he will not afflict" (**ana** - Elihu could be directly contradicting Job's declaration of 30:11).

Is Elihu right in saying that God does not afflict? After all, God was responsible for the affliction that came upon Job. Jeremiah adds an additional word to Elihu's statement when he writes in Lamentations 3:33, "For he doth not afflict (**ana**) willingly" (literally "from the heart" AV mg, Green, Roth). Affliction of the sons of men is tragically necessary but it gives God no pleasure. It is an act of power that is always incorporated in His judgment and justice. Yes, Job was afflicted by God, but not maliciously and not without purpose. The Apostle Paul endorses this concept in Hebrews 12:9-10 where affliction imposed by man is contrasted to that imposed by God.

It is little wonder that men fear God and that those who think on God hold Him in awe. These closing words of Elihu direct his hearers to the next and greatest of the speakers in the Book of Job, Yahweh Himself. Elihu's contribution to the education of Job has ended. He has laid the groundwork for Yahweh's intervention. Elihu's speeches, while not perfect, were superior to those of the three friends and have taken Job out of himself and into a lofty contemplation of the Lord of heaven and earth. Without Elihu's participation Job could have been ill-equipped to receive the humbling words of the Almighty. There is no place for spiritual arrogance or pride when seeking answers or relief from God.

Job is now ready to accept the unequivocal utterances of Yahweh.

33 YAHWEH EDUCATES JOB - CHAPTERS 38:1-42:6

---

## Introduction

The LORD finally speaks; an event that Job had requested on a number of occasions. He wanted God to show him where he had sinned if, in fact, he had inadvertently done so (10:2). He desired that God should speak to deliver His verdict that Job was innocent of the accusations made against him by his friends (23:3-12, 31:35-40). He called for an audience with God that he might argue his case with Him (13:3,22). No such responses were forthcoming.

Instead, Yahweh answers Job's questions with a deluge of counter-questions. He picks Job up out of his small world and spreads out before Job the vast world created by the Deity Job had presumed to question. God does not explain the cause of Job's suffering nor does He reveal the litany of sins Job had committed. In both instances such information was not needed. Job's problems were shown to be minute in the overall scale of things, and God's reluctance to list Job's sins was sufficient proof that such was not required. To do so would have added substance to the theory of exact retribution that was so dogmatically espoused by the three friends. The reason that the cause of Job's suffering remains unrevealed is that it is irrelevant. However, the process of Job's sufferings is instructional, while the outcomes of Job's sufferings incisively declare God's righteousness.

The purpose of Yahweh's response was to complete the education of Job that Elihu had commenced, with all its value and his imperfections. Job is led out into the world and compelled to discover the majesty and power of God in the works of His creation. Job's knowledge of God and himself (an axiomatic Biblical experience as progress in understanding God will inevitably lead to a more accurate self-awareness) was advanced to such a degree that he is able to exclaim in the end, "Now mine eye seeth thee" (42:5).

Simply put, the more the LORD speaks, the smaller Job becomes in his own sight. Conversely, the greater Yahweh becomes in Job's sight. It is not a process of humiliation, whereby Job is ridiculed and mocked. It is a process of humbling, whereby Job is educated, matured and liberated from an unhealthy self-focus.

The key verse which helps us to understand why the LORD responded to Job the way He did is 40:8 -

"Would you indeed annul My judgment?  
Would you condemn Me that you may be justified?" (NKJV).

This is one of two places (see also 40:2) where Yahweh appears to directly accuse Job. Instead of the barrage of blunt charges laid against Job by his fellows, including Elihu, the LORD deftly weaves Job's opinions into His expressions. Job is crushed by the perspicacity and profundity of Yahweh's unimpeachable words. He is made to realise that salvation is of Yahweh, and of Him only.

This realisation, which emphasises the power of God to save through His grace, was the only plausible response to the LORD's premier challenge wherein He ironically invited Job to assume the necessary attributes to rule the world himself:

"Do you have an arm like God's, and can your voice thunder like his?  
Then adorn yourself with glory and splendour, and clothe yourself in honour and majesty.  
Unleash the fury of your wrath, look at every proud man and bring him low,  
look at every proud man and humble him, crush the wicked where they stand.  
Bury them all in the dust together; shroud their faces in the grave.  
Then I myself will admit to you that your own right hand can save you"

(40:9-14 NIV).

Despite all the excellencies of Job's character, he was unable to save himself. His liberation from self-focus in 42:6 saw him seek the salvation of his friends. "And the LORD turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends" (42:10).

The structure of this fourth section of the Book of Job is straightforward. The expressions of the Almighty are contained in two distinct speeches. The first (38:1-40:2) sets before Job the wonders of nature, both animate and inanimate. Yahweh's rapid-fire questions leave no doubt in Job that it is absurd to challenge God (40:3-5). However, Job had declared God to be unjust in His dealings with him. Therefore, the second speech of the LORD (40:6-41:34) expounds the justice and power of God in a way that leaves Job educated to such a profound level that he willingly repents in dust and ashes (42:1-6). The great man Job emerges from his ordeal an even greater man.

The Book's Epilogue (42:7-17) exposes the wonderful outcomes of Job's divine education and his enhanced self-awareness.

34 CHAPTERS 38-40:2 - YAHWEH EDUCATES JOB - YAHWEH'S FIRST SPEECH

---

**38:1-3** Yahweh's dramatic intervention

### **The Wonders of the Inanimate Creation (God's Universal Power)**

**38:4-7** What does Job know of God's power in the Creation?

**38:8-11** Who controls the sea?

- 38:12-15** Who commands the dawn?
- 38:16-21** Has Job plumbed the mysteries of the earth and light?
- 38:22-30** Can Job account for the weather in all its variations?
- 38:31-38** Can Job control the stars, clouds and lightning?

### **The Wonders of the Animate Creation (God's Universal Care)**

- 38:39-41** Who feeds the lioness, young lions and the raven?
- 39:1-4** Does Job understand the breeding of wild animals?
- 39:5-8** Who gives the wild ass its freedom?
- 39:9-12** Can Job tame the wild ox?
- 39:13-18** Why is the ostrich foolish?
- 39:19-25** Did Job give the war-horse its courage?
- 39:26-30** Is Job responsible for the eagle's attributes?
- 40:1-2** Will Job contend with God any longer?

There is a wonderful advantage for a commentator when expounding the speeches of the LORD and that is he can be sure that whatever is said it has to be correct. After all, they are the words of God, "who cannot lie" (Titus 1:2). After over thirty chapters of struggling to interpret the validity of each individual's expressions this comes as a welcome relief. The exercise of the commentator in these speeches is to come to grips with the detail and why Yahweh uses certain examples and terms to overlay His message.

Brother Styles provides an excellent synopsis of the two parts of this first speech. He writes as follows: "Throughout his speeches, Job has expressed a number of criticisms regarding the attitude, the motives and the standards of God. You will remember that many of these were referred to by Elihu (33:10,13; 34:5,9 etc) as he set out to defend God and answer Job. And as was indicated by Elihu, some of these criticisms amounted to very serious charges against the rightness of God's conduct.

"While the accusations were serious, they were the kind that might occupy the mind of any God-fearing person suffering severe trial. Accordingly, the Almighty Himself chooses to deal with the issue personally and answer for Job and for ourselves the accusations that have been raised.

"Job's charges fall into two main categories:

1. **General** - that God is doing a poor job in ruling the world. This is answered in 38:4-38
2. **Personal** - that God's treatment of him indicates He hates Job. This is answered in 38:39 - 39:30".

### **38:1-3 Yahweh's dramatic intervention**

There appears to be little doubt that the LORD, or more than likely His Name-bearing representative, is addressing Job out of the whirlwind that has become prominent in all the storm activity that is now taking place. Those antagonistic to Elihu strive to implicate him in the immediate expressions that follow. For example, Brother Lovelock writes, "It is surely significant that God speaks forth to Job at what must have been the instant Elihu ceased, and the first question of the many is one not in any way connected to those that follow: 'Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge' (38:2). While it is obvious that there was a general reference to the whole course of the discussion, covering all five of the participants, the immediate effect would be of a sudden and devastating comment on the words of Elihu" (p87). Brother Mansfield dismisses Elihu with "[God] completely ignores Elihu who claimed to be in God's stead."

Rather than become tangled up in a renewed consideration of Elihu, the following comments indicate that those two cited opinions are not correct:

1. Yahweh answers Job out of the whirlwind (38:1). There is no reference to Elihu or the three friends. The comments continue to be made directly to Job and conclude, in this speech, with a direct challenge to Job (40:1). There is no clear support for a switch in the recipient of God's words at any time.
2. The question of 38:2, a repetition of Elihu's (34:35, 35:16), is unmistakably applied to Job by Job himself (42:3). He knew to whom Yahweh was addressing the question.
3. The LORD never directly contradicts what Elihu has to say about Him, nor does it appear that He ignores Elihu's contribution. In fact, a number of Elihu's expressions and examples are used and developed by the Almighty to complete the education of Job (e.g. 33:13/40:2, 34:35/38:2, 35:5/38:37, 36:29/38:34-35, 36:31/38:22-23, 26-27, 37:2/39:24, 37:4-5/40:9, 37:6/38:22, 37:13/38:26-27).

But has Job spoken "without knowledge" and darkened counsel, especially when Yahweh declared that Job had spoken that which was right (42:7)? The answer has to be in the affirmative. What is taking place is a reprimand to Job for speaking things in ignorance ("without knowledge"). It is not a derisive remark intended by the Almighty to mock Job. It is an insightful question that informs Job that he has, by lacking knowledge, uttered some things that were unwise. Job set out to teach others of God's providence (27:11) but, because he was not fully conversant with them, he obscured them. Job was to learn that it is better to keep silent than to speak without knowledge (40:4; Prov 17:28, 18:13).

It should also be noted that 42:7 is not stating that everything Job said was right. This cannot be the case. The verse is affirming that Job's general appreciation of God's ways, especially his rejection of the theory of exact retribution as espoused by Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar (1:21, 2:10, 9:22, 21:22-26), was correct. What Job lacked in his understanding of God, God now supplies.

Accordingly, Job is exhorted to prepare himself for action ("Gird up now thy loins" 38:3; Exod 12:11; 1King 18:46; Jer 1:17; 1Pet 1:13). However, the action Job was to experience was not what he requested or expected. He requested a hearing (13:22) only to receive an interrogation ("I will question you, and you shall answer me" NKJV, NIV).

### **The Wonders of the Inanimate Creation (God's Universal Power)**

As stated in the introductory notes on this first speech of the LORD, Job has been guilty of expressing criticism, in the extremity of his affliction, about the way God is ruling the world. He has stated that God, while powerful, has used His power in an essentially destructive way (9:5-7, 12:14-25), and, while just, appears to have allowed an injustice in that the wicked prosper (9:24, 12:6).

Yahweh's response is to direct Job's attention to aspects of the wonders of His inanimate creation. From the very beginning of creation God's power was used in a constructive, beneficial way. The most glorious examples of order, planning and control are evident in God's handiwork. The earth was designed and created so that God's righteousness would be omnipresent. Job's human perspective, inflamed by his personal tragedy, had allowed his spiritual understanding to be obscured. In fact, many of Job's correct spiritual viewpoints are reinforced in this speech of the Almighty. He knew what was right but his wisdom needed development, and the correctness of his understanding demanded bolstering. God supplies both in what is to follow.

### **38:4-7            What does Job know of God's power in the Creation?**

Yahweh begins His interrogation of Job from a global perspective. The broad sweep of the brush laid down the base coat before the fine detail is added. This sharp yet overwhelming foray into the mysteries of the Creation would have crushed any speck of self-importance that may have remained in Job. The knowledge of the origins of the world is only accessible to man through faith. Man was the last on the scene. He never observed the beginnings of the present constitution of planet Earth. He could only describe the result but not the act of Creation or even the Creator. Both remain unseen.

How could Job presume to criticise God's plan? Where was he when the Grand Architect, who is also the Master Builder, set about constructing the world; an act that was accomplished with impeccable wisdom (Prov 8:22-31)? The challenge is thrown out to Job, "Tell Me, if you have understanding (**bina**) ..." (38:4 NKJV). What understanding did he have? Job had already declared that:

- his righteousness stood and his discernment was sound (6:29-30);
- despite the power exhibited in God's Creation, he considered that God could not be seen or perceived (9:11);
- he knew and understood the power of God (13:1);
- should God answer him, Job knew what the answer would be (23:5); and
- understanding (**bina**) is to depart from evil (28:28).

In those expressions there is an inglorious mix of the correct, the insufficient, the self-serving and the presumptuous. God's assault on Job's understanding revealed its inadequacies. Where was Job when God created the earth in its perfection; when God decided its dimensions and "stretched the measuring line across it" (38:5 JB)? The message is very clear - God made the earth to a plan that is beyond criticism, and the implication is readily discerned - God's plan for man, whether it be for man as an individual or a collective, is also above being questioned.

Job had already highlighted the magnificence and precision of God's handiwork (9:9, 26:7, 28:25) but he detected flaws in how God treated him. Yahweh, in continuing His imagery of the building called Earth, is telling Job that if he really did understand God as the Perfect Builder he would not have the temerity to call anything of God's into question.

After all, the creation that Job did not witness nor fully comprehend was so glorious that the "morning stars" burst into spontaneous song and "all the sons of God shouted for joy" (38:7).

There is little dispute that the "sons of God" in 38:7 are the heavenly angels (i.e. **elohim**) who were present at and participated in the Genesis creation. The angels are linked with "stars" in identical circumstances in Psalm 148:2-5

and it is possible that the "morning stars" of 38:7 are the foremost of the angels (It is highly likely that there is an angelic hierarchy. For example, Michael is classed as an archangel in Jude 6 and also as one of the chief princes in Daniel 10:13). To consider the "morning stars" as pre-eminent angels may have some credibility in that Revelation picks up the term "morning star" and applies it to Jesus Christ (Rev 22:16) and to the reward for those who overcome (Rev 2:28). In other words, the redeemed will be as the Morning Star, who is Jesus Christ.

This has support in the other term used in 38:7. Jesus is the Son of God and we in association, through faith and baptism, with Jesus are also sons of God (Gal 3:26-27 NKJV). John captures the full spiritual meaning with, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God ... when he shall appear, we shall be like him" (1John 3:2). As Brother Thomas wrote, "This is equivalent to saying we shall be Morning Stars – stars that come forth as the dew from the womb of the morning shining in all the glory of the resurrection state" (Eureka, The Christadelphian, 1959, Volume I, p300). We will advance to the highest status. We will progress from "sons of God" to become "morning stars".

The rejoicing at that new creation when Christ returns "with the voice of the archangel" (1Thess 4:16) can only be genuinely paralleled with the rejoicing that accompanied the Genesis creation. It will undoubtedly exceed by an incalculable margin the shouting that occurred when the foundation of the Temple was laid in Ezra 3:11. There will be no detractors as there were in Ezra's generation (Ezra 3:12).

Job was not present when God laid the foundations of the planet but he will be, as we can be, singing the song of the redeemed when a new Divine order is established on the earth (Rev 5:9-10).

### **38:8-11      Who controls the sea?**

The imagery of the origins of the sea as the birth of a monstrous infant that must be quickly and strictly controlled is both graphic and breathtaking. The opening phrase, "who shut up (**cakak**) the sea with doors (**delet**)", refers to it being enclosed in the mother's womb prior to its birth. **Cakak** is used in that way in Psalm 139:13 ("covered me") and **delet** is used metaphorically of the female labia in 3:10. In the next expression the sea bursts forth tumultuously from the womb to be encased in a robe of mist along with thick clouds as swaddling clothes (38:9). This child is not some sort of feral recalcitrant who is unruly and unable to be controlled. Besides the provision of beneficial but restrictive clothing, God marked its bounds with His decree and locked the gate to prevent it from damaging all around it (38:10). Finally, the newborn giant is instructed by the Almighty, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed" (38:11). It is tamed by a superior power, and a clamp is placed on its proud fury.

Why is Yahweh instructing Job in this way? Obviously, God's power is again being emphasised. No man can even remotely claim to possess such awesome might. What is also evident is that God controls the sea; the monster-child of His making. The sea, under His mastery, is a beneficial, essential entity. Job saw God as destructive, especially in the way He utilised the waters (12:14-15, 26:12). Job's viewpoint, while not wrong, was unbalanced and incomplete. In fact, God had promised long before in Genesis 9:15 that "the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh" (see also Psa 89:9, 104:9; Jer 5:22).

It is interesting to note that the same concepts can be applied to the nations that are frequently symbolised as seas or waters (e.g. Isa 8:7-8, 17:12; Rev 17:15). Like the literal seas, the nations are unaware that God is controlling their destinies (Dan 4:17).

### **38:12-15      Who commands the dawn?**

While the previous section looked at the birth of the sea, God now directs Job's attention to the miracle of the daily appearance of the morning. It is not a one-off spectacular. It occurs every day without fail. It is a sublime example of divine control over yet another event in which Job has absolutely no influence. Furthermore, it has been taking place long before Job was born (38:21) and unerringly during his brief lifetime (38:12).

Again using poetic language as well as putting a spin on Job's observations in 24:13-17, the image is that of a darkened earth into which the dawn darts and shakes out the darkness along with the evildoers it hides (38:13). The message may even go deeper than that as Job had accused God with allowing the night to provide safety for criminals. These sinners not only survive, they find pleasure and comfort in darkness (24:13-17). While it is true that criminals prefer the night, God disrupts their activities every day with the onset of dawn. Every new day brings hope to His servants and thwarts the wicked. In a prophetic sense it prefigures the great dawn of the Kingdom when the "Sun of righteousness will arise with healing in his wings" (Mal 4:1) and eternally bless those who have walked in light (Isa 60:1; Luke 1:79; 2Pet 1:19).

As 38:14 informs us, the coming of the dawn brings renewed vision. As the sun spreads its light, the contours of the earth take shape as soft clay does under the impress of a seal, and the details of the earth are perceived like the complexities of a variegated garment. Not only does it reveal the colours and complexities of the earth, the dawn stays the arm of the wicked raised to strike. Daylight removes the ideal working conditions for the criminal. Darkness is his light and light is his darkness. When the sun rises it is "stealing light from wicked men" (38:15 JB).

There is also a prophetic core in 38:15. The perfection of 38:15 will not occur until the dawn of a new era when God's kingdom is established in the earth (Psa 37:9,12-13,17, 35-39, 55:22-23; Matt 13:49-50; 2Thess 1:7-9).

### **38:16-21      Has Job plumbed the mysteries of the earth and light?**

God next alerts Job to the subterranean, which is another place that is beyond the comprehension of man (38:16). Had Job journeyed to the sources of the sea (**yam**) or walked in the lower reaches of the deep (**tehom**)? It was impossible for Job to explore such regions yet he had proclaimed that wisdom and understanding could not be found there (see notes on 28:14). Yahweh is correcting Job's limited awareness. If Job fully appreciated the enormity of God's omniscience he could only be humbled, as well as develop in wisdom and understanding.

Job may well declare that God's knowledge of death and the grave was beyond question (26:6) but how much did Job understand? 38:17 could be interpreted in a number of ways but what seems certain is that the "gates of death" (Psa 107:18) and the "gates (AV "doors") of the shadow of death" (10:21-22) are virtually synonymous terms. They both refer to the grave and the prospect that it can be opened. How well did Job understand the resurrection process and God's control over it? He certainly knew of it as the detail in 19:25-27 is quite profound, but it was knowledge only. Death and resurrection were both outside of Job's personal experience.

Job really had no inkling of the dimensions of the earth even though he recognised that God knew what they were (28:23-24). If Job thought he possessed such knowledge then God would challenge him to declare it (38:18).

From the depths of the seas and the shadows of the grave, Yahweh flips Job into a consideration of the first day of creation when light was formed to dispel the darkness. In this passage, God personifies light and darkness and has assigned each to their realm (38:19-20). These realms are out of man's reach and observation unless, of course, man was present on that first day of creation. God, not unlike the outburst of Eliphaz in 15:7, states, "If you know all this, you must have been born with them, you must be very old by now!" (38:21 JB). While Eliphaz was exhibiting the irritation of an old man on the losing side of a debate, Yahweh's statement of fact was designed to continue the education of Job.



God was inviting Job to accept his limitations and to refrain from questioning the methods of the Almighty.

### **38:22-30 Can Job account for the weather in all its variations?**

Yahweh takes hold of the examples of Elihu and adds a few more to continue his questioning of Job. One only has to look at the forces of nature exhibited in the weather to see how powerful God is. Job's consideration of such phenomena resulted in an unflattering portrait of the Almighty. He saw God as destructive and hurtful, almost uncontrolled (12:14-15, 23:13-16). God points out to Job that even His use of the weather is designed to fulfil His purpose. Observe, for example, the snow (referred to by Elihu in 37:6) and the hail. God held them in their treasuries (38:22; Psa 135:7) until it was appropriate to release them.

They are there reserved for "the time of trouble, for the day of battle and war" (38:23 RSV). This builds on Elihu's comments of 36:31 and has been confirmed at various times in Israel's history (Exod 9:24; Josh 10:11; 1Sam 7:10; Ezek 38:22). The overriding message is that God is always in control. His use of the elements in warfare, while destructive, inevitably brought relief, even victory, to His servants. How small is Job! He had not even visited, nor was it possible for him to visit, the places where God restrains the snow and the hail.

The examples keep rolling on, one after the other, and they leave Job in no doubt that God is in control and operating according to His plan.

Does Job know where the lightning comes from? "Light" in 38:24 is open to interpretation and "lightning" is feasible as Elihu uses it that way in 37:3,12,15. Also in 38:24 the sentence containing "east wind" (*qadim*) is difficult to understand. The Revised Standard Version opts for the simple but effective rendition of, "or where the east wind is scattered upon the earth?" While *qadim* essentially means "east", in this context it denotes the desert wind which brings destruction, as Job had noted in 27:21. Despite this, it is absolutely controlled by God, even for good (Exod 14:21).

God also makes preparations for the rain (38:25) so that it falls on lands where man offers no assistance. God gives drink to the lonely wastes and brings green growth in once dry lands (38:26-27). Who else could do this but God? Elihu had declared this (36:27-28, 37:13) and Job had acknowledged such (28:26). God's beneficent activity goes beyond the habitation of man.

Who is responsible for the rain? Does it have a human father? Who begets the dew? What woman gave birth to the winter ice or the frost (38:28-29)? These questions are bordering on the ridiculous but the point is clear. No human agency, male or female, is responsible for the weather. No human agency was present at the Genesis creation nor in the ongoing creation of the rain and dew or the winter ice (37:10 - AV "frost") and frost. The silent power of winter that turns water into stone and can freeze the surface of the deep (38:30) was the object of man's wonder and a further testimony to a power that is beyond his expertise. It was probably beyond the experience of Yahweh's hearers, as they enjoyed a Mediterranean climate, unless they were exceptionally well travelled.

### **38:31-38 Can Job control the stars, clouds and lightning?**

In 9:9 Job utters a doxology wherein he refers to four celestial entities; Arcturus (the Bear), Orion, Pleiades and the chambers of the south. His purpose was to show that, as the LORD was their maker, the LORD is omnipotent.

In 38:31-32 God takes Job's words a step further. Not only did God make the stars, He controls them. They are all bound and fettered by God, who leads them around the sky as He intends. Man is totally incapable of doing this. The only deviation from the constellations of 9:9 is the substitution of Mazzaroth (**mazzarot**) for the "chambers of the south." **Mazzarot** is only found in 38:32 and its meaning is disputed. It could be a variation of **mazzalot** ("constellations" 2King 23:5) which is the Hebrew term for the twelve signs of the Zodiac (Ges, Delitzsch, Roth, AVmg, NEB). Others link it with the "morning star" (JB, NIVmg). The Zodiac appears more likely as it is probably being used by Yahweh to indicate that His control of the stars occurs throughout the year. It is a never-ending process. God can always be seen to be at work in the observable universe because the constellations of the Zodiac appear on time, in their correct position, always. It should also be noted that the Authorised Version's picturesque "sweet influences of Pleiades" is more correctly rendered as "bands of Pleiades" (Green, "cluster" NKJV, "fettters" Roth, "harness" JB).

Yahweh moves from the specific constellations to a more general application of His order in the universe. Did Job understand "the ordinances of heaven"; the laws that govern the movement of the sun, moon and stars? Did Job understand how they exercise their dominion on the earth (38:33)? This dominion was established back in Genesis 1:14-16 and it highlights the constancy of Yahweh (Jer 31:35, 33:25) as it has never changed.

Even closer to home, did Job have any understanding of the clouds? Can he call out to them and they will drop the abundance of their waters (38:34)? In saying this, Yahweh repeats Eliphaz' expression of 22:11 but the difference is unmistakable. Eliphaz uses "abundance of waters cover thee" in a negative, destructive way. He was saying that Job was overwhelmed by calamity because of Job's wickedness. In 38:34, the term is used in the context of nourishment. The sense is that man does not have the power to bring relieving rain when he needs it. Only God can do this.

What control does man have over lightning? The picture being presented in 38:35 is almost comical. It is that of a man organising the lightning to strike at a particular spot. When he calls out to the lightning it enthusiastically responds, "I am ready." Of course man can't do that.

38:36 is difficult to interpret. Andersen writes, "The words translated 'clouds' (**tuhot** - AV 'inward parts') and 'mists' (**sekwi** - AV 'heart') are unique, and have stimulated scholarly debate for nearly two thousand years without resolution." **Tuhot**, only found in 38:36 and Psalm 51:6, means "inner regions, hidden recesses, inward parts" (BDB) and has been linked with man's inward being, clouds and Thot, the Egyptian ibis god. **Sekwi**, a word exclusive to 38:36, has an uncertain meaning but "a celestial appearance, phenomenon" (TWOT, BDB) is favoured. Rotherham's tentative attempt at 38:36 is as good as any as it fits the context and may reflect the meaning of these unique words - "Who hath put-into cloud forms-wisdom? Or who hath given-to the meteor-understanding?" The only other speaker to combine "wisdom" (**hokma**) and "understanding" (**bina**) before this verse was Job in 28:12,20,28. Job's attempt to arrive at the answers to the big questions pales into insignificance when it is clear that he cannot explain the more mundane elements of nature.

Job was not even capable of numbering the clouds, or, to use the colourful language of 38:37, tipping the bottles in the sky that makes the rain pour down to relieve a drought-stricken earth and that changes the dust into soil (38:37-38). This image could also symbolise, although it is not the primary meaning of the verses, the nourishment God's word provides to a spiritually parched world (Isa 55:10-11; Hos 6:3; Amos 8:11-13), and to the great blessings that will be given to a morally and spiritually bankrupt earth when the Lord Jesus Christ returns (Psa 72:6).

### **The Wonders of the Animate Creation (God's Universal Care)**

Yahweh's survey of selected natural phenomena has ended. The remainder of the LORD's first speech, and much of His second, is devoted to living things; examples of God's animate creation. These had already featured in the speeches of Job (6:5, 9:26, 12:7-9, 24:5, 28:6,21, 30:1), Eliphaz (4:10-11), Bildad (18:3, 25:6), Zophar (11:12) and Elihu

(37:8). However, the overall presentation by Job and his three friends sees animals as destructive or used in a negative sense, usually to belittle their debating opponent. Elihu's brief mention of 37:8 is more positive as it alludes to the commonsense instinct of animals. Yahweh takes an entirely different approach. He selects a strange mix of animals to portray His universal care. He provides for all whether they be fierce, timid, beautiful, repulsive, independent, strong, stupid, majestic or courageous. They all depend on God. Man, by contrast, is essentially a selfish creature who has little regard for the creation that is his intellectual inferior. This is not so with God.

The question needs to be asked as to why God selects the animals He does in this part of His first speech? It almost seems random. Some have already been referred to in earlier speeches, whereas others are only mentioned here in all Scripture. Attempts have been made to anthropomorphise the animals by aligning them with certain types of humans. While this is feasible, as God provides for humanity in all its variations, such an approach detracts from the message that God's care extends even to His lesser creation. Job's complaint was that God was treating him unjustly and it simply wasn't fair (7:13-14, 16:9-14, 19:8-12, 27:2, 30:21-23). This part of God's speech shows Job that he is not the centre of God's focus. God's care goes beyond Job, even though he was the greatest man of the east (1:3), and beyond mankind, even though man was made in the image and likeness of the **Elohim** (Gen 1:26). It extends even to a stupid bird like the ostrich and the much maligned wild ass.

It is not that God hates Job. On the contrary, God cares for all, including Job.

### **38:39-41      Who feeds the lioness, young lions and the raven?**

God provides for the animals in ways that, unless compelled to think about it, man would not comprehend. For example, would Job hunt the prey for the lion (**labhi**)? Of course not, because the lioness has an inbuilt instinct which is accompanied by significant physical power. These have been provided by God. Furthermore, could Job supply sufficient food to satisfy the appetite of the young lions (**kephiyr**)?

**Labhi** is the lioness (Ges) and is noted in Scripture for being imposing (Gen 49:9), indomitable (Num 23:4) and aggressive (Hos 13:8). **Kephiyr** is the young lion that is already weaned and beginning to catch its own prey (Ges). It is mentioned throughout the Old Testament as a symbol of the oppressive, certain Gentile nations and the ungodly (Psa 34:10, 35:17, 58:6; Jer 2:15; Ezek 32:2; Nah 2:11-13). Its characteristics are listed as aggressive (Psa 104:21), angry (Prov 19:12, 20:2) and fearless (Prov 28:2; Isa 31:4). It is also used to describe God's fierce anger (Jer 25:38; Hos 5:14). Eliphaz equates these animals with the wicked (4:10-11). But God cares for them! Would Job demonstrate the same interest in their welfare as God does (38:39-40)?

God's concern is not only for the king of the beasts but also for one of the most despised of the birds. The raven (**oreb**), an unclean bird under the Law of Moses (Lev 11:15), is distinguished as a disgusting eater of carrion (Prov 30:17) with a lifestyle unadorned by even an instinctive forethought. As Jesus said, possibly in recollection of this verse,

"Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls?" (Luke 12:24).

How all-encompassing is God's benevolence towards His creatures. It extends from the rapacious lioness in all her imposing glory to the helpless chicks of the hated raven (38:41).

### **39:1-4      Does Job understand the breeding of wild animals?**

The next point Yahweh makes is as simple as it is marvellous. What involvement does man have in the birth of wild animals? These animals give birth without the supervision of man, unobserved by man and unprotected by man (39:1-2). What is even more outstanding is that these animals give birth and somehow their young survive, quickly learn self-preservation and take on independence at a remarkably early age (39:3-4). This is all done via the instincts that have been divinely imprinted in these beasts.

Yahweh declares this principle by referring to two animals on opposite ends of the human admiration scale. The wild goat (**yael**) is the "mountain goat" (BDB, TWOT) that lives among the high hills and rocks (1Sam 24:2; Psa 104:18). It is not held up as an object of beauty. The hind (**ayyala**) is the "doe" (TWOT) or female deer that is noted for its surefootedness (2Sam 22:34; Psa 18:33; Hab 3:19) and its beautiful offspring (Gen 49:21 RSV, NIV).

Despite how these two animals are perceived, God provides for them in identical fashion. Is man as impartial?

### **39:5-8            Who gives the wild ass its freedom?**

What about the wild ass (**pere**)? Who gave it its freedom (39:5)? It was surely not man as **pere** does not relate to a brumby - a horse that had fled the restriction of a human taskmaster. The wild ass that has always been untamed and free. God allowed it to be so. The second word (**arod**) translated "wild ass" is only found in 39:5 and is most likely a synonym of **pere**.

The appearance of the wild ass is that of an uncared for creature (24:5) and is as far removed from civilised man as any animal could be (11:12). Only a lunatic man could dwell with a wild ass (Dan 5:21). It is symbolic in Scripture of the free-spirited and uncontrolled descendants of Ishmael (Gen 16:12) and of an unrepentant Israel (Hos 8:9).

But God does care for this renegade beast. God provides it with a dwellingplace (39:6), both now and in the future (Isa 32:14). The wild ass does not require civilisation to be satisfied (39:7). He does not heed the shouts of the demanding taskmaster (**nagas** - AV "driver"). Instead, he has the God-given freedom to roam the mountains for his nourishment (39:8; Psa 104:11).

It is interesting to note that Yahweh appears to be recalling an early expression of Job's. Job had declared that one of the blessings of the grave was that slaves who had been in forced labour will "hear not the voice of the oppressor (**nagas**)" (3:18). Yahweh's comment is that the wild ass simply ignores the "shouts of the driver" (39:7 NKJV). It has never been under human bondage and is dependent on God in somewhat inhospitable terrain. How dependent was Job on God in his most difficult of circumstances? Perhaps the suggestion is being made that Job was too preoccupied with reacting to the voices of his oppressors rather than totally freeing himself to God's care.

### **39:9-12            Can Job tame the wild ox?**

Can Job subdue the "unicorn" (**re'em**)? **Re'em** is better translated as "wild ox" (TWOT) and is almost certainly the aurochs (BDB, Andersen), the wild ancestor of domestic cattle. The bulls of this beast were enormous, about two metres high at the shoulders and with large forward-curving horns. These horns are noted in Scripture (Deut 33:17; Psa 22:21) along with its prodigious strength (Num 23:22, 24:8). In being the largest hooved animal of its time (exceeded in size only by the elephant and hippopotamus) it was not an animal to be trifled with. Unlike its servile cousin (Isa 1:3) it was not about to be tamed. It is now extinct with the last wild aurochs killed in Poland in 1627.

It is ludicrous to consider that an aurochs would serve a man, let alone spend a night gently snoozing in Job's cattle stall (39:9). Perhaps Job could throw a harness around its muscular neck and get it to plough a few furrows (39:10). Maybe Job could trust it to use its immense strength to do his heavy work and, as the domestic ox (1:14) would, to return home "carrying your grain to your threshing floor" (39:11-12 JB). The images conveyed by these suggestions are farcical.

Yet it seems, on the outside, to be almost logical. After all the aurochs appears to be but a bigger version of the highly valued ox. It is here that the similarity ends. The aurochs' disposition, especially its fierce temperament, sets it apart from the docile ox. It also demonstrates the power and care of God in that He is the author and sustainer of such diverse, although superficially matching, creatures.

It is also God's wisdom that animals do not fit the mould that man intends or prefers. The aurochs had its place as an untamed, powerful beast. This obviously did not comply with man's wisdom who eventually hunted it to extinction only to attempt to recreate them in the 1930s by selective breeding from domestic cattle. This was all too late as the balance of nature had been irreparably damaged by self-focussed men who could not abide sharing their environment with an animal they could not control.

It is also probable that Job was being taught that there are situations in his life that, despite his best efforts, he cannot control. Instead of life faithfully plodding along like a heavily burdened ox he was being confronted by upheavals not unlike a rampaging aurochs. Furthermore, these upheavals may never be controlled by his wisdom and power as they originate in God's wisdom and power.

### **39:13-18      Why is the ostrich foolish?**

Yahweh turns His attention from the powerful aurochs to the comical ostrich in a section that is a break in style. Instead of a series of questions, Yahweh opens with a question and then conducts a largely disparaging review of this large bird. Some authorities are critical of this piece as they consider the ostrich to be misrepresented in a negative way. While this is technically correct, the LORD is using the ostrich to educate Job. Therefore, He described it as Job and his generation would have perceived it.

Verse 13 is virtually unintelligible and the Authorised Version's rendition of it is undoubtedly wrong. The New King James Version translates the verse as follows:

"The wings of the ostrich (*renamin* - "bird of piercing cries" Reichert, TWOT - only here in Scripture) wave proudly, but are her wings and pinions like the kindly stork's?" (see also Roth, Soncino, Green, RVmg).

The stork (*hasida* - erroneously translated in the AV as "feathers") takes its Hebrew name from *hasid* ("holy one, godly, saint" TWOT) because it is considered to be kind to its young. It is also noted in Scripture for being aware (Jer 8:7) and majestic (Zech 5:9).

How does the ostrich compare to the stork?

- Verse 13 The wings of the ostrich wave proudly but they are basically redundant. While the stork rides the thermal currents in its migratory flights, the ostrich is firmly planted on the ground, flapping its wings primarily to attract a breeding partner.
- Verses 14-16 The female ostrich leaves most of the incubation work of her eggs to the male. Her interest in her young appears to be minimal, even bordering on neglect. Her apparent cruelty to her young was the common perception of the time (Lam 4:3).
- Verse 17 "God did not endow her with wisdom (**hokma**) or give her a share of good sense (**bina**)" (NIV). **Hokma** and **bina** are words well known to Job and used by Job (e.g. 28:12,20,28), yet here is an animal, created by God, that seems to lack both these qualities.
- Verse 18 The ostrich can easily outrun the swiftest horse. God has provided it with an ability to survive by fleeing at great speed.

Why does God draw Job's attention to the ostrich? It is possible that the LORD is responding to Job's embarrassed claim that, in his adversity, his only companions were jackals and ostriches (30:29 NKJV). If this was true then Job should be educated by them. He could learn that God provides for even this apparently moronic bird. Without its gift for speed it would be easy prey in its flightless condition. Furthermore, the ostrich was never really blessed with wisdom and understanding. Quite the contrary. Job was blessed with both, yet he seems not to have used them to God's satisfaction. Man without understanding is no different to the ridiculous ostrich (Psa 49:20). It could also be suggested that God's care for the ostrich was not reflected in Job's sarcastic disregard for his wisdom-deficient tormentors (12:2, 13:5, 26:3).

### **39:19-25 Did Job give the war-horse its courage?**

After mentioning the horse in the previous section, Yahweh provides a most brilliant portrait of this animal. He fires off three questions and follows them with a description that leaves Job in no doubt as to what the answers are. We are no longer talking about a strange looking, oversized, flightless bird whose most positive virtue is its ability to run away in terror. The horse bristles with courage, grandeur and strength. Its association throughout Scripture is almost invariably with warfare and its qualities that are linked to man include recklessness (Jer 8:6), lust (Jer 5:8) and stubbornness (Prov 26:3). It is as if it has an arrogance or machismo.

Has Job given the horse its strength (**gibbor**)? Has Job clothed the horse with its flowing mane (**rama** - AV "thunder") (39:19)? **Rama** is only found here in Scripture and its meaning is uncertain. Gesenius states that it literally means "trembling" and refers to the quivering mane of the horse. Most versions, including literal translations (e.g. Roth, Green) support this application.

What is significant is that **rama** is the feminine of **ra'am**, a word that is found alongside **gibbor** in 26:14. It is there that Job, in reference to God, enunciates, "But the thunder (**ra'am**) of His power (**gibbor**) who can understand?" Yahweh picks up this expression of Job's to show him that he can observe God's power in how God created a beast as imposing as the war-horse. Who gave it its athleticism so that it can leap like a locust (39:20)? This is awe-inspiring to consider.

We are not dealing with any ordinary animal. God's description of it is breathtaking especially when we consider this passage as it should be translated.

Andersen's version, to the end of verse 24, attempts to capture the passage's poetic essence. Its structure, with its staccato delivery, reflects the nervous energy of this spirited steed.

"His shrill neigh terrifies;  
He paws violently;  
And exults mightily;  
He charges the foe;  
He laughs at fear;  
And is never daunted;  
And never shies at the sword.  
Beside him quivers rattle,  
Spear and javelin flash.  
He shakes with excitement;  
He swallows the ground.  
He can't stand still when the trumpet sounds." (39:20f-24)

When the battle cry goes up the war-horse is ready, eager for involvement with a reckless indifference to its personal safety (39:25). Layard has this to say about the Arab mare, "Notwithstanding the smallness of their stature they often possess great strength and courage ... Although docile as a lamb, and requiring no other guide than the halter, when the Arab mare hears the war-cry of the tribe, and sees the quivering spear of her rider, her eyes glitter with fire, her blood-red nostrils open wide, her neck is nobly arched, and her tail and mane are raised and spread out to the wind" (A.H.Layard, Discoveries at Nineveh and Babylon, G.P.Putnam and Co, 1853, p330).

Could Job create such an animal? Does Job now understand the thunder of God's power? Or is Job's recklessness indicative of a spiritual swagger that compels him into battles best avoided?

### **39:26-30      Is Job responsible for the eagle's attributes?**

Yahweh concludes His review of His animate creation with a consideration of two birds of prey. Verse 26 provides a brief glimpse of the hawk (**nets**) while the rest of the section contains a more detailed look at the eagle (**nesher**).

**Nets** is derived from **natzah**, which means "to shoot away, fly" because of the rapidity of its flight. It is possibly referring to various species of the falcon family, all of which are noted for flashing speed and keen eyesight. They are among the animal kingdom's great marvels.

The message of verse 26 is probably two-fold. Firstly, did Job give the hawk the necessary wisdom (**bina**) to determine the precise time to take flight and head south for a warmer climate? Secondly, does Job actually understand how the hawk responds to the changing seasons and how it manages to fly so majestically? The first question places God at the forefront as the Creator, whereas the second question declares God's awesome and vastly superior intellect. Yahweh began this speech by challenging Job's understanding (**bina** - 38:4) and is drawing it to its end by reiterating this opening thrust.

**Nesher**, in this context, is most probably the griffon-vulture (Reichert, Gibson. See also G.S.Cansdale, "Animals of Bible Lands", Paternoster Press, 1970, p144). Its typical nesting place is described in 39:27-28 and its ability to spot distant food along with its habit of feeding on carcasses are noted in 39:29-30. It is unclean under the Law of Moses (as is **nets**) and is alluded to by Job in 9:26 in his proverb of life being as swift as the eagle swooping on its prey.

God sees more than that in the griffon-vulture. It is another example of His handiwork and control. Can Job speak a word and this bird will soar to greater heights (39:27)? The birds of the eagle family (this includes vultures) can fly at enormous heights (Prov 23:5), with an apparent effortless grace (Isa 40:31), and make their nests in lofty, inaccessible places (39:27-28). Does this occur because Job commanded it? Of course not. God alone is responsible and, by implication, God can bring down the eagle from its dizzy heights (Jer 49:16; Obad :4). Perhaps, this is God's point in introducing this animal. Just as God can bring down the griffon-vulture so too can He bring down the loftiness of proud men (40:11-12; Isa 10:33).

It is at these heights that the eagle is at its most elusive and potentially destructive. It can detect its prey over a prodigious distance with its superlative eyesight (vastly superior to a man's) and swoop down on it (39:29). Job obviously wasn't responsible for this nor could he match it. Furthermore, Job was not responsible for what he would consider to be repugnant; the instincts manifested early in a vulture's life to drink the blood of a slain animal (39:30).

It seems odd that Yahweh finishes His recall of His animal creation on such a gory note. It may be possible that He was alluding to Job's words in 24:12 where Job bemoaned that, because of the wicked, "the soul of the wounded (**chalal** - same as "slain" in 39:30) crieth out". Job's complaint was that nothing was being done by God to punish the wicked as "God layeth not folly to them". If anything, God could be responding to Job's exaggerated assertion by declaring in the example of the carrion-eating eaglet that even the disgusting and seemingly unfair aspects of life are present because of the LORD. Job's statements in 24:12 were unwise as they called into question the actions of the Almighty.

It is not for Job to instruct the Almighty.

#### **40:1-2 Will Job contend with God any longer?**

God concludes His first speech by directly challenging Job with the words, "Shall a reprover (**yissor** - AV "instruct") contend (**rib** - AV "contendeth") with the Almighty? He that disputeth (**yakach** - AV "reproveth") with God let him answer it!" (40:2 Roth).

God describes Job as **yissor** which means to be a reprover (TWOT) or a faultfinder (BDB, RSV). Job had been such a man to many (4:3 - "thou hast instructed many") but he had clearly overstepped when he found fault with the workings of the Almighty. Indeed, much of what precedes this challenge are Yahweh's responses to His faults as alleged by Job. Does Job wish to strive (**rib** - see 33:13) against God after all he has heard? Job had desired to argue (**yakach**) his case with the Almighty (13:3) so God issues the challenge, "I have put forward my case, you can now respond with yours".

God is not bullying Job into submission. He is placing Job in a position, by using Job's criticisms and Job's expressions, whereby Job will be compelled to unequivocally accept the divine perspective and unhesitatingly acknowledge God's righteousness.

35 CHAPTER 40:3-5 -YAHWEH EDUCATES JOB - JOB'S REPLY

---

#### **40:3-5 "I am of small account"**



God has not given Job any explanation of what has transpired. The issues of sin, blame, suffering and retribution are absent in Yahweh's opening speech. God has offered no philosophy to account for Job's position nor has He endorsed Job's general understanding of Him. That would come later (42:7). What God did do was bring Job face-to-face with the universe in which he lived and ask Job what input did Job have in its creation and what ability did Job have to govern it. The point of Yahweh's presentation was elementary. As Job could not be equal to God in His inanimate and animate outworkings, Job could not presume to argue with God or call Him into question.

In the context of that unveiling Job was brought to the realisation that, "Behold, I am of small account" (40:4 RSV, RV, Soncino). Job is suitably humbled as he sees himself as **qalal** (AV "vile"). **Qalal** means "to be light" (Ges). As Morgan writes, "In the Hebrew word there is no suggestion of moral failure. Quite literally it means, of no weight. Job did not here in the presence of the majesty of God confess moral perversity, but comparative insignificance".

He acknowledged the foolishness of answering the Almighty; of strutting his perceived wisdom in His presence (23:4-7, 31:37). How wrong he had been in doing this. His best response, he believed, was to enact the advice he gave his friends to display wisdom by surrendering in silence (13:5, 21:5). Such behaviour was recognition by Job that he is in the audience of one who is superior to himself (29:9; Mic 7:16; Hab 2:20; Zech 2:13).

In words reminiscent of Elihu's (33:14), Job cuts short his reply by exclaiming that he has said too much already and it is best for him to proceed no further (40:5). He will no longer contend with the LORD. It is also feasible to suggest that Job is agreeing with Elihu's assessment of him that he had multiplied his words against God (34:37).

There is no doubt that Job's awareness of God has been heightened. He has no intention of challenging God again. But is Job's response satisfactory in the sense that it stretches to God's requirements? As we will see, Job's second reply to Yahweh (42:1-6) displayed a humility that went beyond this initial reply. Job does not presently confess to any unrighteousness. While he submits to Yahweh's superiority, he still appears to hang on to his personal righteousness. Instead of repenting and retracting what he had said, he decided to keep silent. Instead of declaring his utter unworthiness, he stated he is of small account in comparison to God.

Job has made wonderful progress but his spiritual education is still incomplete. Yahweh will supply this lack in His second speech.

---

## 36 CHAPTERS 40:6-41:34 - YAHWEH EDUCATES JOB - YAHWEH'S SECOND SPEECH

---

- 40:6-9** Introduction and challenge
- 40:10-14** Job is invited to rule the world
- 40:15-24** Behemoth - who can overpower him?

### Leviathan

<b>41:1-9</b>	Can Job tame leviathan?
<b>41:10-11</b>	Who then can confront leviathan's maker?
<b>41:12-24</b>	The power of leviathan
<b>41:25-29</b>	Man is ineffectual against his ferocity
<b>41:30-32</b>	He causes turbulence
<b>41:33-34</b>	He is king of his domain

Job may have felt that he had adequately responded to Yahweh's opening speech. This was not the case. Yahweh addresses Job a second time and hones in on Job's presumption of righteousness. The question of 40:8, "Wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be righteous?", is the key to this speech.

The LORD directly challenged Job with terms that cannot be avoided or misinterpreted and followed them, not with a diversity of divine achievements but with detailed analyses of two animals. It is also apparent that the symbology attached to behemoth and leviathan is paramount. It is not just an exposition of God's handiwork, as we saw in the first speech, but extended allegories that relate to pride, sin and man's powerlessness.

After this speech Job is compelled to acknowledge God's righteousness and his own total unworthiness. Job's education was completed.

#### **40:6-9 Introduction and challenge**

Even though Job was in a subdued frame of mind, any perception he had that his response signified the end of the matter came crashing down when Yahweh addressed Job (40:7) by repeating the formula of 38:3. It was almost as if nothing had been said before. Almost, as Yahweh omits the question, "Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?" (38:2).

I believe that this omission was deliberate as Job's response was derived from a knowledge enhanced by God's and, to a lesser extent, Elihu's interventions. His response contained nothing wrong or unwise and he had learned that silence, in this context, was the preferred course of action. He had definitely progressed in his understanding but not yet to Yahweh's satisfaction. This is powerfully enunciated in 40:8.

40:8 is the opening verse of the heart and pivot of the LORD's total expression. The personal issue between God and Job is directly dealt with - "Wilt thou disannul my judgment (**mishpat**)? Wilt thou condemn (**rasha**) me, that thou mayest be righteous (**tzadak**)?"

Had Job done this? A perusal of the three Hebrew words noted provides overwhelming evidence that he had. For example, **mishpat** was used by Job when he:

- Questioned God's judgment (9:19, 14:3, 19:7, 27:2);
- Asserted his confidence in his own righteousness (13:18, 23:4), and
- Proclaimed how righteous he was before his affliction (29:14).

Job also regularly affirmed that he was **tzadak** (9:15, 10:15, 13:18, 27:5-6, 29:14, 31:6, 32:1-2). **Rasha** was a classification that Job rejected for himself (10:2,7) but, in the heat of debate, appeared to suggest that the wicked (**rasha**) were not effectively dealt with by God (10:2, 21:7-18).

Yahweh's inquisition of Job was essentially based on the words that had flowed from Job's mouth. He could not deny the charges. Job may not have uttered the audacious phrase, "My righteousness is more than God's" (35:2), but it is certainly implied when the various parts of Job's words are put together. Yahweh in 40:8 (as did the inspired writer in 32:2) affirmed Elihu's assessment of Job in 35:2.

The inappropriateness of Job's words was emphasised by the questions in 40:9. Job did not have the ability to enter into a contest with God. He lacked the strength and the authority. He could not disannul whatever God purposed. He could not turn back the stretched out hand of God (Isa 14:27).

#### **40:10-14      Job is invited to rule the world**

There is no doubt that this is one the most crucial sections of the Book of Job. It highlights the fact that man, without God, cannot save himself. Job thought he knew what was right. Job had already spoken, without authorisation, on God's behalf (23:10-12), predicted God's judgment (13:18), and complained of the apparent unfairness of his circumstances (9:17-18).

Did Job have the strength and authority of God (40:9)? If he felt he did then Yahweh invited Job to rule the universe. All Job had to do was adorn himself with majesty (**ga'on**) and excellency (**gobah**) and array himself with glory (**hod**) and beauty (40:10). All of these attributes are attached to God throughout Scripture (e.g. 1Chron 29:11; Psa 21:5, 90:16, 93:1, 104:1-2) and are found, in reference to God, in the speeches of Eliphaz (**gobah** - 22:12), Zophar (**gobah** - 11:8) and Elihu (**ga'on** - 37:4; **hod** - 37:22). They are not used by Job in his speeches. While this may be coincidental, it could be an additional layer of detail provided by Yahweh as he reminded Job of qualities Job had failed to attribute to the Almighty.

God continues to challenge Job to flex his muscles and, in his ferocity, to abase the proud and demolish the wicked (40:11-12). That's what Job wanted to see done so that he could be vindicated. It is interesting to note the play on words as "proud" (**ge'eh**) is derived from the same primary word (**ga'a**) as "majesty" (**ga'on**) of 40:10. The difference between the two words is only minor yet their outcomes are widely divergent. Instead of being elevated by his association with God's majesty, Job had lifted himself up in pride. Before Job could abase the proud, he needed to have his own pride conquered by the majesty of the Almighty.

If Job had the strength and authority of the LORD he could take hold of the proud and the wicked and, to quote the Jerusalem Bible's colourful translation, "Bury the lot of them in the ground, and shut them, silent-faced in the dungeon" (40:13). If he could do that then Yahweh would be the first to acknowledge that Job's own right hand could save (**yasha**) him (40:14). Job knew the folly of this as he understood that salvation (**yeshua**) could only come from God (13:16). Salvation was not to be found with his friends (26:2) or any man, but his understanding had been embittered by his circumstances.

Verse 14 brought Job to the end of his quest for truth. It brought him to the unsullied realisation that he must hand the whole matter over to God. His life is not in his hands to save it. He must completely trust in God to do what is actually right, rather than what Job believed to be right. 40:10-14 is the theological heart of the Book of Job's 42 chapters. It instructs all believers, not just Job, in the ways of God. It tells us that:

- Our perception of being in the majesty of God and therefore superior to others is in reality being in the thrall of human pride;
- Our perception that God is slow to act is incorrect as it is in reality the patience of His redeeming power. He works to His agenda and not man's;
- Any believer who complains about particular events in his life is implying that he could propose to God better ways to run the universe; and
- Any believer who erroneously feels he can match God also incorrectly believes that he can save himself without God's intervention.

What follows are two detailed illustrations from the animal kingdom that reinforce these divine axioms.

#### **40:15-24 Behemoth - who can overpower him?**

Who or what is behemoth? This transliterated Hebrew word (**behemot**) is only found in 40:15 and is derived from **behema** (12:7, 18:3, 35:11) which is the common word for beasts or cattle (Gen 1:24). Linguistically, **behemot** does not apply exclusively to a specific animal. The context of its usage helps to identify the animal. Opinions vary on its application in 40:15 but the majority vote is for the hippopotamus.

The hippopotamus would have been well-known to Job and his companions as it was "reliably reported from the Orontes river in Syria around 1500BC, and was in the lower Nile until the twelfth century AD" (G.S.Cansdale, "Animals of Bible Lands", Paternoster Press, 1970, p101). Even in the event that it did not exist in Job's immediate environment, Job and his companions had a familiarity with matters Egyptian (8:11-19, 9:26). It also seems that as the elephant was unknown in Palestine and its environs, the hippopotamus was the largest beast known to the people of that locale.

Despite the poetic language being used, most factual statements, as the following dot-points show, link **behemot** with the hippopotamus.

- It is a grazing animal (40:15). It averages a nightly consumption of around 70 kilograms of grass.
- It is immensely strong (40:16,18).
- It has powerful legs (40:17 - "the sinews of his thighs" RSV, Roth, NIV etc. AV's "stones" is incorrect.) In spite of its unwieldy appearance, the hippopotamus is remarkably fast and agile and can overtake a running man.
- It grazes over long distances and can climb steep slopes (40:20).
- It is an aquatic animal (40:21-23) as it is designed to suit a life in water. Its sense organs (nostrils, eyes, ears) are set on top of its head. Its nostrils can be tightly closed when it submerges.
- Being an aquatic animal it is hunted with hooks (probably harpoons) and preferably when it is off-guard as it has razor-sharp lower canine teeth and can be aggressive when provoked (40:24).

The only apparent anomaly in this description is in 40:17 where its tail is likened to a cedar. The language may sound hyperbolic but Gibson provides a simple explanation when he writes, "The comparison of the short, stiff, muscular tail, to the strong and elastic cedar branch (which is probably intended) seems really to be perfectly natural, and need cause no difficulty". The mention of the Jordan in 40:23 need also cause no difficulty. While the hippopotamus may not have dwelt in the Jordan, the river is being mentioned as a typical specimen of a rushing river. Any other rushing river could have been quoted but the Jordan was familiar to Job and was noted for its capacity to flood.

Why then does Yahweh describe the hippopotamus at this place in His second speech? There is little doubt that the characteristics of the hippopotamus are being used to draw comparisons with mankind, particularly Job. This is hinted in 40:15 when Yahweh opened this section, "Behold now behemoth, which I made with thee". While it is true that behemoth was made, along with man, on the sixth day of creation, this introduction strongly suggests that behemoth is here representative of man. Further investigation also reveals behemoth being compared to Job in his pride. This is noteworthy in 40:19.

As the hippopotamus was characterised by strength (40:16-18) so too was Job. Despite Job lamenting his lack of strength (6:11-12, 26:2), Elihu twice makes mention of the excellence of God's power (36:5, 37:23). Elihu in these verses also states that God does not despise the work of His hands (36:5) nor does he indiscriminately afflict (37:23). Job displayed his misapplied strength by contradicting those concepts. As far as he was concerned, God despised and oppressed the work of His hands (10:3, 30:11). This strength of Job could only be conquered by submission to his maker. This message is reinforced in 40:19.

The hippopotamus, possibly because of its size, is called "the first of the works of God" (40:19 RSV, NKJV). While the latter half of 40:19 is the "despair of all commentators" (Andersen), it has been translated, "Yet his Maker can approach him with his sword" (NIV - see also RV, NKJV). The point is that the hippopotamus can overpower any other beast, including man, in a one-to-one confrontation. However, against God it cannot prevail. The symbol is readily discerned. While Job, in debate and with his spiritual pride inflamed, comprehensively outscored his three antagonists, he could not prevail over the Almighty.

The self-confidence of the hippopotamus is also displayed in the comfort of its surroundings. He can find grass on the hills (**har** - AV "mountains" is literally correct. "Hills" is preferable here and **har** is rendered as such in 58 other places in Scripture). His size precluded him from being attacked and his herbivorous diet meant that other animals were at ease around of him (40:20). His comfort was further enhanced by his restful surroundings as he lay in cooling streams or under the shadows of nearby vegetation (40:21-22). While Job could not be considered to be in comfort as he received these words, it was certainly the case prior to his affliction (29:2-11). He was prosperous and popular. His demeanour was peaceful and non-aggressive. He was in harmony with his environment and those around him. He was also convinced of his own righteousness.

So convinced that, like the hippopotamus, "when the river rages, he is not alarmed; he is secure, though the Jordan should surge against his mouth" (40:23 NIV). Even an incurable disease coupled with overwhelming personal tragedy had not shaken Job's self-confidence (27:1-6). He was able to withstand any direct assault on his integrity. Doubtless the hippopotamus was hunted and taken but success for the hunter was less likely when the beast was alert (40:24 RV - see also Prov 1:17 for similar use of the Hebrew). Job's self-righteousness was impervious to the darts of his three friends and while he was softened up by the blows of Elihu, his real motivation for repentance came from an unexpected source. He had requested answers but received questions that could not be disabled.

## **Leviathan**

The epic poem about leviathan closes the words of Yahweh. This, the longest poem about a terrifying animal, was deliberately left until last to provide a terrific climax. This animal strikes fear into mankind with its physical features, vicious disposition, fearlessness and inability to be tamed. While the leviathan of 3:8 is most likely a mythological creature, the one described in chapter 41 is considered by most to be the Nile crocodile. The whole of chapter 41 is poetic and full of imagery, but it contains several points that could hardly be applied to any other animal. The personal understanding demanded by the poem (e.g. "Canst thou ...") presents an animal well-known to Job and, as we have noted elsewhere, Job and his companions had a more than reasonable knowledge of matters Egyptian (see notes 40:15).

Outside of the Book of Job, leviathan is mentioned in four places (Psa 74:14, 104:26 and twice in Isa 27:1). In Psalm 74:14 and Isaiah 27:1, leviathan is representative of pagan nations (Egypt and Assyria) who were enemies of Israel, intent on Israel's destruction, and were eventually destroyed by the intervention of Yahweh. These allusions lend support to Brother Styles' perception that the leviathan of chapter 41 is a symbol of sin and indeed the language applied to leviathan can be easily attached to sin. Therefore, the leviathan poem goes deeper than any previous poem. It is not only a doxology extolling the power and care of the Almighty (as in the LORD's first speech), nor does it deal with the pride of mankind, particularly Job's, that downplays God's righteousness (as in the behemoth poem). It exposed the root cause of man's problems. It demonstrated the power, ferocity and doggedness of sin. Man, on his

own, cannot defeat it (40:14). The leviathan poem was Yahweh's crowning argument and it left Job completely humbled in His presence (42:5-6).

#### **41:1-9            Can Job tame leviathan?**

The style of Yahweh's first speech resurfaces here as this part of His discourse begins with a series of questions. These questions have the objective of convincing Job how helpless he is in the presence of leviathan. The questions border on the absurd as it was impossible for Job to be able to tame the crocodile in the way God suggested. Yet underneath this surface of seeming silliness lie profound lessons, especially as they apply to man and sin.

Can Job take the crocodile with the hook (*hakka* - literally "fish hook") or the bulrush (*agmon* - AV "hook", Green "read rope" 41:2)? Maybe Job could tame it and bridle its mouth with a cord? Perhaps he could pierce the crocodile's jaw with a thorn (41:1-2)? All these proposals, in the literal sense, are ridiculous. But God tamed Sennacherib, the great enemy of Israel and blasphemer, not with a fish hook but a nose ring (Isa 37:29). The same sort of ring, not a brittle thorn or a fragile bulrush, was figuratively passed through the jaw of the Pharaoh, king of Egypt (Ezek 29:4). God can do what man cannot. How effectively can man control sin? He struggles to tame even his tongue (Jas 3:7-8). Sin reigns untamed in his body unless he presents himself alive to God in Christ Jesus (Rom 6:11-12).

Is the crocodile the sort of beast who seeks Job's favour with gentle words? Will he make a covenant with Job and be his servant for ever (41:3-4)? Of course not, just as tender words are not to be found with the dominant (Prov 18:23). Instead they are part of the true disciple's repertoire (Prov 15:1, 25:15). We cannot expect sin to come around to a divine way of operation. It is impossible to make winning deals with sin because sin is deceitful (Heb 3:13). Like a crocodile, it cannot be trusted. We will always end up serving sin and not the other way around (Matt 6:24).

Can you make a pet of the crocodile or put him on a leash for your maidens (41:5)? How bizarre is this! We couldn't or wouldn't do this with a crocodile but we can be guilty of doing the same with sin. We think we have it under our control and introduce others, including our family, to its wiles. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us (1John 1:8). Without God in our lives (Psa 119:11), sin will be unrestrained (2Pet 2:14).

Nor is sin, as the crocodile (41:6 RSV, NIV), some sort of commodity we buy and sell in order to make profit. While this is possible, and has always been part of mankind's economy, the result of such activity is death without hope (Ezek 18:4). It has no spiritual profit. If a man is just and has faithfully walked in God's statutes, he shall live (Ezek 18:5-9; Matt 5:6).

Perhaps Job could take him on in combat and assail the crocodile with harpoons and spears (41:7)? As 41:8 warns, this is not a good move. If you lay your hands on the crocodile it will probably be the first and last time you will do so! Any hope of subduing him in that way is false. Its very appearance filled the would-be subduer with dismay (41:9). The crocodile is simply too strong, too well protected, too fierce and too big for man, especially when one considers that, in times past, the Nile crocodile could reach a length of 10 metres. In Job's day this was a more likely event as man had not yet developed the armaments to easily kill it and whatever they flung at it usually bounced harmlessly off it (41:26-29).

It is the height of folly to think that a mere man can subdue this terrifying monster. The same applies to our battle with sin (Rom 7:14-15). As Jeremiah wrote:

"O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walkest to direct his steps" (Jeremiah 10:23).

#### **41:10-11      Who then can confront leviathan's maker?**

These two verses are the vital point of the leviathan poem. They clearly enunciate the message of the Almighty that is stated more ironically in 40:10-14. Job did not have the power or authority to rule the world. Job was incapable of saving himself. In fact, in this continuation of the sentiments of 41:9, "No one is so fierce (**azkar**) that he dares to stir him (i.e. the crocodile) up" (41:10). Job would not be so foolish to antagonise a crocodile, yet he was willing to antagonise Yahweh whom he labelled as **azkar** (AV "cruel") in 30:21. Job was prepared to present himself before the Almighty and proclaim his personal righteousness as the basis for his vindication (13:18, 23:7, 31:3-37).

Job was convinced of his righteousness (6:29, 27:6, 29:14) and even though he had previously acknowledged that it was futile to oppose God (9:4), he had complained that God was not prepared to regard Job's claims (30:20-23). The question is explicit. If Job was not strong enough to challenge a crocodile why then did he challenge leviathan's maker? As Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "Are we stronger than he?" (1Cor 10:22).

The inference is clear. If man is powerless against leviathan, he is definitely powerless against God. As Yahweh continued, in the Hebraically obscure 41:11, "Who has a claim against me that I must pay? Everything under heaven belongs to me" (NIV see also RSV, RV). As Brother Styles writes, "The language here is akin to that used of people offering God the best of their flock and feeling He should be very impressed by it. What such people need to remember, however, was that the animal belonged to God in the first place and only by His blessing did the individual possess it."

In other words, God does not owe us anything regardless of how righteous we may feel. What we receive from God is not meant to coincide with our perception of our personal righteousness. God owns everything (Exod 19:15; Deut 10:14; 1Cor 10:26) and what we have is due to His provision. For that we should be thankful (1Chron 29:11-14). By extension, Job's righteousness was also derived from God. Without his understanding of, and relationship with, God he would be consumed by sin as readily as a man would be crushed in a wrestling bout with a Nile crocodile. He would be totally without hope; powerless against sin.

While 41:11 is a verse that was designed to humble Job and put him in his proper place, we should also understand the wonderful positive message it contains. The Apostle Paul cites this verse in Romans 11:35. The context of that citation is devoted to subjects such as mercy, wisdom, knowledge and glory, with the emphasis being on the riches of God's plentiful mercy. The Apostle declared the underlying intent of Yahweh's words. Job had to be freed from any perception of self-righteousness to comprehend the excellent wisdom and abundant mercy of the Almighty. Yes, Job was the greatest man of his generation and was a spiritual giant, but he had to fully appreciate that he was dependent on God (Rom 11:36). He was the recipient of God's gifts whereas he felt he was being treated unfairly. He did not understand the mind of the LORD as it was applied to his circumstances (Rom 11:34).

In the end, Job was in no doubt. Everything came from God. God can do all things. Job could not claim credit for any of it (42:2-6). Job saw that having God in his life was the key to true righteousness and that righteousness has no alliance with human pride.

#### **41:12-24      The power of leviathan**

In maintaining the type we could just as easily label this section "The power of sin." The described characteristics of leviathan aptly fit the boldness, destructiveness and resilience of sin. Like the crocodile, sin is extremely difficult to overcome. Its ability to withstand the efforts of those who wish to conquer it is well understood by those who endeavour to do so. Even the highly spiritual Apostle Paul was compelled to write:

"For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.  
Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it but sin that dwelleth in me" (Romans 7:19-20).

It is noteworthy that Yahweh from 41:11 onwards no longer exclusively addresses His questions to Job. Instead of "Canst Thou?", we read "Who can?". This indicated that Yahweh has completed His direct education of Job. He knew what Job was thinking. The message had penetrated and made a powerful impact. Yahweh concludes His speeches with instruction for all. Nobody was and is exempt. All have to appreciate that sin is a remorseless, uncaring beast. Sin, like leviathan, does not take prisoners or exercise mercy. Every mortal human being must learn to place their lives in Yahweh's care to have any hope of not being crushed by sin.

The description that follows is detailed and occasionally open to interpretation. Again, in places, the Hebrew is obscure and some widely divergent variations exist. Notwithstanding this, the overall theme is unperturbed as the power of leviathan is consistently stressed.

Verse 12        God will not hold back in describing the powerful limbs and matchless strength of the crocodile. God also will not conceal the power and strength of sin (Ezek 33:7-11). A clear recognition of sin's attributes will encourage those who wish to be righteous to turn to God for help.

Verse 13        "Who can strip off his outer garment?" (RV). This is a general description of his armour of scales. More detail is supplied in 41:15. The "double bridle (**recen**)" has been variously interpreted as the crocodile's upper and lower jaws (Gibson, Reichert, Roth, Delitzsch), double coat of mail (RSV, JB, NEB) or as a bridle for restraint (NIV - "Who would approach unto him with a bridle?"). As **recen** means "bridle" and is only translated as such in Scripture (30:11; Psa 32:9; Isa 30:28), it makes sense that its usage in 41:13 relates somehow to the crocodile's mouth.

Verse 14        This continues the reference to the powerful jaws of the crocodile with special mention being made of its teeth. The teeth of the wicked are highlighted in a number of places (Psa 57:4; 58:6; Prov 30:14), and is characteristic of that which is especially destructive (Dan 7:7).

Verses 15-17     It is now that Yahweh describes the armourplating of the crocodile. He introduces it with the revealing statement, "The rows of shields are his pride (**ga'awa**)" (41:15 Green). Attempts to translate **ga'awa** as "back" are not supported by the Hebrew and detract from Yahweh's message. The sin of pride hardens man against the impact of divine things (Prov 6:16-17, 8:12-13, 26:12; Jer 43:2), and deceives men into self-reliance (Jer 49:16) and self-righteousness (Luke 18:11-12). The emphasis of 41:15-17 is obvious as the impenetrability of the crocodile's armour is stressed throughout. A man coated in pride is completely protected from the grace and mercy of the Almighty (Psa 10:4).

Verse 18        "His sneezings (**atisha**) flash forth light and his eyes are like the eyelids (**ap'ap**) of the morning" (NKJV). **Atisha** is another splendid example of an onomatopoeic Hebrew word as it mimics the sound of a sneeze. The spray forced through the mouth of the sneezing crocodile appeared to flash in the bright sun. His eyes emerging on the surface of the water appeared like the sun rising. **Ap'ap** is translated as "dawning" in 3:9 and Egyptian hieroglyphs represent the dawn with the eye of the crocodile. The sneeze and the barely visible eyes were indicative of the malevolent presence of the



crocodile. It was there, lurking, and ready to crush a hapless victim who had ignored the warning signs. The comparison of this with sin is obvious.

- Verses 19-21 These verses are clearly poetic hyperbole. Flames do not actually shoot out of the crocodile's mouth, nor do its nostrils belch smoke. However, the image of the Nile crocodile gliding effortlessly through the water and then lunging viciously at its victim and grasping it between its vice-like jaws conveys a fantastic image of sudden and unrestrained aggression. Its objective is to kill. Nothing less. It is little wonder that the crocodile was the template of the mythological fire-breathing dragon. Who can defeat such a beast? Who can defeat sin, its symbolic equivalent? Only God, who is attributed similar identifiers (Psa 18:7-15; Isa 30:33) but with a power so unmatched that He can deliver the humble because they trust in Him (Psa 18:27-30).
- Verse 22 The neck is used as a symbol of obstinacy (15:26; Psa 75:5; Isa 48:4) and strength (39:19). To yoke the neck is to exercise control over the beast (Deut 28:48) and to put one's foot on the neck of an enemy is to demonstrate total conquest (Josh 10:24). The crocodile, with its thick neck, heeded nobody and feared nobody. It filled with dismay those who wished to conquer it. Sin has no fear and frustrates all who challenge it (Rom 3:23).
- Verse 23 Sin also has no perceptible weakness; no soft underbelly. The same applies to the crocodile. Its underparts are not flabby and soft as the skin located there is very thick and covered with thick scales.
- Verse 24 According to this verse, the heart of leviathan is hard. Literally, this is inaccurate but its demeanour is self-satisfying, aggressive and unforgiving. As the prophet Jeremiah wrote, "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jer 17:9). Hardness of heart is a trait especially attached to the defiantly wicked (Ezek 3:7; Rom 2:5; Eph 4:18-19).

#### **41:25-29 Man is ineffectual against his ferocity**

The dread that leviathan creates in man was noted in 41:10, is recalled in 41:25 and is forcefully driven home in Yahweh's closing remarks (41:33-34). The image conveyed in 41:25 is that of an enormous crocodile emerging from the river and terrifying the brave and the strong to such a level that "from alarm they miss their aim" (Delitzsch). The Hebrew for "purifying" is *hata* which means to "miss the mark" (Ges) and is the root word for *chattaah* ("sin"). A number of versions render it with the rather insipid "beside themselves" (RSV, RV, NKJV) but this detracts from the intended image in both its literal and symbolic forms. The fear that leviathan generated caused his hunters to lose their focus and miss their target. This only underlines the impotence of even the great men of faith in dealing with sin. They either failed altogether or, as the verses continue, the weapons, in which they placed so much confidence, were ineffective.

Whether it be striking at him with the sword, spear, dart or harpoon (Delitzsch, Reichert, Gibson - AV "habergeon"), none manage to pierce him (41:26). Hard metals make as much impression on his solid flanks as straw and rotten wood (41:27). Arrows do not make leviathan flee and sling-stones are as damaging as chaff (41:28). "Clubs" (RV, RSV, JB etc) are held in similar esteem and "he laughs at the rattle of javelins" (41:29 RSV).

As Brother Styles writes on these verses, "Compare Romans 7:15-23 for a classic portrayal of the futility any man feels when he tries to overcome sin. Man's weapons, his intelligence, determination, will-power, self-control are of no avail against the dominant power of sin."

#### **41:30-32      He causes turbulence**

This section describes the spectacular movement of the crocodile. As it moves across the bank of the river, the scales on its underbelly and tail are sufficiently sharp to scour out a trail that looks as if a threshing-sledge (**charuts** - AV "sharp pointed things") had been there (41:30). The **charuts** was a heavy wooden sledge that had pieces of sharpened basaltic rock jammed into holes that were cut into its base. This device was dragged over the grain to beat out the kernels (Amos 1:3). It is a perfect description of the result of the crocodile's slide across the mire before it plunges into the river.

From the bank the crocodile dives deep into the water, creating considerable turbulence. The violent agitation of the water is comparable to the foaming mixture made when ingredients were being boiled to make ointment (41:31). His rapid passage through the water also left a white furrow of foam; "a glittering wake" (41:32 JB).

Even his movements created turbulence and disruption. Everything about him oozes menace and destruction. He leaves scars in the landscape that signal where he has been and that he is not far away. The mere signs of his existence should alert the watchful. Yet how many have been caught unawares and slain by this beast.

The parallels with sin are evident. Sin causes disruption in the life of God's servants (Jas 3:16). Sin leaves scars and disfigurement (Psa 38:3-5). Sin will always take those who are not watchful. And when sin has us in its grip we have no chance of survival unless we cry out to the LORD in our distress (Psa 107:17-22).

#### **41:33-34      He is king of his domain**

The climax of this epic poem and Yahweh's speeches is reached as leviathan stands unrivalled and fearless. There is no creature so thoroughly dangerous, so exceedingly strong, so difficult to wound and so without predators among the animal kingdom. He is the king of his domain. Man is its only predator and even then, until the development of high-powered rifles, man barely dented its numbers. In fact, the Nile crocodile is one of only two species of crocodile (the other being the Indo-Pacific also known as the Saltwater crocodile) that habitually hunt humans ("Encyclopedia of Reptiles and Amphibians", UNSW Press, 2nd Edition, 1998, p230). In Job's day, man was more endangered by the crocodile than vice versa. The Jerusalem Bible translates these verses:

"He has no equal on earth,  
being created without fear.  
He looks the haughtiest in the eye;  
of all the sons of pride he is the king."

Who can defy leviathan? Who can overwhelm sin; that great dragon that slays mankind? At this, the conclusion of Yahweh's speeches, there is no doubt as to the answer to those questions. Righteousness can only be sourced in the Almighty. Sin can only be conquered with the assistance of God. Man cannot defeat sin on his own. It would be like trying to strangle a Nile crocodile with your bare hands. God is against sin and those who willingly enslave themselves to it (Deut 25:16; Prov 6:16-19; Ezek 29:3). No man can cleanse himself from sin (Prov 20:9; Jer 2:22; Mic 6:6-8). However, those who associate with God's power can be released from sin's grip (Exod 20:20; Psa 119:9-11; Prov 16:6; Mic 7:18).

How will Job, now powerfully educated by Yahweh Himself, respond to what he has just heard? There was only one correct form of reply. Job wisely and humbly exercised it.

**42:1-6 "Now mine eye seeth thee"**

The effect of Yahweh's second speech saw Job completely humbled. The first speech had silenced him but the second had expanded his vision of God to an unprecedented level. He realised that he was a very small part of God's world. His efforts to unravel the mysteries of the Almighty had resulted in unwise criticism of Him who is immeasurably superior to Job. After God had presented Himself, and Job was confronted by His awesome majesty, Job comprehended that human folly has to be restrained and that man can really only advance in spiritual understanding by exercising humility. It could also be inferred by the silence of the Satan that he may also have been compelled to reach the same conclusions.

Job's confession highlighted the limitless authority and power of Yahweh, Job's relative insignificance, and that righteousness is only sourced in God. In seeing this, Job more accurately saw himself.

Job realised that God can do everything and none of His plans can be thwarted (42:2 NKJV etc - the AV's "no thought" is not preferred). What is impossible for man is possible with God (Gen 18:14; Jer 32:17), especially the salvation of mankind from sin and death (Matt 19:26). An understanding of this should result in submission to the Father (Mark 14:36). Job knew that God's purpose could not be hindered by man (23:14; Ecc 3:14; Isa 14:27, 46:10), but his questioning of it revealed a dissatisfaction with how God had treated him. Job is now satisfied. It was not for him to demand, "What doest thou?" (Dan 4:35). God is authoritative in an absolute sense. As Brother Lovelock writes, "He is the One we must obey, before whom we must yield implicit and instant obedience, however difficult and unreasonable the command may appear to us."

Job knew he was the one who had spoken without understanding (42:3 - note that Job applied 38:2 to himself). While this wasn't an act of wilful rebellion, he had made the mistake of being opinionated about matters that were outside of his comprehension. What he had learnt from the LORD were "things too wonderful for me." This was not merely a statement of humility but one in which Job liberated himself from himself. Job is free of his own perception of personal righteousness. Psalm 40:4-5 (see also Psa 131:1-2, 139:6) reflects the true intention of Job's utterance:

"Blessed is that man that maketh the LORD his trust, and respecteth not the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies.

Many, O LORD my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered"

42:4 opens with an entreaty ("O hear now, and I will speak" Delitzsch). Job next quotes words that Yahweh had spoken twice (38:3, 40:7) and he completes his answer in a way that declares he has correctly discovered Yahweh. Yes, he had heard about God but a hearing does not place God totally in his vision. God would just be part, shared with other values, of Job's life. Job previously could not find the Almighty (a fact he readily acknowledged in 23:8-9) but now Job's comprehension had advanced. He could see God (42:5). His hope of 19:26-27 had gained a partial achievement with its grand fulfilment still to occur at the resurrection.

How can one see God? Yahweh's speeches have supplied the answers to that question. God can be seen in His creation and in His control over His creation. God can defeat what man is powerless before. Everything under heaven is His. Job could now see God at work in his life. He now understood that even his sufferings had their place in God's overall purpose. He now no longer had any need to understand why. God can be seen in His works, however undesirable to man, the greatest of which was outworked in the only begotten of the Father (John 1:18, 12:46).

In seeing God, Job truly saw himself. He realised that God came first and that God should fill his vision. This is the message of Job's opening statement in 42:6, "Wherefore, I abhor (**mahas**) myself." **Mahas** has two meanings, "to reject, despise" (TWOT) and "to melt, flow abroad" (Ges), and while "myself" is not found in the Hebrew text it can be inferred. A number of versions translate the phrase as "I despise myself" (e.g RSV, RV, NIV, Green) while others attach Job's contrition to his words ("I retract all I have said" JB - see also Soncino, RVmg). The New English Bible has the unusual "Therefore I melt away", which complies with the other meaning for **mahas**.

All these variations have merit but they fail to capture the full impact of Job's liberating expression. In 40:4 Job proclaimed, "I am of small account" (RSV). In other words, "I am of comparative insignificance, a lightweight, in the presence of God." Now, in 42:6, he has practically cancelled himself out altogether. He has melted away, disappeared, rejected himself and retracted all that he has said. Literally we could render the opening expression of 42:6 as "I reject." Job had rejected everything about himself because God now filled his vision. Job's self-pity in his sufferings (7:16 - **mahas** "loathe"), his shame at being despised (**mahas**) by young children (19:18), and his disdain (**mahas**) of the fathers of his mockers (30:1) are nothing now that Job has given himself over to the Almighty. Job no longer rejected (**mahas** - AV "refuse") the decisions of the Almighty (see notes 34:33).

Instead he will "repent in dust and ashes" (42:6). Job was physically sitting in dust and ashes (2:8) and was himself nothing more than dust and ashes (Gen 3:19, 18:27). Job willingly accepted his true status whereas before he had perceived it to be more than dust and ashes (30:19). Job repented. He uttered a deep feeling of sorrow. The language is that of complete submission to God and it was uttered not only before God but in the presence of those he had overwhelmed in debate. They were not, in any way, vindicated by Job's submission. Instead, Job's humility was a greater teacher to them than all of his expressed wisdom.

Only God can lift "dust and ashes" (i.e. mankind) out of the "dust and ashes" of their pitiable human condition (1Sam 2:8; Psa 113:7).

---

## 38 CHAPTER 42:7-17 - THE RESTORATION OF JOB

---

- 42:7-9** Yahweh's verdict
- 42:10-11** Job's rehabilitation
- 42:12-15** God blesses Job
- 42:16-17** After this, "full of days"

The speeches have finished and the poetical section, which began way back in chapter 3, has ended. The drama has reached its conclusion and all that remains is for the narrative to satisfactorily wind up the loose ends. In reality, the education of Job and the confirmation of the righteousness of Yahweh has been accomplished. The salvation of Job from his affliction need not have occurred until his resurrection to judgment and immortality. He could have died, a repentant man devoid of the restoration of his health, wealth or family. But this was not the case. Instead we have a happy ending that almost seems too good to be true.

However, this was entirely necessary. The restoration of Job was essential to silence the Satan. He had been proven totally wrong in his assessments of Yahweh's dealings with Job and of Job's integrity. And while we are not told if the Satan even knew the outcome of the experiment he had so cruelly initiated, the outcome had to be declared. Secondly, Job's three friends had persistently clung onto a false perception of the operations of the Almighty with His servants. Yahweh, having finished addressing Job, publicly rebuked the three for their error. Finally, a number of powerful divine principles were proclaimed, not the least being that found in 42:10, "And the LORD turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends". As we will see, the principle contained in that verse was perfected in the Lord Jesus Christ and is the lodestar that leads "dust and ashes" out of selfishness and towards salvation.

#### **42:7-9            Yahweh's verdict**

It is only after Yahweh had settled the issue of His righteousness with Job that He turned His attention to the three friends. His wrath was kindled against them (an expression attached to Elihu in 32:2,3,5) because they had not spoken that which was right about God as Job had (42:7). The three had accepted the tradition of the elders and were unshaken in their adherence to it. This was despite the drubbing they had received from Job in their debate with him.

Eliphaz was directly addressed by Yahweh as he was the leading advocate of the theory of exact retribution and possibly because he was the oldest. Eliphaz was responsible for introducing the theory into the dialogue (4:7) and thereby established the pattern that was readily adopted by Bildad (8:4) and Zophar (11:5-6).

Was Job right in what he said? While it was clear that Job was not blameless, his general appreciation of God's ways, and especially his rejection of the theory of exact retribution (1:21, 2:10, 9:22, 21:22-26), placed him above his fellows in the estimation of God. Job was right in his consistent denial of the viewpoint that affliction was always a punishment for sin. Furthermore, while Job's understanding had, at times, been faulty, the absence of deliberate rebellion against God coupled with a full expression of penitence had placed him in harmony with the Almighty.

It was because of his allegiance to that which is correct, both expressed and enacted, that God was willing to accept Job and the prayer he uttered for his former antagonists (42:8). The understanding of right doctrine, along with genuine selflessness before God and for the spiritual advancement of others are keys to the receipt of divine favour. Yahweh called Job "my servant" four times in 42:7-8; an indication that God had not diminished the observation of Job that He had made back in 1:8.

Yahweh's positive verdict of Job was made public with the supreme irony that followed being that the three friends became dependent on Job. They had to secure Job's patronage to escape the execution of divine displeasure. None of them would have anticipated this. At no time, in their speeches, had they even vaguely speculated that they would be the subject of Yahweh's wrath. They were instructed to offer seven bullocks and seven rams in the presence of Job and to rely on the prayer of Yahweh's servant. Only then would God not deal with them according to their folly. In other words, God would not apply their theory of exact retribution to them. The irony for Job was that he had to use his tongue for the redemption of his friends rather than the vanquishing of his friends.

The model of seven bullocks and seven rams is mirrored by David when he brought the Ark to Jerusalem (1Chron 15:26), by Hezekiah when he restored temple worship in Jerusalem (2Chron 29:21), and by the priests in the New Jerusalem (Ezek 45:23). In their number and format, these offerings speak of complete renunciation and rededication. They are linked with true worship and understanding. They have no alignment with the false worship of Balaam (Num 23:1) but speak of that greater time when the antitype of Job offered the perfect sacrifice that saves all who correctly associate with it (Heb 10:10-14).

Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar did as Yahweh required and Yahweh "lifted up the face of Job" (42:9 Green). It was Job who was accepted. The friends shared in Job's acceptance. The rendition, "the LORD accepted Job's prayer" (RSV, NIV), is not literally supported by the Hebrew. While, to some degree, it reflects what happened, it dilutes the message. Their actions, in seeking Job's intervention, involved offerings whereby they renounced their former ideologies and perceptions, and pledged themselves to a newness of life. It was not just Job's prayer but the totality of the actions demanded by God that contributed to their salvation.

Their salvation required the grace of God ("lest I deal with you after your folly"), the work of a mediator ("Job shall pray for you") and a display of genuine personal dedication ("went, and did according as the LORD commanded them"). This arrangement has never changed. It is still required of all who wish to be a partaker of divine nature in the New Jerusalem.

#### **42:10-11      Job's rehabilitation**

The rehabilitation of Job was twofold. Firstly, with God (42:10) and, secondly, with all his fellows (42:11). His restoration by Yahweh was based on a wonderful principle that was perfected in the Lord Jesus Christ. His return to his brethren indicated that Job fully comprehended this principle.

Job's reinstatement was not the result of his repentance in 42:6, but of his intercession in 42:8-9. It was when Job prayed for his friends that God restored Job's fortunes (42:10). It was not because of Job's personal righteousness so that Job had earned his salvation. It was not because Job had been sorely afflicted and was therefore restored out of pity. It was not because Yahweh had made a mistake and thus Job's rehabilitation was righting a wrong. It was because he was willing to put aside all the antagonism generated by his friends' incorrect and hurtful reasoning and pray for their salvation. Job's interest was the salvation of others, even if it included those who had aggravated his suffering.

Why should Job pray for them? Because their need for repentance remained. It was as if they would suffer the more for their earlier intransigence unless somebody intervened on their behalf. Yet, in working for their salvation, Job opened himself to God for a magnificent blessing. His captivity was turned. He was like the Zion of the Psalmist - "When the LORD turned the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream" (Psa 126:1). It was a remarkable turnaround. His incurable disease was miraculously cured. Only Yahweh can do that, just as it is only He who can remove the terminal mortality that afflicts all mankind.

The principle espoused in 42:10 is that Yahweh saves those whose business is centred around their selfless efforts to enhance the salvation of others. Their focus is not themselves. Jonah was saved from the belly of the whale when he declared "Salvation is of the LORD" (Jon 2:9). The proudly chauvinistic prophet became willing to preach repentance to Israel's hated enemies; the Assyrians. The Apostle Paul's unnatural selflessness was proclaimed in his final letter when he wrote as a prisoner awaiting execution:

"Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory" (2Tim 2:10).

For this life, dedicated to the salvation of others, God had laid up for the Apostle Paul a crown of righteousness which will be given to him at that future day (2Tim 4:8).

The greatest example of all is that of the Lord Jesus Christ. The purpose of his existence on earth was clearly enunciated by the Apostle Paul when he wrote, "Christ Jesus came into this world to save sinners" (1Tim 1:15). That

was his objective, given to him by his Father (John 3:17), and because Jesus did all that was required of him, God could rightly raise him from the dead and grant him immortality (Acts 2:24).

Job's selfless act of praying for his friends proved that he understood the lesson of the Book. Righteousness is sourced in God. As Brother Tennant writes, "All stand in need of God's mercy and to pray for others shows our understanding of this." Job was actively beneficent. He prayed for his friends while still horribly afflicted by his disease. He did not know, at that point in time, if he would ever be relieved of it. His thoughts were centred on his friends' recovery rather than his own.

"And the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before." This was a wonderful outcome for Job, both in what it was and what it represented. God, in doing this, declared that Job was God's firstborn in his generation (Deut 21:17). His joy will be paralleled by that to be experienced by the rejuvenated and elevated Israel in the age to come (Isa 61:7); when they will be recognised as first among the nations (Isa 61:8-9).

Job's rehabilitation among his fellows (42:11) both moves and astounds. The astonishment is not that they returned to Job but that Job accepted them without malice or recrimination. They had deserted him when he most needed them. Job's catalogue of former acquaintances who abhorred, avoided, forgot, mocked and turned against him is heart-rending (19:13-19). It included his wife, brethren, acquaintances, kinsfolk, sojourning guests who had received his hospitality, his personal attendant, those of his family clan, and closest friends. Even young children, not old enough to understand, despised him as they mirrored the attitude of their parents. Yet, with his apparent return to divine favour (he had never left it, despite appearances), "all his brothers, all his sisters, and all who had been his acquaintances before, came to him and ate food with him in his house" (42:11 NKJV; Prov 16:7). They had returned to be in fellowship with Job who, in turn, accepted them without questioning their motivation or their conduct during his affliction.

The original intention of the visit of the three friends to the afflicted Job (2:11) was finally acted out by all, with the restored, Job as they "bemoaned (*nud*) and comforted (*nacham*) him." What the three had failed to do, they now accomplished as it is highly likely they were still present. Job as a type of Christ is unmistakable here. Jesus, in his affliction, was rejected by his countrymen, but they will, in contrition, return to him when he is glorified among them (Zech 12:10). 42:11 also declared that Job's fellows accepted the restored Job, fully aware that Yahweh was responsible for his horrible suffering. This applies to all who would attempt to fellowship with Jesus Christ. They do so in full appreciation that his gory public execution was an act of God's love (John 3:14-16).

We, in gratitude to Jesus, should give the little that we have. In a material sense, what we give is inadequate compared to the enormous blessings that can be extended to us because of the work of the Saviour (1Pet 1:3-4). The type of this is perceived in the gifts that were brought to Job. They were trifling compared to the double portion Job had received from Yahweh. The pieces of money and golden rings were but tokens of their recognition that God had honoured Job and that they should never have rejected him (Zech 13:6; Acts 2:23, 3:17-18). As the Apostle Paul writes:

"And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it"

(1Cor 12:26 - see also Rom 12:15; Heb 13:3).

#### **42:12-15      God blesses Job**

God's blessing to Job of a double portion is outlined in 42:12. Job received exactly twice the wealth (1:3) that had been stripped away from him. This ironically fulfilled the prediction of Bildad (8:7) and proclaimed the value of patient endurance to all generations (Jas 5:11). It is probable that Ecclesiastes 7:8 is based on this blessing -

"Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof: and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit."

He also gained ten more children; seven sons and three daughters (42:13), but this was not double what he had originally lost (1:2). This has led to a number of observations that are interesting without being conclusive. They include:

- (1) That the previous ten children will be restored to Job at the resurrection and Job will be reunited with his twenty children. This opinion is feasible as Job was aware of and pinned his hope on the resurrection (14:13-15, 19:25-27).
- (2) That the previous ten were actually raised and restored to Job. This would provide a wonderful ending to the Book and soften the blow of their dramatic demise but, unfortunately, the text is silent on this.
- (3) That as no lost child can be effectively replaced (2Sam 12:23), Job, in reality, had twenty children. This point of view claims it is improper to classify the second ten as substitutes for the first ten. The loss of people in our lives is considerably different to the loss of material possessions.

While I favour the first suggestion, the other two are not without merit. However, the following two verses focus on the daughters of Job. They are named in 42:14, and mentioned for their beauty and inheritance in 42:15. The text is muted in regard to his seven sons as it was not unusual for them to have received an inheritance. Clearly, Job's three daughters were exceptional women of both spiritual and physical beauty. As such, they symbolised the true ecclesia; the Bride of Christ (2Cor 11:2; Rev 19:7-8). The meanings of their names contribute to this conclusion.

Jemima probably means "dove" (Delitzsch, Soncino, IDB). This bird is used in the Song of Solomon in reference to the Bride of the Beloved (Song 1:15, 4:1, 6:9). Kezia means "cassia" which is the base of an aromatic substance. Its only other use in Scripture is Psalm 45:8 where it is mingled in the garments worn by the Messiah when he meets his Bride. Keren-happuch is derived from two Hebrew words, **qeren** ("horn") and **puk** ("antimony, eye shadow"). While two usages of **puk** are overtly negative (2King 9:30; Jer 4:30), the other two are far more uplifting. **Puk** is associated with the precious items prepared by David for incorporation into the Temple to be built by his son (1Chron 29:2 - AV "glistening"). In Isaiah 54:11 (AV "fair colours") it is linked to a once barren bride being blessed by her divine husband (Isa 54:5-6).

These three daughters, in receiving an inheritance to which they were not entitled (Num 27:3-4), were representative of the recipients of God's unmerited favour. While their beauty was unchallenged, it was because of the love of their father that they were granted their inheritance. It was not something they had received through legislation or entitlement. Job's understanding of God's overwhelming love was undiminished as he outworked it among his family. 1:4 places the emphasis on the seven sons. They all had houses while his daughters did not. They seem to be almost an afterthought in the overall panorama that opened the Book. In 42:14-15 Job's daughters gained what they had not earned nor were expected to receive. It was a gift from their father, just as eternal life is the gift of the Father (Rom 6:23) to those who are part of the Bride of Christ.

**42:16-17**      **After this, "full of days"**



The last words to describe Job's mortal existence are simple, dignified and speak of the peace of mind that comes from being in harmony with God. He lived 140 years beyond his restoration (42:16) and, should we adopt the "double portion" analogy, this could indicate that he was 70 years old when the bulk of the action in the Book of Job took place. The 140 years alone places Job in patriarchal times. This is reinforced by the closing words of the Book. He died "old (**zaqen**) and full (**sabea**) of days" (42:17). The only other Scriptural identities this epitaph is attributed to are Abraham (Gen 25:8) and Isaac (Gen 35:29).

**Sabea** means "satisfied, sated, abounding in" (TWOT). It is only found elsewhere in the Book of Job when he described himself as "full of confusion" (10:15), and the lot of man as "full of trouble" (14:1). Life had certainly changed for Job! His satisfaction comes not only from his exceptional longevity but also from the wonderful blessing of seeing his descendants to the fourth generation (42:16; Prov 17:6). 140 years earlier, the line of Job lay crushed to death in a flattened building.

Job had first-hand experience of the salvation of Yahweh and is set on high for our instruction in the ways of God's righteousness. As the Psalmist writes:

"Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name.

He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him.

With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation"  
(Psalm 91:14-16).

He, along with Abraham and Isaac, died an old man, full of days. As much as long life is a gift of God, it is neither His greatest nor His final gift. Job's initial rehabilitation was like the resurrection of Lazarus. He was still bound in the graveclothes of mortality (John 11:44). The perfection of Job's restoration will not take place until after the grand resurrection to judgment and immortality that is still to occur. It is an event that is available not just to Job, but to all who have longed for the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ (2Tim 4:8).