The Wycliffe Bible Commentary

Edited by
CHARLES F. PFEIFFER
Old Testament
EVERETT F. HARRISON
New Testament

The Southwestern Company
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE
INTRODUCTION

Title. The name of both the book and its hero, יְבַנֵי, appears in extra-Biblical texts as early as 2000 B.C.E. Its memorialistic English form, Job, derives from the Vulgate (i.e., Latin) version.

Literary Genre. The central core of the book is poetry, set like a gem within a prologue and an epilogue of epic prose. Such ABA structures are found elsewhere in ancient literature. For example, Hamramut placed his laws within a prologue and an epilogue of poetry. And an Egyptian work, The Elusive Peasant, frames the peasant’s nine semanticic protests within a proleptic prologue and an epilogue.

Along with Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and, to a degree, the Song of Solomon, Job belongs to the Wisdom (bokmd) genre, a type of writing generally illustrated in a variety of forms in ancient Near Eastern literature. Within the canon of Old Testament Scripture, the distinctive contribution of the Wisdom books is that they exposed the relevance of the foundational covenant revelation through Moses to the great issues of man’s life in this world, more specifically, of man’s life apart from the peculiarly theocratic context of Israelite history. There are many formal similarities between Job and various extra-Biblical Wisdom pieces, e.g., dialogue style, and motifs like the problem of suffering and the longing for death. Nevertheless, in its essential teaching, Job differs altogether from the non-biblical Wisdom literature because it represents the unique message of re-demptive revelation, the wisdom of God which makes known the wisdom of men. Even in its literary structure, considered as a whole, it is unique—a masterpiece universally acclaimed.

Closely related to the literary form is the question of historicity. Certainly Job was a historical person (cf. Ezek 14:4; 22:9, 38:11), and his actual experience was substantially as recorded in this book. Nevertheless, the magnificent poetry of the several discourses has compelled general assent to the conclusion that the treatment of the account here is not literal but free. Moreover, the semanticic epic style of the prologue and the narrative and refrain, though it does not require the view that the narrative is legendary, suggests the possibility of a free, figurative treatment of some details.

Authorship and Date. Discussions of the authorship of Job by most modern critics are complicated by the critics’ doubts as to the unity of the book as we have it. The evidence is not primarily external, for though the LXX text of Job is about one-fifth shorter than the Masoretic text, its omissions are clearly secondary. The sections that have been most widely regarded as additions to an original basic work are the prologue and the epilogue, the poem on wisdom (chs. 28), the Elihu material (chs. 32–37), and part or all of the Lord’s discourses (chs. 38–41). Also, chapters 24–27 are regarded as seriously disarranged. However, strong defense of the integrity of our present text is found in the masterly structural unity of the whole and the rich interrelationships of all the party.

The question of date has received every possible answer, which indicates the difficulty of determining the time precisely. The date of the writing of the book is not to be confused with the date of its history narrated. The man Job apparently lived in early, patriarchal times. We note, for example, the humility of Job, as well as the not inconsiderable practice of true religion (attended by special supernatural revelation) outside the bounds of the Abrahamic covenant, and the early cosmic and political developments reflected in the book. The question regarding the dating of the book, then, is: How long was the story of the patriarchal Job transmitted—whether orally or at least partially in writing—before the anonymous Israelite writer, under divine inspiration, transformed the tradition into the canonical book of Job. The majority of negative critics favors an Exilic or post-Exilic date, their judgment being influenced by the way they construe the interdependence of Job, Isu-
The Book of Job: The 17th chapter of Job begins to reveal the character of Job as a man of faith. The first two chapters of Job are essentially a prologue or introduction. Job is described as a man of integrity and a pious man who feared God and shunned evil. He was also a man of great wealth and prosperity. Throughout his life, Job remained faithful to his faith, despite facing numerous trials and tribulations. The first chapter of Job introduces the character of Job and sets the stage for the remainder of the narrative. It conveys a sense of loss and suffering, and it highlights the importance of faith and patience in the face of adversity.

V. Restoration. The triumph of Job's wisdom. 42:7-17.
B. Job's wisdom blessed. 42:10-17.

COMMENTS


A. Job's Wisdom Described. 1:1-5.

The fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom, was the hallmark of Job. The wellspring of his life and character was the covenantal religion of faith in the Christ of promise, "what of God is made unto us wisdom." (1 Cor 1:30; cf. Isa 11:2)

1. Job's hometown, Uz, lay somewhere in the east of Canaan, near the borders of the desert that separates the eastern and western areas of the Fertile Crescent. It was an area of towns, farms, and migrating bands. Perfect and upright (AV), does not denote sinless perfection (cf. Job's recognition of his sins; e.g., 7:20; 13:8; 14:14; 34:18; 42:6) but straightforward integrity, specifically, covenant fidelity (cf. Gen 17:1,2). There was an honest harmony between Job's profession and his life, quite the opposite of the hypocrisy of which he was presently accused by Satan and later by his friends. One that feared God. In the OT, the fear of the Lord is the name for true religion. Job's piety was the fruit of a genuine commitment to his Lord, before whom he walked in reverence, reluctantly rejecting what the world presented.

2. True wisdom finds expression in the vigorous prosecution of God's creation mandates to replenish and subdue the earth (Gen 1:28). Due to the abnormality of history, which results from the fall, fulfillment often does the opposite of the godly. But Job's undertakings in family, field, and flock had been crowned with the Creator's blessings (cf. Job's description of this period in ch. 22).

3. Mindful of his God in good days as in evil, Job faithfully fulfilled his covenant as priest within his family. No tone formatist, Job perceived the root of sin in the human heart (cf. ch. 31), and, as the priest, he recognized, as special redemptive revelation had made clear, that there is no revocation of sin without the shedding of sacrificial blood. Human offerings, while symbolic of the Messianic expiation of sin, were also a consecration, etc. By means of these Job dedicated the fruits of progress in the area of culture (cf. 1:29) to his Creator. Thus human culture reached its proper end in the worship of God.


He who is wise unto salvation is aware of the demotic dimension of history, the age-long fury of Satan against "the seed" of the woman (cf. Gen 3:15), that is, Christ and His people. The Adversary charged that Job's godly wisdom was not genuine, that his piety was only a temporary by-product of his prosperity. Put to the test, however, Job bruised Satan under foot by demonstrating that he was ready to serve God "for naught." Since true wisdom, the fear of God, is a divinely bestowed redemptive gift, Satan's charge against Job was actually a defiant denial of the wisdom of God, a challenge to the sovereign efficacy of God's redemptive decree to "put eminently" between the elect and the serpents (Gen 3:15). The primary purpose of Job's suffering, unknown to him, was that he should stand before men and angels as a trophy of the saving activity of God, an exhibit of that divine wisdom which is the archetype, source, and foundation of true human wisdom.

1. The Endurance of Satan. 1:6-12.

6. That the reader may discover the primary purpose of Job's sufferings and to be in a position to judge accurately where true wisdom lies in the sequel, the veil is withdrawn from the invisible angelic world, depicted here as a royal court with the Sovereign seated on his throne amid his servants. The sons of God. This phrase in ancient polytheistic myth denotes divine beings, in the Bible it refers either to angels (e.g., Gen 6:2) or, as here, to celestial creatures. Satan, literally, the Adversary, is
among those obliged to render account before the throne. That, as well as the fact that Satan cannot tempt Job without permission, advertises his absolute subordimation, along with all other creatures visible and invisible, to the God whom Job feared.

8-10. God justifies himself by pointing to Job as a creation of his redemptive grace. There is none like him in the earth (v. 8b). This divine endorsement goes even beyond the description in verse 1. But though the hostile accuser can find nothing in Job's outward life to condemn (contrast the situation in Zech 3), he intimates that the patriarch's apparent devotion is that of calculated self-interest. He is saying, in effect, "Job is a deceiver like me, his true father, the devil." Satan sought to black out God's hand, and so he disputed the Lord's claim that Job had been made His son by redemptive grace. The devil hints that, in failing to recognize the sinlessness of Job's party, God is naive. Foi who, having been given a world all his own with a fence around it, would not keep up the necessary appearances of loyalty to the giver? The satanic assault on the integrity of Job is thus ultimately an assault on the integrity of God: God has bribed the prophets to act as if, indeed, the opportunity given to Job by his trial, therefore, is not so much to vindicate himself as to justify God.

11-12. In the temptation in Eden, Satan disparaged man to God. But he used the same subtle technique in both instances. He began with an insinuating question, then moved boldly on to outspoken contradiction of the divine word. Remove Job's prosperity, he says, and the piety that rests on it will collapse. God accepts the challenge. Indeed, by directing Satan's attention to Job, in his unfathomable wisdom, he invites the challenge.

That the heavenly scene and the transactions of the heavenly coast are not disclosed to Job is in keeping with the fact that this book is not intended primarily to answer the question, Why do the righteous suffer? Rather, the book represents absolute confession of self to man's faultless Creator-Saviour as true wisdom. A man must continue to fear God even when his world flails about and his hand strikes him, like Job, in stunned bewilderment on the refuse heap.

2) The Integrity of Job. 1:13-22. 13-19. How unequal the contrast seemed (Pseudepigraphal Wisdom) between God and power — with the element of surprise in its favor — arrayed against a might David and Goliath, in comparison, were equally matched. Yet Job's steadfast righteousness, like David's heroism, was only the visible index of the power of divine redemption working in and through the servant of God. The strategy of God, like that of Eljah or Carmel, was to make it impossible for Satan to point on the witnesses a naturalistic explanation of the wonder. He was about to perform. The overwhelming advantage God allowed Satan became, in the sequel, the measure of the devil's ignominy and of God's praise.

There was a day (v. 13b). Possibly the significant weeks were spent on some unusual celebration; but if there was a continuous succession of weeks, weeks of fasting, this was the day when Job had offered burnt offerings. His piety and devotion being thus set aside by the devil, his devotion seems the more uncommonly certain. Certainly the repetition of the picture of Job's happy family life as the prelude to the record of the stroke that obliterated it serves to set the joyous prosperity and the sudden desolation in sharpest contrast. The Sabeans (v. 15). Arab Bedouins. The fire of God (v. 16b). Possibly lightning. The Chaldeans (v. 17) of this early period, unlike the later empire-builders, were nomadic wanderers. The great wind (v. 19). Apparently a desert whirlwind, like that from which God later addressed Job. Note how the unquenchable assaults of man on the accumulated fruit of Job's labors alternate with the austerity of nature. The messengers were spared only to carry the evil tidings, in overwhelmingly awesome succession, to their bereaved master.

20-22. And when Job had spoken these words, his wife said to him, "You still hold your integrity? Why do you not curse God and die?" He said to her, "You speak as a woman would speak. Who can curse God and live?" But Job answered his wife, "Be it far from me. Would that I had died, or that I had not been born!" She said to him, "Do you still maintain your integrity? Then curse God and die!" But he said to her, "You speak as one of the fools. Shall we receive good at the hand of God and not receive evil? In the赛ed, however, God does not resist the sovereign God, not mistreat His spiritual child, even as a father who found in adversity occasion for praise. Perhaps in measuring the gre
ness of his loss, Job took stock of the abundance which had all the while been entrusted to his stewardship. Moreover, the hour of desolation was a moment of truth for him. Stripped naked of the things of this world, Job was immutably sensible of God’s confronting presence. Deeply was constrained to cry out unto thee. And how can the adoring redeemed heart respond in the presence of God but with doxology. “Whom have I in heaven but thee and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee” (Ps 73:25). Satan prophesied: “He will curse thee” (Job 1:11). But Job blessed God his former. In the Hebrew there is a play here on one root word, Satan using it with the meaning of cursing, and Job with the meaning of blessing.


14. Summoned again before the throne of the heavenly court to render account, Satan volunteers no report on his temptation of Job, God, however, to clarify his name, declares openly the fact of the triad and true integrity of his servant. Without cause (v. 3). This represents the same Hebrew word as the “forught” of Satan’s question (1: 9), God echoes the term to give the lie to Satan’s insinuation. It is now obvious that Job does serve God for taught and, therefore, it was for taught that Satan had accused him.

5) Skin for skin (v. 4b). A cynical parody of the reverent praises with which Job had responded to his desolation (1: 21), Satan intimates that even Job’s leaking bowels are not an adequate bargain for his physical well-being, all that a man hath will be given for his life (v. 4b). Satan implies that Job, by his docility had only feigned love for God as the exhortant but necessary fee for health insurance. Touch his bone and his flesh (v. 5b). If God will let Satan touch not merely Job’s possessions but also Job’s soul, so that there will be no profit left in “the religious deal,” Job will weigh back curse for curse. This statement proceeds from the desperation of Job’s past piety to a pretension that he will prove to be profane. So once again God permits the mystery of affliction to engulf his servant.

4) The Patience of Job. 2:7-10

7,8. Sore boils (v. 7b). Modern medical opinion is not unanimous in its diagnosis of Job’s sores, but the evidence seems to indicate that Job was suffering from lepra. The word job means the pustule, palsy caused by intense itching (2:7,9), maggot in sores (7:5), erosion of the bones (30:17), blackening and falling off of skin (30:30), and terrifying nightmears (7:14), though some of these may possibly be attributed to the prolonged exposure that followed the onset of the disease. Job’s whole body, it seems, was rapidly smitten with the loathsome, painful symptoms. Though Satan had been enabled to spare his victim’s life, the sufferer probably thought his death was imminent. Among the aches (v. 8b). The incurable disease was so bad to reduce this former prince of eastern patriarchs, revered above all others by his fellows, to an outcast from human society. Once renowned as the salt of the earth, he was driven out as its scouring. His dwelling was in the utter desolation of what was probably the town dungheaps.

9,10. The narrative reminds us repeatedly of the temptation in Eden (Gen 3). Job’s wife plays a role remarkably like that of Eve. Each woman succumbed to the tempter and became his instrument in the undoing of her husband. Satan had spared Job’s wife—as he had spared the four messengers—for his further use in his war on Job’s soul. Curse God, and die (v. 9b). The blasphemous apostasy to which she urged the sufferer was precisely what Satan had prophesied of Job. Her evil counsel brought this phase of Job’s torment to its finest pitch and elicited his second decisive response. As one of the foolish women (v. 10a). The charitable restraint of Job’s reply testifies as convincingly as his doxologies to the genuineness of his piety. He did not call his wife a fool, but he charged her with speaking, in her fretted despair, like one of that company in whose counsel she would not ordinarily walk. The fulness of her behavior brings into sharper relief the wisdom of Job’s godly patience. In the Bible, “wisdom” is a religious virtue, and the “foolishness” Job refers to is not lack of intellectual
keenness but surely lawlessness and godlessness (cf. Ps 14:1). Shall we not receive evil? (Job). The verb means to receive mockingly, patiently. It is used in an ancient Canaanite proverb: "If ants are smitten, they do not receive it passively but they bite the hand of the man who smites them" (Amarna Letters 3232:18). In all this did not Job sin with his lips (v. 19c). He did not utter curses against God, as Satan had hopefully prophesied. There is certainly no veiled suggestion that Job had cursed God in his heart. Job's wisdom proved sound; he truly served God for nought but for God Himself.

Satan seduced Adam even while Adam was standing in the integrity of his creation righteousness. From this it might have appeared that Satan could trip up the depraved sons of Adam at will and triumph over them. But herein lies a great wonder of redemptive grace: since Job stands triumphant where righteous Adam tragically fell! Thus, for the confounding of Satan and the reassurance of the saints, the Lord gave clear proof that a righteousness more enduring than that of Adam was being provided through the second Adam. This triumph of Job's patience over the Adversary's malice provided a seal, especially for the ages before the Incarnation, of God's promise that He would bestow on the faithful the gift of eternal salvation through the Christ to come.


The trial of Job's wisdom was by no means over. A new phase of it now began with the aggravation of Job's evil state by spiritual torment. Through Satan does not appear again, he was none the less still present, subtly using Job's well-intentioned comforters as his unwitting accomplices, with more apparent success than had marked his efforts hitherto.

II. After the second arrest of temptation and before the arrival of the friends, there was an interval of some months (7:3), during which Job's spirit was stretched that by the unrelenting distress in his flesh and the ravager of the lord discussed in Job 1:16, 22. 2:1, 2:24; 3:12; 13:5, 13:24; 14:1, 17:11 (the best recognized (see esp. chs. 19:30). Job's three friends. The cherished companions and counselors of "the greatest of all the men of the east" must also have passed by their people and aged of renown. Ten men in Eden was provisions for wisdom (Job 49:7). The Shushan tribe (cf. Gen 25:30) and thorough-thrown Naaman, were located in the east country, land of wise men (cf. 1 Kgs 4:30).

12:13. Though the friends were aware of Job's calamities, they were unprepared for what they found. Their stunned, speechless silence was like a mourning for the dead (cf. Gen 50:10; 1 Sam 31:13). Sincere as was their sympathy, their mute presence evidently afforded little comfort. To judge from their subsequent interpretation of Job's wretchedness, their mission of consolation would have ministered even sooner had they spoken. Still, it does seem remarkable that the prolonged silence led to be broken by the cry of the distraught suferer rather than by a healing word of comfort from a friend.


Between the heights of spiritual acumen in the prologue and in the whole stretches the abyss of Job's spiritual agony. The descent into and ascent out of that abyss are marked by national, dramatic changes of spiritual temper. These are described in brief transitional phases (i.e., chs. 3:42:18). The first of these portrays Job's startling abrupt plunge from patience to deep despondency.

1. Cursed his day. What turned Job's suboxonatory doxologies into undermined incantations? Had his spiritual resistance been worn away by the endless day and nights of physical distress? Or did the sight of the distinguished companions of his former prosperity recall too vividly the vanished honor and happiness of the past? Or was it that the love of his friends, gushing with unutterable pity, mirrored too faithfully the unfitness of his presence? Is not the clue to be found in the friends' identity as wise men? The brevity presence of these philosophical interpreters of life could not fail to start Job philosophizing about his tragi experience. But the more intently he sought for an explanation for the men anxiously aware he became the will of mystery encompassing him. Seeking the Why, he soon had lost the Way. Observed by the dead that God had abandoned him, he ceased his futile
endurance. Neither at this point nor later did Job fulfill Satan's prediction that he would renounce God with a curse. By yielding his own existence, however, Job, in effect, ventured to dispute with the Sovereign who decreed it. Whatever it is not of faith is sin; hence, the need of Job's repentance (cf. 42:1-6) in the way to renewed peace with God. 3:18. Job's inescapable present misery obliterated the memory of his former joyful years as he lamented that he was ever born. Let the Almighty not call his birthday into the light (v. 4), but let darkness and the shadow of death claim it for their own (v. 5a, ASV). Would that the night of his conception were blotted out of the calendar of time (v. 6), that Jehovah (v. 8b, ASV; a mythological symbol of the foe of cosmic order) would swallow it into chaos.

1:18. Why? Explosive impotence yields to petition lamentation. Why, since he was excommunicated and born, was he at least not an abortion or stillborn (vv. 11,16)? Even confinement in the dark grave—yet illuminated by the resurrection glory of Christ—seemed a far better state of existence. There Job, ostracized and a byword of base men and fools, would be a common lot with kings and princes (vv. 14,15); there all those afflicted by "the wicked" and taskmasters and relief from human troubles (vv. 16-17)

20-30. Why, not having been stillborn but rather welcomed into life and nourished (v. 18), must his wretched life continue? As the complaint draws to a close, Job finally returns his basic problem: Why does God give the light of life to a man and then use it against him? The words of God (1:10) now cast a shadow over him as one hemmed in by God with darkness and despair.


Because the dialogue of Job and his friends attaches to Job's complaint rather than directly to his calamities, the friends' motives assume less the air of pastoral consolation than of judicial defense, and thus becomes increasingly, so with each successive cycle of speeches. (For the cyclic structure of the dialogue, see the Outline above.) The friends meet as a council of elders to pass judgment on the demonstrative offerant. The weighing of Job's guilt involves discussion of broader aspects of the problem of theodicy, but always with Job's particular case and condemnation in view. Hence, for Job, the debate is not a detached, academic study of suffering in general, but a new, more painful phase of his sufferings. The friends are beguiled by their adherence to traditional theory into asking and rebuking Satan in his hostility to God, and darkening the way of wisdom for God's servant, Job. But the debate serves to silence this wisdom of the world and so prepares for the presentation of the covenantal approach to wisdom, which follows in the discourses of Elihu and the Lord. Again, in Job's appeal from the verdicts of men to the highest court, expressed in his passionate longing to plead his case before the Lord, the debate reaches out to the visible manifestation of God.

1) First Cycle of Debate. 4:1-14:22.

a) First Discourse of Eliphaz. 4:1-5:27.

4:1. As the eldest, apparently, of the friends (cf. 15:10) and thus the possessor of the most seasoned wisdom, Eliphaz is accorded the first word of procedure in each of the series of speeches (cf. 42:7). He sets the direction for the council of the friends by presenting his theory of sin and suffering and applying it to Job's case. The fundamental, but false, assumption of Eliphaz is that present circumstances invariably bring weal and wretchedness, that there is a direct ratio between sin and suffering. He addresses himself first to Job's 'discordance' (4:4-11), then to his impatience (4:12-5:7), and finally counsels him to repent (5:8-22).

2:11. Who can withhold himself from speaking? (v. 2b). For seven days the wise men had looked on Job's calamities without offering a word of consolation. When Job complained, however, the comforters could not restrain remonstrance for a moment. Thus for the whole course of the debate their sights were fixed on Job's temporary lapse into impatience, while his earlier prolonged display of patience quite disappeared from their perspective. They reproach Job as though he had given up at the first taste of adversity: it
toucheth thee, and thou art thrown into alarm (v. 5:3).

Even as I have seen (v. 5a; cf. 5:3). The authority for Eliphas' theory is mysterious. He accepts the traditional view of Eastern sages because his observations of life seem to bear it out. His statistics show, for example, that extreme calamity follows extreme wickedness (vv. 9-11). Only arrogant sinners who make a lifework of vowing sin reap a harvest of death and calamities. They perish like herbage scorched by the withering blast of desert wind (v. 9), or like a tree of roasting lions dispersed by a sudden blow (v. 10:11). His observation also has confirmed the converse: Who ever perished, being innocent? (v. 7a). Though the righteous experience a measure of suffering, they are never cut off under affliction. From such observations Eliphas deduces his law of sin and suffering, and he assumes that it must uniformly and universally govern human history. Unfortunately, Eliphas' method of constructing the doctrine of providence is incorrect. For true theologiae of the authority of divine revelation, not on limited human observation and fallible speculation. Unfortunately, too, as Job points out later, even Eliphas' observations and statistics are inaccurate (cf. 31:17f).

Vain doctrine can offer only vain comfort. Is not thy fear of God the confidence, And the integrity of thy ways thy hope? (4:6, ASV). Eliphas does not question Job's essential righteousness. Therefore, trusting to arouse him from his despondency, he assures him that because he is a just man, he will not perish. But this favorable evaluation of one laid low by disasters is inconsistent with Eliphas' own theory. To be consistent he must regard Job as the basest son of Belial. For the patriarch's agony is so great that he passionately covets that death from which Eliphas, declaring it the worst calamity that could befall the ungodly, has pronounced him immune. Later, when Eliphas has worked out his position more consistently, he charges Job with hypocrisy and criminality. In this first speech, however, unappreciative of the exceptional severity of Job's sufferings, he classifies Job with the generality of moderately sinning, moderately suffering righteous men, and is only astonished that he complains so immorally.

4:12-5:7. Job had called in question the wisdom of God's providence. Eliphas counters with the argument that fallen men, whether godly or ungodly, are deficient in wisdom and justice and, therefore, incompetent to criticize Providence (4:12:21). They are, moreover, justly subject to all the woes attending mortality (5:1-7).

4:12-21. Now a word was brought to me stealthily, my ear received the whisper of it (v. 12, RSV). As a supplementary source of his knowledge, Eliphas refers impressively to a special revelation vocalized to him in a hush (v. 15) night vision. His account of the mysterious appearance and voice (v. 15-16) serves to cast a prophetic mantle about him. (For similar features in the annals witnessed by Abraham, Moses, and Eliphas, see Gen 13:12, Num 12:6, 1 Kgs 19:12.) The content of the alleged revelation is presented in Job 17:21. Shall mortal man be just before God? Shall a man be pure before his Maker? (v. 17, ASV margin; cf. RSV). The AV and ASV translation is also grammatically possible and would provide a suitable reframe for the challenge to God's government implicit in Job's complaint. If by comparison with God's wisdom, even the wisdom of angels is imperfect (v. 18), certainly man is alive and dies without wisdom (v. 19), ASV is not qualified to sit in judgment over God's ways. Analyzing man's inferiority to angels in terms of his mortality, Eliphas echoes the divine verdict against man's body of dust (v. 19; cf. Gen 3:19). In comparison with angelic life, human life, like that of the dust (Job 4:19, 20), is fleeting, that death is like the collapse of a tent when its cord is loosed (v. 21, ASV).

5:1-7. If Eliphas had applied to himself the message of the Lord's transcendent wisdom and man's lack there of sent him in the night vision, he would not have volunteered so dogmatic an explanation of God's dealings with Job. Afflictions come not forth from the dust . . . but man is born with trouble (v. 6a; 7a, ASV; cf. 4:8). Though a servant of God, he is not. Job is still a fallen mortal. His troubles, therefore, did not spring out of the ground like a magical harvest, even now; they are the thorny fruits of his sins. Hence, neither men nor angels can listen sympathetically to his cry (v. 11). Vexation killeth the foolish man (v. 2, ASV). To display resentment against God is not according to wisdom; it is not so be done as well as it is spoken on high (v. 7; Ps 35:23; cf. 17:2).

The end of the text does not reproduce the entire text of the book of Job. The remainder of the text is lost or unrecorded.
God's providence is worse than failure; it involves affliction unto death. I have seen the foolish (v. 3a). Again Eliphaz's authority is experience. His thoughtless death (v. 3a) is the essence of the house, field, and children of the churlish fool (v. 3b), remarked as it was of Job's recent losses, might well have made Job wonder whether Eliphaz judged him to be such a fool.

8-11. Eliphaz urges the mourning servant to submit trustfully to God. The core concept of his exhortation is the wisdom of the chastened man (v. 10). He describes the goodness of God's mercies (vv. 6-10), prophecies of the happiness that will follow upon repentance (vv. 18-20), and adds a modest guarantee of the wisdom he has afforded (v. 27).

8-11. But as for me, I would seek to God (v. 8, ASV). The unanswered age has no doubt how he would set it before the Lord. Wise advice is also his account of the goodness of God's providence and His special interest in the mourning young (see Paul's quotation of v. 13 in 1 Cor 3:11). But his misinterpretation of Job's extraordinary sufferings and his uncomprehending attitude indicate Job to pull from this exhortation.

11. Beware is the man whom God correcteth. Eliphaz recognizes the distinction between chastisement and punishment, and he appreciates the ultimate benefits of God's fatherly chastening. However, his views of the relation of sin and suffering leave too room for other causes, such as unkindness and unrighteousness, in inflicting the righteous. (For further comments on this theme see 33:33-35.)

12-20. Coats and fleeces restored (vv. 23; 34:1 ASV, shalt miss nothing rather than AV shall not stint). Numerous off-spring (v. 25), and long life (v. 26) are evident to be Job's happy portion. Eliphaz spoke more truth than I tarried, too, in predicting deliverance from the scourge of the tongue (v. 21), as the reader, aware of Satan's slander and the friends' misjudgment, well knows. The skill of the author is evident in this early anticipation of the actual outcome, presented as it is in the form of a forecast based on such profound misunderstanding. For Eliphaz was mistaken in ascribing all his receiver's prosperity always follows repentance. Suffering is not in exact proportion to sin in this life, and neither is prosperity granted to proportion to piety. All depends on God's good pleasure.

b) Job's Reply to Eliphaz. 6:1-7:21. The presence of the philosophers had set Job to speculating about his fate, and that led to his questioning God's wisdom (ch. 3). The pronouncement of Eliphaz concerning the relation of sin to suffering had introduced a theme that was to lead Job to question the justice of God; for Job knew that his own extraordinary sufferings could not be accounted for on the ground of extraordinary sin. In this first reply, however, the patriarch does not engage in theological discussion about God's justice, but vents again his inner torment, the consequence of his sense of estrangement from the God who afflicted him. That had been the undercurrent of Job's original complaint, and the effects of Eliphaz had only aggravated it. The present speech is, therefore, a continuation of the complaint, with certain new overtones. Beginning on the defensive, Job presents his original complaint (6:1-13). Then, taking the offensive, he reproves his friends for their pitiless attitude (6:14-20). Finally, turning to his friends to God, he renewes his lament (7:1-21).

8-13. As the plural forms indicate, this chapter is addressed to all the friends. For they all concurred in the views of Eliphaz, and by glance and gesture had no doubt signified the application which would presently become vocal in their own speeches. Oh that my assertions were just (5:11, ASV). Job ignores Eliphaz's insinuations as to the cause of his degradation, and defends the veracity expressed in his complaint. To Eliphaz the complaint had sounded ambiguous (5:21), says Job, if the word of Eliphaz makes woe writhe with his lips by anguish were placed in the scales, they would easily be unbalanced by his calamities, which were heavier than the sand of the sea. The answer of the Almighty ... the terror of God (v. 4). An goodness, an almost infinite remission, had been betrayed in Job's complaint by his reluctance to mention God even as the author of his sufferings. The vigorously trenchant interpretation of Eliphaz did at least give a wholesome shock. In that regard, Job soon frankly expresses his feeling that God is confronting him like
an enemy, marshaling hosts of terrors against him. In further defense of his complaint, Job observes that even animals do not complain without reason (v. 5). And it is only natural for a man to reject insipid, loathsome food (vv. 6,7). Then, recalling Eliphaz’s description of the death of frail mortals (4:16-21), Job declares that death is precisely what he loathes (vv. 8,9). He would even exult in pain unspiring (v. 10b, RSV). Even if he should die the kind of death Eliphaz says is reserved for the ungodly, it would be welcome. Nor would it, in his case, be the death of the ungodly; for contrary to the intimations of Eliphaz, he had not denied the words of the Holy One (v. 11c, ASV). What is my end, that I should be patient? (v. 11b, RSV). Job’s resources for endurance were spent. In spite of Eliphaz’s fair predictions, the future in this world was hopeless. 14-30, Eliphaz has attacked Job’s complaint; now attacks Eliphaz’s consolation. My brethren have dealt deceitfully as a brook (v. 15a). He has not begged favors, such as a great ransom (vv. 22,23)—only the pity a man naturally expects from friends. Yet he has been as bitterly disappointed in his “comforters” as a thirsty desert camel when it reaches the eagerly anticipated oasis—sometimes a rushing, dark torrent—and finds not even a trickle among the rocks (vv. 15-21). Ye see a terror, and are afraid (v. 21b, ASV). And make merchandise of your friend (v. 27b, ASV). Their pitiful procedure, says Job, is dictated by fear that trouble as his may be visited upon them. If they should show him sympathy, God might misinterpret their concern as criticism of His providence, and He might plague them similarly. To God’s partiality for themselves, they intimate that Job must have sinned in proportion to his sufferings. As evidence they point to the rebellious tone of his complaint. But his desperate words uttered under extreme provocation give no proof of his normal attitude and conduct (v. 56). Return, I pray you (v. 29a). Job returns the compliment by assuring his guilt, for I am righteous (v. 30). 17-21, In the midst of his replies Job repeatedly turns from his friends and addresses himself to God. The structure of the patriarch’s individual speeches reflects the overall course of his inner struggle as, disappointed by earthly friends, he is compelled to look anew to his heavenly Friend and divine Redeemer for understanding. 1:16. Like the days of an hiring (v. 1). Human existence, and Job’s life in particular, is like a hired hand’s hard campaign or a field laborer’s weary grind. It is a succession of days of toiling being the cool of evening, and restless nights of longing for the coming, a flood of misery and hopelessness (v. 16). Thine eyes shall be upon me, but I shall not be (v. 1b, ASV). Reverting to the theme of human mortality introduced by Eliphaz, Job builds upon it his resumed complaint. He introduces (v. 7-10) and concludes (v. 21b) his appeal for relief (vv. 11-21a) with the pathetic prospect of the Valley looking for his faithful servant too late to show him over the pit Am I the sea, or a snare? (v. 12b, RSV). To judge from the insistent surveillance kept over him, Job says, one would think he was the chain-monster (a mythological figure, cf. 3:8) threatening the stability of the universe. 17-21, What is man (v. 17a), An ironic twist is given to Ps 8:4 (cf. Ps 144:3). The contrast between divine transcendence and human finitude is exploited to minimize the significance of human action. If I have sinned, what do I unto thee (v. 20a, ASV). Actually, of course, God’s transcendent nature magnifies the seriousness of sin, it is the foundation of the meaningfulness of human experience and of all this is. Moreover, this struggle of Job was particularly significant because it had been made the test case for this very truth of the transcendental authority and control of God over history. In Job’s temptation the stability of the universe was under attack—as the “sons of God” could have told Job—by the real "dragon” (cf. Rev 20:2) of whom the mythical sea monster was a paganized version. The angel saw the world trembling with every woe of Job’s spirit. For if the redemptive power of God could not preserve Job in the fear of God, not only Job but the world was lost to save. c) First Discourse of Bildad, 8:1-22. Bildad proves to be no less insensible as Eliphaz regarding Job’s wretchedness. He spins the sufferer’s defense of his complaint, ignores his criticism of the impassive approach of the friends, and proceeds to give Job more of El
Job 3:1-9

plus comfort in the same of divine justice (v. 2.7) and venerable tradition (v. 8:19). Then he awkwardly appeals to his word of cheer (v. 20:22).

2:7. How long (v. 2.8). Here is no appeal to the months of patience; only indication over a few minutes' patience! God. God preserve justice! (v. 3.24. ASV). May I be conscious God was not unjust to Job. But behind Bildad's rhetorical question lies the judgment that Job was reaping a harvest of sin. This issue of God's justice, though doubtful involved in Job's complaint, had not previously been foremost in his thoughts.

The patriarch had contemplated his destiny from the metaphysical perspective of divine transcendence and human finitude. By focusing attention on the ideal aspect, the comforter proceeded only in intensifying their friend's temptations. Job's theocracy was as inadequate at their. Reason therefore told him that God must be deeply grated with him, but his conscience refused to acknowledge transmigration commensurate with his suffering. Where then was justice? Where was the good God he had known? He has delivered them into the power of their transgression (v. 4.18. ASV). An astonishingly heartless, but thoroughly consistent application of the friends' dictum. Though the form is conditional, the intent is declarative. If thou wouldst see God, go to God (v. 5.18). Since Job's assertions have not yet proved fatal, as his children did, he may entertain hope that he is not like them, reproved and not his repentance will be followed by a manifestation of his saving grace and blessings (v. 7.12).

8:18. But if there be . . . (v. 8.3). Aware of the limitations of the individual mortal (v. 9.1), Bildad would know the probability of personal observation with traditional lore (v. 9.10). Between Bildad and Eliphaz there is no essential difference. Each builds on schematic conceptions drawn from the simplicity of his own consciousness and the relativity of the changing world rather than on the granitic discourses of the omniscience Creator. Bildad reproduces the proverbial wisdom of the forefathers in similar forms known mostly from their habit of growth of speech and custom (v. 1.16). So we see the paths of all that are dead (v. 12.4). All the skies touch one season; the boughness of the wicked is fragile, perishable. If situations sometimes seem to contradict the traditional theory that suffering is the wages of sin, it is never for long. But why does Bildad allow a warning designed for the ungodly to dominate his counsel to Job?

20:22. The perception states the application of Bildad's doctrine to the perfect and to evil doers (v. 26. ASV). The speaker offers some encouragement for Job, but it is brief and preliminary (v. 21:22). Though the sufferer finds himself here in the category of the "perfect," he cannot forget Bildad's earlier H (v. 6). d) Job's Reply to Bildad. 9:1-10:22.

Following the general pattern of his previous reply, Job addresses himself first to the friends (9:1-24), then more or less directly to God (9:25-10:22). He accepts their rebuff of Bildad with sarcastic emphasis of his friend's opening (and fundamental) thesis (9:2; cf. 5:13) and closes with vehement contradiction of Bildad's closing (and dominant) contention (9:22-24; cf. 8:20-22). Then Job renews his complaint to God in the mood of reckless defiance to which the counsel of the friends has given him. In this speech he plunges into the darkest depth of his imagined alienation from God. Though he approaches blasphemy in his frenzy, he does not turn from God with a curse but wrestles on in prayer. For Satan cannot pluck him from his Father's hand.

9:24. Of a truth I know that it is so (v. 26. ASV). See comments on 8:3. The judicial aspect of the situation now begins to Job. God appears to him a presuming judge. But bowl man can be just with God? (v. 26. ASV). Through this question is similar to form to Eliphaz' revelation (4:17), its meaning is different. Job is not saying that man, being a fallen mortal, cannot stand in his own integrity before God. He is saying, i.e., the following verses show that no matter what the righteousness of a man's cause, he is too puny and ignominious to defend it before the overwhelming wisdom and power of God. The thought of God's transcendence had led Job to ask why God should bother to afflict a frail man. Now the same thought provokes the question, Why should a blood man bother to contend against God? This question exposes Job's loss of the sense of God's loving-kindness. The Almighty seems to confront him like a giant adversary.
Which doeth great things past finding out (v. 10a). Again Job gives a new application to a quotation from Eliphaz (cf. 5:9) by way of answering Bildad. Eliphaz spoke these words as a ground for Job's committing his cause to God (5:6) and illustrated with gory works of destruction (5:10-16). Job repeats them to show how futile it is for him to plead his cause before God. And he illustrates with more ominous examples of the sheer impotence of God's cosmic rule (vv. 11-12). In the final illustration Job apparently adopts again the imagery of current mythology, the helplessness of the gods (v. 13b, ASV), to depict God's rule over the sea (cf. 26:12). He cannot answer him one of a thousand... Though I were righteous, yet would I not be answer, but I would make supplication to my judge (v. 13b, ASV). This strikingly anticipates the subsequent prophecy (26:28) and Job's response (40:3-5). Yet the present is again subtly veiled in misunderstanding. For the reality which will prove to be the pledge to joy regained, here seems to Job a dismal eventuality. I am perfect (v. 13a, ASV). This section terminates in a crescendo of invective, Job's exculpation becoming almost incoherent and extravagantly. In utter despair of ever establishing his integrity before the irresistible God, who seems bent on breaking him without cause (v. 17b, cf. 2:3), Job nevertheless defiantly affirms his uprightness. He destroyeth the perfect and the wicked (v. 22b). The assertion of the friends that only the wicked are carried away violently needs correction; Job, however, fails to discern the love of God in the death of the righteous. He will laugh at the trial of the innocent (v. 23b), just as, sitting immovable in the heavens, he will "have in derision" (Ps. 2:4, the same word as is here translated laugh) the rebels razing against his throne. The friends had condemned Job that God might be righteous—according to their standard. Job, defending himself against their unjustified insinuations, is driven to condemn God that he himself might be righteous (cf. 40:8).

9:25-10:13. The failure bewails his sorrows, continuing to interpret them as tokens of divine condemnation. He cannot suppress his longing for a day in court, though he has no hope of being granted such a privilege. Hence, he reasons earnestly with the strange God, the phantom creation of his frenzied double.

9:25-35. Now my days are swifter than a post (v. 25a). The opportunity for the Judge to reverse his decision and return Job's prosperity will soon be gone. Job describes the anguish of his miserable life to those things that are fleeted on land (v. 25b), on the sea (v. 26a), and in the air (v. 26b). Ye shall pluck me in the ditch (v. 31a). Even if the case come to court and Job proved his innocence as effectively as human skill could (v. 30), the Judge would overpower him with charges of guilt. There is no reprieve between us (v. 33a, RSV). Here, when Job's faith is at its lowest ebb, there emerges in this complaining negative form the concept of the Mediator, which was afterwards to become for Job a positive conviction. This concept attains its greatest expression in the speech (ch. 19) that marks the crest reached by Job's faith within the course of the debate. For lack of a diagnosus, Job turns back to the omnipotent One, who seems determined to terrify him into dumbness (vv. 33-35) and find his guilt.
(v. 13a, ASV). God’s secret design in the earliest formation and nurture of Job’s life was to prepare a prey to be stalked like a lion, mercilessly, relentlessly (vv. 14-16). God’s hidden purpose was all the while to make that life miserable at last by witnessing to its guilt with an unending host of plagues (v. 17). Wherefore then hast thou brought me forth out of the womb? (v. 21a).

The consideration of God’s role in the origin of his life brings Job back to the theme of his original complaint (cf. 3:11). Let me alone (v. 20b). Cut off, as he feels himself to be, from the aid of God, the most he can ask, before he slips into the darkness of death, that God will simply cease paying attention to him for a moment. Nevertheless, it is still to God that Job cries.

c) First Discourse of Zophar. 11:1-20. Job had reacted to Eliphaz’ and Bildad’s concentration on his public status with increasingly intense protestations of innocence. These in turn provoked the friends to ever more constant application of their doctrine until Zophar now bluntly accuses Job’s alleged iniquity (v. 4f). He supports his charge by appealing to God’s infinity (vv. 7-12), yet he concludes with an assurance of restored prosperity (vv. 13-20).

14. Job had insisted that God had offered him knowing him to be righteous (v. 4a; cf. 9:2; 10:7). That Zophar points out, contradicts traditional theory, is iniquous, and can not be allowed to stand as the last word. Should a man call of talk be justified? (v. 2b)? The customary introductory courteous, disposed with altogether by Bildad, are thus dispatched by Zophar with such haste and disdain that accusation merges with apology. But oh that God would speak, and open his lips against thee (v. 3). Job seems irrepressible in controversy with his fellows; but if he were granted to speak, he would loath to let the mere words of his adversaries reach his ears. He desires to be permitted to state his cause, to bring home to God the charges of his adversaries. Zophar’s reference to Job’s private and secret sin (v. 14), afflicting him not as it relates to his iniquities. Zophar’s desire to modify the other two friends’ theory of direct ratios—i.e., in the opposite direction from Job! Here is the climax of condemnation in the first cycle. Job 11-16 is pivotal; it concludes the indictment but also introduces the theme by mentioning the unsearchable wisdom of God (cf. 5:9).

7-12. Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? (v. 15). By his infinite wisdom God comprehends and controls creation in its height and depth, length and breadth (vv. 9b). Who can hinder him? (v. 10b). If God wills to bring a man into judgment, the man cannot escape. Zophar thus endorses the conclusion Job had earlier drawn from the absolute wisdom of God, namely, that resistance to Him is futile (cf. 9:12; 10:7b). But while Job had also appealed to the divine omnipotence for vindication of his innocence (10:7a), Zophar does so to convict Job of guilt. He seeth wickedness also (v. 11b). Having openly condemned Job, and being ignorant himself of any direct evidence to substantiate his charge, Zophar finds it convenient to supplement his own ignorance with the omniscience of the Almighty. He would have made better use of his excellent doctrine of the incomprehensible-ity of God, however, if he had humbly recognized the limitations of his own knowledge of divine providence and had not presumed to understand Job’s sufferings to perfection. This truth of God’s unsearchable wisdom, though sadly mis-handled by Zophar, in the doctrine that should have quelled Job’s spirit and silenced his complaints. By reeking more seriously with it, Job and his friends alike would have recognized that his sufferings were compatible with exemplary piety on one side and divine favor on the other. It is primarily by this glorification of The Wisdom of the Almighty that the Lord Himself later delivers the burden of Job from his temptation. Thus again the author of the book employs veiled anticipation. In 11:12 he uses Job’s favorite device, echoing an argument with a prophetic saying. He cites the anxiety of vain men as a foil for the stability of divine wisdom.

13-20. Compare the similar appeals of Eliphaz (5:8 f.) and Bildad (6:5-7, 20-22). Contrary to Job’s pessimistic opinion (9:28, 10:15); unit for God’s favor would be successful (v. 15). At least it would be if it were preceded by thoroughgoing repentance, extending to heart, hand, and feet (v. 15b; cf. 13:14). By laying down this condition Zophar man-
ages to intensify accusation into the midst of consolation. Renewal of God's favor will be accompanied by restoration of prosperity, in which present grief will be forgotten as waters that are passed away (v. 18b, ASV). Also, contrary to Job's assumptions of unceasing darkness (10:21-22), a bright dawning of hope, peaceful security, and honor, as of old, awaits him (vv. 17-19). But the eyes of the wicked shall fail (v. 20a). Zophar's growing suspicion of Job suggests the advisability of his seasoning consolation further with warning. He closes by identifying the only hope of the wicked with death, in words clearly resembling Job's description of his own prospects. Zophar's pattern of repentance and restoration was to be washed out; but in a way quite surprising to him.


Thoroughly contemptuous of the arrogant ignorance of his counselors, Job subjects them to devastating criticism (12:1-13:12). He declares his righteousness to his friends (13:13-19), then once more appeals directly to God (13:20-14:22). In the midst of this appeal, a new hope dawns in Job's soul—the hope of life beyond Sheol! Though despondency darkens Job's concluding words, it is clear that in this reply to Zophar, his faith has begun its triumphant ascent out of the abyss of despair.

13:1-13:15. Wisdom shall die with you (12:26). Job's sarcasm suggests how insufferable he found the pretensions of the trio who had all sung the same empty tune. Their words would continue to sting but he would no longer take them seriously as possible solutions to the riddle of his sufferings. I am not inferior to you (12:3b; cf. 13:2). The familiar formulae they recited hardly justify their attitude of superiority to the thought of him that is at ease there is contempt for misfortune (13:5a, ASV). In sheer exasperation Job bewails the whole situation. Because of his troubles, a man of godly wisdom is treated like a singleton or criminal on the basis of a theory that is contradicted by another (equally distasteful) fact, namely, that robbers are prospering while he is reduced to such mockery (12:6-10). Into whose hand God brings (12:6c). Better, who bring their god in their hand (ASV marg. and RSV). Lamech-like (cf. Gen 4:21-24, Dan 11:38) they idolize the weapon in their hand.

Ask now the beasts (12:7a). The three friends' doctrine of God's immutable wisdom is common knowledge; all creation testifies to it. In 12:1-13 Job demonstrates his familiarity with the concept of divine rule, which his friends thought to teach him. His account of it, indeed, surpasses their own (cf. Ps 107). All the glory and dignity of man's earthly kingship are at the mercy of God's sovereign might (Job 12:22; cf. 1 Cor 1:25). The elemental forces of nature are at his disposal to overturn the earth (Job 12:5; cf. Gen 7). The highest civil and ecclesiastic dignities are impotent against him (Job 12:17, 21, 24). Verse 19 mentions priests (ASV) and 'sinnim (cf. Ugaritic, priests, a temple guild). Job takes special delight in expounding the text: "Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" (1 Cor 1:20), and one need not look far to discover certain wise men he had particularly in mind.

Surely I would speak to the Almighty (13:3a; cf. 5:8). Mourning disgust with human helpers drives Job again to reason with God, but first he delivers a scathing rebuke to the self-appointed legal counsel for God (13:4-12). And it shall be your wisdom (v. 5b). If they had never broken their seven days' silence, they would not have exposed their stupidity (cf. Prov 17:28). Will you then partiality toward him, will you plead the case for God? (13:6, RSV). They have disgraced their dignity by severity. Worse, they have carried God's favor at the expense of truth; ye are forgers (L. Stephens) of lies (13:4; cf. v. 7). See the similar charge in 6:21, 27. Your memorable sayings are proverbs of ashes. Your defenses are... of clay (13:12, ASV). The weighty maxims by which they falsely condemn Job in order to justify God are as vulnerable to the hammer of truth as clay to a hammer of iron. Their defense of God was an offense to God. They equated a certain providential procedure, falsely assumed to be invariably followed, with divine justice. In effect, they set up an abstract principle as an absolute and so subordinated God to it. Is it good that he should search you out? (13:9a) Zophar sought to connect Job's supposed guilt by stating his guilt before the bar of God's omniscience. The patriarch remedies him and his associates prosecuting attorneys that, in the process of indicting him, they too have come to
stead before that judge; and under such exposure his motives and false charges cannot escape detection. He will surely repay you (13:10a). is Job’s accurate prognosis (cf. 42:7f). Though Job’s confidence in the justice of God is unshaken, in his more desperate moments, by his ascription of absolute 2819575123.24, but the judicial scene quickly fades, and the court oratory turns into the customarydoxological lamentation.

Thou . . . makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth (13:28). Compare with let the affirmation of man’s universal sinfulness in 14:4. When Job was disputing with his friends, the issue at stake was his general integrity, concerning which he was outspokenly confident. But apparently, in the imagined confrontation with the judge, that issue yielded to the more penetrating question of the status of a sinner before the perfectly holy One. Job’s later response to the actual theology is foreshadowed here (cf. 40:3-5). Meanwhile, his fearless avowal, not accounted for by the general insubstantiality of men, crushes his spirit. Turn from him, that he may rest, till he shall accomplish, as an hireling, his day (14:6). Though this lament is expressed in terms of the frailty of all mortals, it is nevertheless personal (cf. 14:3b). Let the common tool and sorrow of mankind suffice for Job (cf. 7:1-2).

The daring desire to come before God is both a token of a favorable verdict, in the presence of God is the one place shown above all others by one whose name is given, where, as a hypocrite, Who is there that will contend with me? For thou wouldst be silent and die (v. 10, KJV). A triumphal challenge, but un-likely if Job envisages God as well aware, if he could be successfully con- tradicted, if he could be proved ungodly in reality—and not just according to ap- parent and conventional—he would die. And that, he knows, is impossible: I know that I shall be justified (v. 19a). 13:8-14:23 Then will I not hide myself before thee (13:20b). If granted a fair trial, Job will not, like Adam, flee from God, covered with shame. If only God will deal for a time from oppressing him and refrain from overwhelming him with his terrible majesty (13:21 cf. 9:34, 35), Job will appear before him either as defendant or as complainant (v. 22). If Job can successfully defend his integrity, it will be evident (according to his inadequate concept of human suf- ferance) that God has been at fault in afflicting him so severely. Or, if Job is to succeed in convincing God of such wrong, he must first demonstrate his own integ- rity. Imagining himself as confronting his tormentor in the coveted trial, the sufferer now demands an explanation of God’s behavior (13:23-24). But the judicial scene quickly fades, and the court oratory turns into the customary doxological lamentation. (13:25f).

Thou dost區域 makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth (13:28). Compare with the affirmation of man’s universal sinfulness in 14:4. When Job was disputing with his friends, the issue at stake was his general integrity, concerning which he was outspokenly confident. But apparently, in the imagined confrontation with the judge, that issue yielded to the more penetrating question of the status of a sinner before the perfectly holy One. Job’s later response to the actual theology is foreshadowed here (cf. 40:3-5). Meanwhile, his fearless avowal, not accounted for by the general insubstantiality of men, crushes his spirit. Turn from him, that he may rest, till he shall accomplish, as an hireling, his day (14:6). Though this lament is expressed in terms of the frailty of all mortals, it is nevertheless personal (cf. 14:3b). Let the common tool and sorrow of mankind suffice for Job (cf. 7:1-2).

The daring desire to come before God is both a token of a favorable verdict, in the presence of God is the one place shown above all others by one whose name is given, where, as a hypocrite, Who is there that will contend with me? For thou wouldst be silent and die (v. 10, KJV). A triumphal challenge, but un-likely if Job envisages God as well aware, if he could be successfully con- tradicted, if he could be proved ungodly in reality—and not just according to ap- parent and conventional—he would die. And that, he knows, is impossible: I know that I shall be justified (v. 19a). 13:8-14:23 Then will I not hide myself before thee (13:20b). If granted a fair trial, Job will not, like Adam, flee from God, covered with shame. If only God will deal for a time from oppressing him and refrain from overwhelming him with his terrible majesty (13:21 cf. 9:34, 35), Job will appear before him either as defendant or as complainant (v. 22). If Job can successfully defend his integrity, it will be evident (according to his inadequate concept of human suf- ferance) that God has been at fault in afflicting him so severely. Or, if Job is to succeed in convincing God of such wrong, he must first demonstrate his own integ- rity. Imagining himself as confronting his tormentor in the coveted trial, the sufferer now demands an explanation of God’s behavior (13:23-24). But the judicial scene quickly fades, and the court oratory turns into the customary doxological lamentation. (13:25f).
redemption is not, however, the central theme of the Book of Job. The book does, indeed, challenge us to endure, with hope. But it contrasts us with an even more profound demand. It sounds the primary and everlasting call for glad consecration, come what may, to the covenant Lord.

But thou numberest my steps (14:16a, ASV). The curse of Job's spiritual state through the course of the great debate is graphed in words of scale. In individual replies like this, where the climax is not at the end but is followed by an emotional decrescendo The flame of the patriarch's hope is extinguished, though only for the moment, by his bitter thoughts of the upspring severity of God, who mine-like hordes clip Job's every sin for visitation (14:16,17). Thou dost destroy the hope of man (14:16c). By inclement affliction, even as a constant fire in nature wears away the most durable objects (14:15,19). Thou prevailest for ever against him (14:20a). God's hostility culminates in the death stroke, cutting man off from rapport with this world, even from knowledge of his posterity (14:21), shutting him up to himself in death, to the endless dull pain of decomposition and the soul's dreary drudge (14:22)

2) Second Cycle of Debate 15:1-21:34

a) Second Discourse of Eliphaz 15:1-35

How a round of debate can alienate friends! The genial Eliphaz forgets even introductory civilities. All is new censorious warning. The philosopher exposes his professional sensitivity to Job's slights (cf. 12:2,3;7ff.; 13:1-5,12) by reverting to the relative wisdom of himself and Job each time he introduces a new indictment (cf. vv. 1ff., 7ff., 17ff.).

1:6. Vain knowledge (v. 2a). Literally, knowledge of wind. Cf. the parallel east wind (v. 2b). i.e., the violent, suffocating desert blast. Job's claim to wisdom are belied by his windy speeches (v. 3). Yes, thou dost away with fear. And hinderest devotion before God (v. 4, ASV). Job's brazen outbursts are worse than interminable, for they depreciate the fear of God, and undermine religion. The tongue of the crafty (v. 5b). Possibly an allusion to the "snide" (same word) serpent in Gen 3:1. Job's guilt explains his words (v. 3), and his words prove his guilt (v. 9).

7-16. The friends have the advantage over Job in age and hence in wisdom (vv. 7-10; cf. 12:12). His bearded to the contrary, Job has not the antiquity of Adam nor of some primal beings (v. 7; cf. wisdom personified in Prov 8:22ff.). Neither has he any special, secret knowledge of God's decrees (Job 15:8, cf. the heavenly scenes in the Prologue). Perhaps verse 10 refers particularly to Eliphaz. Are the consolations of God too small for thee (v. 11, ASV)? A rather characteristic description of the friends' counsel, but in line with Eliphaz' alleged special revelation (4:12ff.), which he now echoes (vv. 14-16, cf. 4:17-18). The purpose of the repetition is revealed by a comparison of 15:10 with 4:18. Eliphaz seeks to express his revised estimate of Job as one who lusts disproportionately after sin.

17-35. Unto whom alone the earth was given (v. 19a). In addition to the personal observations of the eldest contemporaries (v. 17; cf. v. 10), Eliphaz invokes the sanction of parent tradition (vv. 18,19) to support his retribution dogma and contradict the Joban heresy that the ungodly often prosper (cf. 15:6). The prosperity of the wicked, with Job (by his affliction) is evidently identified, a merely imaginary (vv. 20-35). He believeth not that he shall return out of darkness (v. 22). His peace is ruined by presentiments of calamity without remedy (vv. 24-25), the tormenting forebodings of a conscience defiled by carnal ease and contempt of God (vv. 25-28). Every grasping enterprise he undertakes proves abortive (vv. 29-34); according to the law of retribution (v. 35), which may be delayed but not thwarted. Eliphaz here sounded the counsellors' keynote in the second round of debate.

b) Job's Second Reply to Eliphaz 16:1-17:16

As the crisis of faith nears, Job pays little attention to his friends' arguments, except to express his disappointment in a brief introduction (16:1-7). In the remainder of the speech Job seems to be railing aloud at any occasionally addressing his words to God (16:8, 17:3, 34) or to his friends (17:10).

10:1-5. Miserable comforters (v. 2a). Literally, comforters of distress. A sarcastic response to Eliphaz' query (15:1). The counsel of the three friends has not merely been irrelevant; but it has
betrayed their ignorance of the comfort of ordination righteousness.

6-17. Though I speak (v. 6a). It seems useless to Job to continue the debate, for both God and his friends are against him. His former pretensions of innocence have been and will be interpreted as proof of guiltlessness. Devoid of inner resources and outer weapons (v. 7), he is labeled "dumb" by his expected witnesses (v. 8). His heart turns him in his wrath (v. 8a, ASV). It seems to him that God has savagely snatched him (v. 8b), and given him over to the spiritual whale, who had once been obliged to respect him (vv. 10, 11). God shuts his ears (v. 12a) and hinders his voice (v. 12b), pinning his weeds while (vv. 12b, 13) and reducing him to a nothing wreck, prostrate in the dust (v. 13, 14). And all without cause: although there is no violence in my hands, and my prayer is pure (v. 17, ASV, cf. Isa 53:5).

16:18-17:18. The power of God, that is made known to us in his weakness now enables Job to hope against hope. O earth, cover not thou my blood (v. 18a). The cry of Job's innocent blood crying for vindication must not be muffled (cf. Gen 4:10; Heb 12:3, 4). Even now, behold, my witness is in heaven (v. 18b, ASV). This heavenly witness-bearer is God himself! Job prays to him in tears (v. 19), that he will maintain the rights of a man against his neighbor (v. 21, ASV). This practical faith in God to advocate Job's cause against God, who saw lawless images in the plain: Give now a voice, an answer for me with thy servant (v. 17, ASV). Let God continue to establish Job's integrity at the time of prosperity.

17:2-3. Verse 1 is transitional. It explains that God must provide Job's plight because human friends refuse to do so, and it launches a lament over the patriarchal humiliation. Job's experience cannot be warded righteous men (v. 4). But they (and Job among them) doubt he can ever return the man in righteousness, undercepted by the irregular dealings of providence or the standards of the public. A triumphant confession: it exceeds Satan's hopes (cf. 2:5).

17:18. Job's changes in mood are swift and extreme. Distraughtly inviting the ruthless men to renew their threats (v. 10). Job concludes with a description of his pathetic plight—on the brink of community with the worms.

c) Second Discourse of Bildad. 18:

In his longing for a divine advocate, Job probes far deeper into the mystery of godliness than is ever considered, while later relief generates into irrelevant paragons on the voices of the wicked.

4. Reason for Job's low estimate of his accusers' acumen (v. 3). cf. 17:10, 12.7]. Bildad returns in kind. Thou that dwarest thyself in chime anger (v. 4, ASV), like a stupid brute, following the while that God is to blame (cf. 16:9). To judge from the way Job-beats him-s-elf to death against the established order of creation and providence (in particular, against the law of retribution, invoked by the friends), it would seem that he expects the universe to be redesigned and for him (v. 4b, c). The plural forms in verses 2 and 3 are possibly in sarcastic allusion to Job's associating himself with the company of the righteous (cf. 17: 8, 9). 5-21. This word-counting, controlled by the artist the dwellings of the wicked (v. 21a), is not an exact likeness of its original, but it is sufficiently so for Job to recognize it as his portrait. He beholds his ten-walled city walled with hewn stone, symbol of God's prophetic cause (v. 15b; cf. 11:16; Gen 19:24; Deut 29:23). He sees himself being consumed by the fatbers of death (v. 13b), i.e., deathly disease, being hurled on to the king of terror (v. 14b), death itself being charmed into oblivion (vv. 16-19), a spectacle of his enemies which people immediately shudder (v. 20).

d) Job's Second Reply to Bildad. 19: 5-23.

Felled by Bildad's brutal judgments (v. 21), Job cannot summon the contemplative indifference he showed toward his contemporaries in his previous speech. He is strained for understanding, and he seeks pity from his fellow human beings (10:2-22). But he finds them inhuman still. In his extremity, however, he discovers again the breathing of life in the love of God, his heavenly Sympathizer (vv. 23-29).

2-22. Job's introductory plaint leads to further self-defense, along with a description of his desolation (v. 7-12) and isolation (v. 13-19). If the friends are so antagonistic that they must prosecute

475
the case against him (v. 5, cf. 22), let them know now that God hath subverted Job in his cause (v. 6a. ASV; Bildad used the same verb in 8:3, to which this is a delayed reaction). They are defending injustice. More acquaintance, are driven estranged from me (v. 13b. ASV). Job's sense of ostracism, aggravated by the debaters' callous handling of him, has become a crushing burden. He is avoided, forgotten, abhorred by all—freak surrendering acquiescence to closest family intimate (vv. 13-18), and last but not least by his group of counselors (v. 19). Out of this abandonment issues the double Have pity upon me (v. 21a). Enough of accusation and false charges! (v. 22) Thus this section comes full circle (cf. vv. 23, 23), ecomparing Job in deprecation. 23-29. Since his contemporaries disbelieve his personal witness to his integrity, Job wishes it might be committed to writing on a scroll (v. 23) or, more indelicately, on a rock (v. 24). Then it might secure a hearing and possibly a kinder verdict from some future generation. By the inclusion of Job's history in the Scriptures, that wish has been realized beyond his imaginings. Job despairs, however, of any fulfillment whatsoever. Besides, what his soul most craved was not human but divine vindication. The look to the future was, therefore, only preliminary to the look unto heaven. But I know that my Redeemer liveth and at the last he shall arise upon the dust (v. 25). The hope of a heavenly, a divine vindicator which had been gathering strength in Job's soul (cf. 9:33; 16:18ff.) is here perfected. The office of the redeemer (גֵּדֶל) was that of next of kin. It was his responsibility to restore the fortune, liberty, and name of his relative, when necessary, and to redress his wrongs, especially to avenge the shedding of innocent blood. Job is confident that although all earthly kin may disown him (cf. v. 13 ff.), his divine kinsman is prepared to own him and to speak in his favor the last word in the case (cf. Isa 44:6). The heavenly גֵּדֶל, bearing the cry of Job's innocent blood from the dust of his grave (cf. Job 16:18; 17:10), will pursue his detractors (vv. 28,29) and avenge his name. And after the lust of my skin which is thus destroyed, even from my flesh shall I see God (v. 26). Like English "from," the Hebrew preposition here translated "from" is ambiguous, meaning "in" or "without" (though the latter meaning is not attested elsewhere with a verb of perception). Job still regards death as imminent for his wasted body, rapidly being destroyed by disease (cf. v. 20), but his earlier longing for a return from Sheol to true life (14:13-15) returns now as a firm hope. God will thoroughly fulfill his kinsman's office, even delivering Job from the tyranny of the king of terrors. Hence, Job will witness, as he never could if he were cut off in Sheol (cf. 14:21,22), the interventions of God in the real world for his vindication. However the phrase from my flesh is construed, Job still expresses the idea of a renewal of the whole man after death. The emphasis of 19:27 is probably not that Job rather than another will see God (AV), but that Job will behold God as his kinsman, not as a stranger (ASV) hostile to him (cf. vv. 11,12). Here are the beginnings of what progressive revelation would ultimately enunciate in the doctrines of the coming of Christ at the end time, of his resurrection of the dead, and Final Judgment. The fact that neither Job nor any other speaker subsequently refers to these exalted convictions is further indication that the author's purpose was not theology. This remarkable thrust of faith at the midpoint of the debate serves to break the tension for Job, even though his spirit was unable to maintain the sublime level. e) Second Discourse of Zophar. 21:1-29. Job has struck such chords of dispersive truth as to thrill angels, but Zophar, having ears, hears not. He is enamored of Eliphaz' song, and he pairs in close harmony with Bildad, continuing the ballad of the wicked man. Unfortun-
ately, Zophar is too often content to draw the inspiration for his lyrics from the dunghill where the friends found Job. I have heard the reproach which puz-
Zophar's song, and he pairs in close harmony with Bildad, continuing the ballad of the wicked man. Unfortun-
ately, Zophar is too often content to draw the inspiration for his lyrics from the dunghill where the friends found Job. I have heard the reproach which puz-
zels me to shame (v. 3a. ASV). At the threat of God's pursuing him to avert Job's blood (cf. 19:20), Zophar seems with anger. He hastens to recant his earlier view. God wreaks vengeance for his oppo-
sion of the poor (v. 19). According to all the friends, the alleged complicity of the wicked is deceptive, even worse than the wicked. Bildad pointed a
his perpetual desolation; Zophar emphasizes his sudden, unexpected at the pinnacle of his prosperous career. While his ambition is in the clouds (v. 6) and his honors are full of his youth (v. 1), ASV, when he has just savored sin like a delicious morsel (v. 12.13.15a), in the fulness of his sufficiency (v. 22), then the Avenger overtakes him (v. 23). Verse 27 is a direct contradiction of Job's hope (v. 8.9.16.19, 19.25) and states, in case there should be some doubt in Job's mind, to identify Zophar's wicked man.


The accusers, blinded to Job's transparent sincerity, have denied rather than explained the mystery of his afflictions. But stronger now in hope, his rives above his disappointment in him and takes the initiative in the dispute. His eyes, once opened by his own strange experience to the fallacy at the fully traditional notion of retribution, perceive that history abounds in "exceptional" cases. After a profane request for attention (vv. 2-6), he proceeds to undermine the opposition by exposing the fallacy in their analysis of the fortunes of the wicked (vv. 7-34).

30. Let this be your consolation (v. 25). Their open eyes affront more con-"scen\" than their open mouths (cf. the sister narrative response to Zophar in [18]). The case of Job's argument should silence them (v. 5).

7-34. Job describes the prosperity of the wicked that in general terms (vv. 7-8), then in contradiction of the friends' specific representations (vv. 17-20), and finally by way of his self- defense (vv. 27-34).

7-16. Wherefore (v. 7). The apparent injustice of life, though it supports Job's case, troubles him (v. 6) precisely because he recognizes that God governs all (v. 9.16.18a). It is indicative of Job's integrity that even in his misery he would not exchange places with the wicked rich (16b). Job does not, however, appreciate sufficiently the enormity of divine grace for the continuous of the fallen race in this world. Furthermore, he lacks understanding of the evangelical goal of the covenant grace enjoyed by unbelievers (Rom 2.4; d. Mt 5.45).

19-20. Men oft (v. 17). The patri-arch challenges the statistics on which the accusers lean (cf. v. 29). Job himself exaggerates, but he is nearer the truth than his opponents. In 21:19a Job anticipates a probable evasion (cf. 5:4; 20:10) and rebuts it (21:19b-21). The verbs in verses 19b-20 have the force of command; e.g., Let his own eyes see his destruction (v. 20a, ASV). Shall any teach God knowledge? (v. 22a). The traditional position constitutes a disguised expression of God's actual ways (vv. 23-26).

27-34. I know your thoughts (v. 27a). Job recognized his image in their veiled portraits. Have you not asked those who travel the roads? (v. 29a, ASV). Though the friends recommend their observa- tions as prudential law (cf. 20:4), they are merely theories, out of touch with real life (cf. comments on 4:2-11). The wicked man is exalted in the day of calamity . . . he is rescued in the day of wrath (v. 30, ASV). The AV would make Job "inconsistently endorse his friends' view of the death of the wicked, whereas Job insists that the death of such men is often easy (vv. 15b, 23) and honorable (12:33). Job's esti- mate of the career of the uprightreaches a balanced emphasis (found to an extent in the friends' speeches) on their spiritual unrest during life and vindication hereafter. But by puncturing the bubble of airtight retribution, Job leaves his accusers clinging to false- headed (v. 34).


The conclusion inherent in the three friends' theory from the beginning and now most loudly hinted at is now blurted out unambiguously. This open accu- sation of Job was their only alternative to capitulation after Job's considered de- nial that justice is uniformly discernible in God's treatment of men. The lamentable fact is that the friends endorsed Satan's view of Job as a hypocrite. Think- ing to defend God, they became Satan's advocates, insisting that those whom God designated as His servant belonged to the devil.

5-11, since the all-sufficient God cannot be helped or hurried by man's ac- tion, the answer to Job's sufferings
cannot be in Him (vv. 2:3). Certainly Job is not being punished by pity. Is it for thy love of him that he reproves thee? (v. 4a, ASV). From these negative premises Eliphaz draws his positive conclusion in a sad betrayal of truth and brotherhood. Is not thy wisdom exceeding (v. 5a). . . . Therefore names are round about thee. (v. 10a, ASV). For lack of real evidence Eliphaz finds the key to the precise nature of Job's crimes in his inner wealth—its accumulation must have been stained by inhuman abuse of the poor and weak (vv. 6-9). Contrary to this drastic oversimplification of Job's dilemma, the Prologue has, of course, revealed to the reader that the answer was in God, who, though all-sufficient in himself, glorified himself in his works and had deferred Job's trial for the praise of his redemptive wisdom. 12:20. And thou seest, What doth God know? (v. 12a, ASV) Presuming to read Job's secret thoughts, Eliphaz puts in Job's mouth blasphemies antithetical to the sentiments he has actually expressed (vv. 12-14). The fictitious argument is, then, unsatisfactorily answered by appeal to the unusual divine judgment as the Deluge generation (13:8; cf. Gen. 6:17; 8:21-22). 21-30, Eliphaz's last words, seeking return to God, in hope of peace and blessing, remind us that, in spite of all, he was a friend in the family of faith. Nevertheless, this consolation is vitiated by its Pharisaic spirit and its unjust repetition of the false accusations. In their distorted way these promises were prophetics of the sequel. Note especially, 22:30. He will deliver even him that is not innocent; Yea, he shall be delivered through the cleanness of thy hands. (ASV). Cf. Job's intercession for the friends (42:7-9). b) Job's Third Reply to Eliphaz, 23: 1-24:25. The patrician refrain from indignantly denying Eliphaz' unfounded charges, and resumes the theme of his previous speeches (ch. 21). This monologue is, therefore, only indirectly a reply to Eliphaz. Job portrays the perplexing absence of discernible justice in God's dealings with himself, a righteous man (v. 23:1), and with the wicked (ch. 24). 2-6. Even today, is my complaint rebellious (v. 2a, ASV). Job stubbornly refuses to yield to any exhortation to repentance which implies that his suffering is but part of God's plan (cf. 22:21). Oh that I knew where I might find him! (v. 3a). Since he now believes that his divine Averages lie, his longing to appear before God is more ardent than before, and his confidence in his vindication further than ever. (v. 4-7). But he cannot find God to reason with his face to face (v. 8-9). 10-17, But he knoweth the way that I take (v. 10a). Knoweth probably expresses here not mere acquaintance but approval (as in Ps. 1:1-8). More than an own precept I treasure the words of his mouth (v. 12b). Job has all things beloved the way Eliphaz recommends (cf. 22:21). Yet God inexplicably executes against Job all he has foreordained, in apparent disregard of virtue or learning (20:13-14). Therefore am I terrified at his presence (v. 15a, ASV) . . . not because of the darkness or because of my own face which thin darkness covers (v. 17; cf. ASV margin). Not dark calamity (cf. 22:11) nor married visage may dimess Job but the inscrutability of God (23:16) and his superhuman failure to inform his providential role with justice. 24:1-12. The burden of this section is found in its opening and closing words: Why are times not laid up by the Almighty? And why do not they that know him see his days? (v. 1, ASV). God regardeth not the holy (v. 4, ASV). God does not, like Samuel (cf. 1 Sam. 7:16), have a regular judicial court for preserving order and punishing crime. Counsel and prayer are perplexed, upon the helpful Job is therefore, the plaintive How long of those who are oppressed by the hand of the soil. 13-17. Economic evants, such as thus just described, often operate within legal technologies. In addition to them, was ten and violent men overset the said. These are murderers, adulterers, thieves (cf. Ex. 20:13-15); all locusts of darkness. 18-20. If the point of this verses is the quick, easy death of the wicked and the subsequent easing of his heritage, unobserved by him, they agree with Job's views in chapter 21. The ASV introduces them with, You say, as adopting the interpretation that Job here quotes the opposition's view of the ruin of the wicked in order is answer it (cf. v. 21f). Possibly this re-
JOB 24:21-27:7

Yet God preserves the rigidity by his power (22a, AV; for vv. 22-23, an AV for connection of AV); God abounds with the riches of the wicked to make full maturity and to end as other men's lives end (v. 24). Who will prove me a liar (25a, AV)? Some of his foes, Job sees his victory challenge.

c) Third Discourse of Bildad. 25:1-46

Bildad avoids Job's challenge (24:25). Again, however, to say something, he repeats ideas expressed earlier by Eliph- plat (cf. 4:17b, 15:14f.) and accepted by Job (cf. 9:2, 14:4). The hoped repeti-
tion indicates that the philosophizers have exhausted their resources of wis-
dom. Bildad's brief, fragile effort repre-
sents their expiring breath, Zophar's subsequent failure to speak in the silence of the vanquished (cf. 29:22).

Job: an insignificant worm of the dust, says Bildad, in comparison with the pious heavenly bodies (v. 6); may not hope to prove his innocence before God (v. 8), whose one-inspiring majesty pervades universally (vv. 2, 9), setting to dome even the brightness of moon and start (v. 5). The speech is in every respect unattractive.

d) Job's Third Reply to Bildad. 26:1-14

Job purports more impressively and to better purpose the theme attempted by Bildad with somewhat vague words (cf. 4:3b, 13:23-25).

5:14. Bildad concludes his brief formalism at the turn as distinct from Bildad's useless contention. From whom hath man learned knowledge? (4a). On "saw," cf. Akk. ittu; on this use of "he," with higher, cf. Mic 3:18. Bildad's idea was but echoes of Eliphaz, and his use of these to condemn Job and more likely inspired by Satan than God.

5:14. They that are deceived, worthy, the waters, and the inhabitants thereof (5:7, AV). More remarkable than the awe God style, being near his lofty throne (25:2) is the connection his wisdom and dominion (5:7) to the waters (Shed 26:2f.). Whether Job's cosmology actually agrees with ancient concepts is merely figu-

re or metaphor. If, regardless, it is not presented as necessarily normative revelation. To the survey of the evidences of God's guidance, the speaker now pass on from the underworld to this world (vv. 7-13). Though verse 7 might envisage creative action, this section as a whole pictures God's general providential rule of nature. The north over empty space (v. 7a, AV), refers to the northern heav-
cons. He inflicteth the face of his thighs (v. 9a, AV) means, He veils the heav-
en with clouds. The qualification in 26:10b is not temporal (AV) but spatial (ASV). The pillars of heaven (v. 11), are mountains, their peaks hidden in clouds. He smiteth through Rahab (v. 12b, AV) ... His hand hath plowed the dwelling speech (v. 13b, AV marg.). God controls the upper and lower waters in proves favorable climatic order. For the mythological imagery, cf. Isa 27:1; Ugadi; Job 44:18. Lo, these are but the outskirts of his ways. And how small a whisper do we hear of him (v. 14b, AV), cf. ch. 25. If Job's friends had recognized the limita-
tions of their knowledge, they would have avoided their misinterpretation. Job's praise of the perfection of God's knowledge contradicts their glorification of him with ungodly men.

e) Job's Instruction of the Silenced Friends. 27:1-26:28

Since Zophar fulfills to speak, Job continues, now addressing all the friends (cf. chapters in 27:11). Aware of his mastery, he assumes the role of teacher (27:11). After once again declining his righteousness, with a strong oath (27:1-7), he contrasts his own experi-
ce with that of the wicked. Chapter 28 is an artistic introduction to the way of wisdom. Modern critics have argued forcefully that the text from 27:7 on has suffered disarrangement. They contend that the sentiments expressed correspond to previous sections of Job; in the case of chapter 28, are incompatible with the sequel. A tenable, possible, how-
ever, to defend the originality of the present textual arrangement, and the follow-
ing exposition is based upon it.

27:1-7. As God liveth, who hath taken away my right (v. 2a, AV). This oath restates the various motifs and presents the climax in the lemma. On the one hand, it proclaims God the God of truth, and on the other, through his treatment of Job, is unright. Surely my lips do not speak unrighteousness (v. 4a, AV marg.). This is not a vow (AV); it is a declaration that Job's unshakable claim to integrity (v. 5b) is true to conscience and fact.

479
Let mine enemy be as the wicked (v. 7a). The reader of the Prologue apprehends how diabolical was the accusation that Job's party were not godly (v. 8). So the Lord.

8-23. For what is the hope of the godless when God e’ems him off (v. 8a, RSV)? No longer driven to reactionary extremes by the pressure of debate, Job achieves a more penetrating spiritual analysis of the vapory. They are without God in the world. That means not only that they will suffer eternal perdition (v. 8b), but that they have no divine refuge amid present trouble (vv. 9, 19, cf. 22b). Why then are ye become altogether vain? (v. 12b). ASV) The friends should have recognized by Job’s persistent crying to God that their identification of him with the godless was false (cf. 28:9). This is the portion of a wicked man with God (v. 13a; cf. 20:29; 31:2). The prosperity of an ungodly family (vv. 14-18), is not passed down through successive generations. As for a wicked individual, prosperity is not his final destiny (v. 19-22); Job so far modifies his former statement as to agree with his silenced opponents that the prosperity of the wicked is not the dominant trend in the world; but he still recognizes that the wicked only prospers for a season. And any such exception is fatal to the logic of the theory that condemned him.

26:1-28. Some commentators regard this chapter as a hymnic interlude inserted by the author to separate the dialogues from Job’s final summing up (chs. 29-31). It is treated here as a continuation of Job’s instruction “concerning the land of God” (27:11a, ASV) and, as such, further demonstrates that his party is both genuine and fervent.

1-11. As a foil to the following theme of the failure of man to gain true wisdom apart from God (v. 12f), there is pictured the success of the dashing sons of Tubal-cain (cf. Gen 4:22) in exploiting earth’s hidden treasures. Man’s first conquest of the earth, commanded by God at the beginning (Gen 1:28), is marked by phenomenal technological triumphs.

12-19. But where shall wisdom be found? (v. 12b). The next section (20:27) is also introduced by this refrain question. There it receives a positive answer, but here a negative one. In spite of amazing achievements in scientific enterprise (Pss. 8:3-5, 14), men are unable by the techniques or treasures of science to attain wisdom. That supreme prize cannot be obtained by probing or prudence, because it is not, like some precious items, deposited in earth or sea (vv. 13, 14).

20-27. Back of the assumption that man can discover wisdom lies the pre-supposition that the Creator possesses infinite wisdom. Wisdom is not found in the land of the living (v. 21; cf. 13:18) nor in the realm of the dead (v. 22). The way of wisdom is beyond the unaided ken of man here or hereafter. It is distinctly visible only to the One who enjoys all-encompassing, all-penetrating perception (vv. 23, 24). Note the one of hearing and seeing for partial and perfect knowledge respectively (vv. 21, 27). The Creator perceived wisdom in the beginning, when he was ordaining the laws of the world (vv. 25, 26). In fact, the natural creation, with its governing law established by God, is an expression and embodiment of wisdom (v. 27, cf. Prov. 8:21-31). For wisdom is the word of the Lord and becomes articulate for man in God’s law—natural and moral. Divine law is the form in which God reveals his wisdom to men.

28. The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom. Man’s reverent acknowledgment that he and his world are subject to the Creator is so much the livelihood of human wisdom that it can be identified with wisdom. A man begins to be wise when he cease to strive for wisdom independently of God and by his own power. He advances in wisdom through meditation on the moral law and investigation of natural law. Apart from a true recognition of divine revelation, whether in the natural creation or in the Word, man’s meditation and investigation produce not wisdom but folly. The cultural enterprise of man begins and continues in the cult of vain. And the cult, if it be not the true cult of the Lord, is vanity. The fear of the Lord, covenant consecration, is the beginning and chief part of wisdom.

1) Job’s Final Prognostic (29:1-31:49). The engagement with the friends is over; now the encounter with God comes to the fore. In a final monologue Job summarizes his case. The dirge addresses in 36:20-25 marks the end of Job’s continuing complaint. The speech is a reiteration of Job’s opening complaint, considerably tempered by having passed through the fires of the great debate. It is a trilogy consisting of a description of Job’s former condition (ch. 29), a description of his present

480
humiliation (ch. 30), and a final protestation of innocence (ch. 31).

Saul's eulogy is a vindication of his extraordinary history where the Book of Job begins in it—in the prosperous months of old (y. 4a, ASV); not youth (AV). Job struggles with the heart of the matter—(the book also does) the close covenant bond between himself and God (cf. 1:1).

The blessedness of those former days which now stir such longing in Job was not the paradise-like abundance as such (y. 6), but the friendly favor of God (cf. Ps. 25:14), from which that prosperity flowed (y. 2:5). When I went forth to the gate (y. 7a, ASV). Because Job's estate was adjacent to the city, Job was active in civil and judicial affairs. The gate and adjoining 'street,' an open market place, was the location of the town forum. The eminent role the patriarch had played in council and court seems to him now the most significant aspect of his past (vv. 7:17,21-25), viewed from his present personal struggle for justice. The last word, so grandly granted him in the present debate, had always before been his undisputed right (vv. 21-23) as he sat a king among his fellows (v. 25). The irony was that he who had been the celebrated champion of the poor and oppressed (vv. 11-17), the comforter of mourners (y. 25a), was now, in his trouble, denied a fair hearing by friends (cf. esp. ch. 21) and, apparently, by God. I put on righteousness and it clothed itself with me (v. 27). The rightness came become incalculable in Job, who, unaccounted for by dependency or difficulty (y. 26, ASV), yielded the sword of justice to deliver the innocent from perverted men (y. 17a; cf. Isa 11:2-3; Ps 2:10-11). One of the blessings of Job's lost paradise had been his happy hopes of prolonged days in the bosom of his family (Job 29:18), of honor (20a), and of strength (30b) constantly renewed (v. 19). Job presently relates the sad confounding of these hopes (ch. 30): 30:1-14. The repetition of that same ...And now...And now (v. 1, 9,18) effectively accepts the theme as Job contrasts the bleak, turbulent present with the peaceful past. The king of salvation has become the byword of folk (vv. 8-15). The friendly favor of God has turned into cruelty (vv. 16-23).

Il. The extremity of Job's disdained appears in the fact that even the lowest of humanity look down on him. By describing their wretchedness (vv. 1-8), cf. 34:12, 20. These are the people full of full irresolution of his very soul's destiny. No more than that (cf. 3:24; 3:25); there was not one among them who was not more wretched than he, for Job was not the only one who was in distress, in sorrow, and was in fear of future calamities. 31:40. 

I am a man in misery, in God I know not who. The book is an apologue in its direction, a part of God's word. This chapter is a ground for the setting of Job's confidence present.
the extant samples of such autobiographical narratives correspond with Job's (e.g., ion of crops, grinding, breaking of limbs, thirst. See vv. 10, 22, 40). The picture, therefore, is that of the covenant vassal protecting his faithfulness to the various stipulations laid upon him, disavowed that his sovereign has visited him with the curses rather than the blessings of the covenant (cf. Deut. 28:18,31,35). God seems to Job to have foretasted the savior's role as protector, and strangely turned enemy against an obedient vassal.

1:8. Job begins by disclaiming private sins of the heart - lust (v. 1), vain deceit (v. 5), covetousness (v. 7). In this he displays profound insight into the spirituality of God's law (cf. the Sermon on the Mount, Mt 5:6, 7). His deep concern with the Sumerian's imminent judgment emerges frequently (vv. 5, 11, 12, 14, 23, 26), most strikingly in his self-accusations (v. 8), cf. Deut 28:30, 33). By these references to the penal sanctions of the covenant Job solemnizes his oath of innocence. Muddled with Job's reverent fear of his judge is his confident longing to stand before him, eloquently proclaimed in vv. 35-37 and more simply here (v. 6).

9:23. The patriarch also disavows public sins against his neighbors—adultery (v. 9), maltreatment of maids (v. 13), neglect of the social obligation to charity to the needy (vv. 16, 17, 19-21). Self-accusations are attached to the first and last "I chants" in this section. In addition, Job's denial is vividly enforced: his denial of adultery, by indictment of such enormity (v. 11, 12); his denial of abuse of servants, by a reckoning with divine investigation (v. 14); and a recognition of common cruelty in origin (v. 15); and his denial of uncharitableness, by positive affirmation of the opposite (v. 18); and confession of his fear of God (v. 23).

24-37. The charge of hypocrisy and secret iniquity that the counselors brought against him, for want of evidence of Job's supposed crimes, had already been contravened by his protestations. It is now directly repudiated by his denial of concealed sin in his relations with God, his enemies, and strangers. Neither the deceptions of riches (vv. 24, 25) nor the fascination of pagan worship of heavenly bodies (v. 26) had encouraged Job to covert idolatry, the transgression of the most fundamental demand of allegiance to God (v. 28). Secret matter towards foes (v. 29) he firmly denies (v. 30). Household intimates acquainted with his private life can vouch that he has not begrudged hospitality to the passing stranger (vv. 31, 32). Summing up, he claims similarity to Adam, who tried to hide his sin (v. 33; cf. 13:20; Gen 3:7-10). Job had no need to fear the open scrutiny of society (Job 31:34) or of God (v. 35).

In utter contrast to the (right and flight of Adam at the approach of the Lord), Job passionately desires to confront God (v. 35a); cf. 13:3, 12; 23:3-9; 30:20. Lo, here is my signature (v. 35b). Dramatizing the desired audience with God, Job represents the defense he has just offered as a signal and sealed legal document. Then, with consummate arrogance, he declares how he will strike before God as a prince (v. 37b), crowned with the very scroll of his indictment (v. 36c; ASV, v. 36) which will be transformed into an emblem of honor for him by being refused charge by charge (v. 37a).

38-40. The impious challenge is uttered (vv. 35-37), while answering to the "if like Adam" conditions (vv. 38, 39), forms so satisfactory a refutation of the entire catalogue of sins and so grandly quest a conclusion for the whole speech that many scholars regard the syllogistic verses 38-40 as disdained. Stylistically, however, the author of Job is fond of the penultimate climax (cf. e.g., 32:28; 34:15, 16). And materially this final sin (vv. 38, 39) is impeached (v. 40) follow naturally the allusion to the fall of Adam (v. 23); for Job here invokes the elementary principle upon the ground (Gen 3:17, 18; cf. Gen 4:11, 12).

Job's protestations of innocence have kept pace with his deepening perceptions of the demands of divine holiness. But now his exhibition of remarkable penitence, into God's moral requirements exposes an equally remarkable depth of self-righteousness in him. Such blindness to the depravity and deceptiveness of his own heart did not negate the genuineness of the divine redemptive work in him. But it did constitute a serious spiritual need to deal with which He Elohim was presently to point out (ch. 33, ff.)—was the purpose of God (even though not the paramount purpose) in appointing Job's sufferings.


482
Elihu, apparently one of a larger audience attending the debate of the masters, now comes forward and presents his theology. Introducing himself, he would have started the dramatic movement of the poem by a clumsy anticipation of the calebite's outcome. The younger man was as ignorant as the others of the heavenly transactions related in the Book of Job, his interpretation of Job's sufferings is, therefore, not comprehensive. Elihu did, however, perceive the significance of the all-important principle of God's free grace, which the others had slighted. Hence, with this speech, the light of day begins to dawn on the way of wisdom after the long night of debate. He has only an occasional gleam of understanding. The privy arrangement of Job is unfolded, and thus Elihu serves as a sent before the face of the Lord to prepare the way for His coming in the whirlwind (cf. 38:1).

The speech of Elihu (32:6–37:24), though marked by several gashes (34:1; 36:1), is essentially a unit. Following the apology (32:6–22), the theology is developed in answer to particular complaints of Job (quoted in 33:8–11; 34:5; 35:2, cf. 36:17f.) and by means of an exposition of God’s grace (33:13–33), righteousness (34:10–30; 36:25), and knowledge (36:36–37:24).

32:1-5. The poetical form is briefly interrupted by this prose passage. Elihu’s origins are rather fully traced (v. 2a, cf. 1:1; 2:11). Buzai, Cfi. Gen 25:1. Job’s failure to be more jealous of God’s honor than his own had aroused Elihu’s indignation (v. 2b): note the Lord’s concurrence (40:2). What prompted Elihu to inform his elders was the failure of the friends to answer satisfactorily Job’s definative protests against God. And yet he bore no condemned Job (v. 3b). The friends’ charge of hypocrisy was a shameful exponent to cover their logical and theological deficiencies. Another possible translation is, because they had condemned Job. That is, they had failed to give him wrong in his operations against divine justice. This agrees well with Elihu’s interest in the justification of God. According to a variant ancient textual tradition, verse 3b would read: and so condemned God. That is, the friends’ silence before the still-protesting Job was tantamount to their condemning God.

6-22. Elihu’s preliminary apology for claiming the ear of the audience is here expanded beyond Occasional taste, but that may not reflect on propinquities in the land of Cz (cf. Hab 14:12). Days should speak (v. 7a). Delineate for the tension associated with age had foretold Elihu’s earlier intervention (vv. 6, 7, 11). Wisdom, however, it is basically a matter of divine gift. God’s endowment of the spirit he has given him subordinate to the spirit in a man, the breath of the Almighty, that makes him understand (v. 5, AV; cf. Gen 2:7). The magnificent performance of the creatures has demonstrated their lack of wisdom in spite of age (Job 32:9, 12,15,16), while Elihu claims understanding in spite of youth (v. 6b,10). Reckoning them for abandoning the crusade (v. 13, AV), Elihu undertakes it (vv. 16,17) with new strategy (v. 11), under the compulsion of a spirit burning with knowledge of the mystery the signs so perplexing (vv. 18-20), and with fearless devotion to truth alone (vv. 21,22).

33:5-33. The general apology has been directed to the friends. Now introducing his answer to Job’s protests, Elihu addresses to him a challenge (vv. 1-7). The cites statements of Job (v. 8-11) and gives his own reply (vv. 13-30). So the ground is once more thrown down (vv. 31-33).

1-7. Behold, I am toward God even as you are (v. 6a). AV: Elihu is a willing human being, a man of clay (v. 6b) by God’s creative breath (v. 4; cf. Gen 2:7). Facing Elihu’s challenge, Job therefore, made a hypocritical plea for an end of the current controversy that paralyzing divine terror robbed him of the compositer necessary to defend himself (cf. Job 9:34, 13:21).

8-11. Elihu does not misunderstand Job’s present. Job had given a nod of assent to his involvement in human sin (cf. 1:21,15:20). Moreover, his protestations of innocence were justified in so far as they defended his integrity against the cry of hypocrisy and other excessive charges of the friends. Nevertheless, a tendency towards an overstatement of his righteousness is traceable in those protestations (v. 9 21; ASV: 10:7; 12:4; 16:17; 20:10ff; 22; 5:9, 18:5). And this conceit becomes almost incredibly bold and bold in Job’s final words (ch. 31). In 30:10b Elihu quotes 13:34a; and in 33:11 he quotes 13:37a. 12-20. When Elihu cites the further complaint of Job that God gives not account of any of his matters (v. 13b: 453
cf. 19:7; 30:20), it might seem that he has dismissed Job's doubts of God's justice very lightly (vv. 8-12) to return to them later (cf. chs. 34-37). But in his answer to the alleged lack of revelation concerning God's ways (vv. 14-30), Elihu incorporates an explanation of the suffering of God's servants, and thus actually begins his defense of divine justice in OT days God spoke to his people by various special means no longer employed after the completion of the NT revelation (cf. Heb. 1:1). Elihu mentions dreams (Job 33:15-17) and the interpreting angel (vv. 20-30) as special media of revelation. God did not leave his covenant people to grope without the light of authoritative revelation. If there be for him an angel as an interpreter, one of a thousand (v. 23). Immemerable angels minister to the heirs of salvation (Heb. 1:14). cf. Job 4:18; 5:1, Deut 33:2; Ps 68:17; Dan 7:10; Rev 5:11). one ministry being the interpretation of God's will and ways. Possibly one of a thousand suggests not the abundance of such hierarches but the purity and pre-eminence of his angel-mediator (cf. Pss. 7:28). To bring him back his soul from the pit (v. 20a; cf. vv. 18,24,28). At the heart of the description are the principle and purposes of divine grace. Men live under the shadow of the destroyers (v. 22b), God's angels of death, because of the Lord's holy displeasure with their sin. But once... twice, etc. (v. 14,29; AV) grace intervenes. Sometimes special revelation intervenes as a warning to prevent the pursuit evil and so deliver from its disastrous consequences (vv. 15-18). Sometimes the revelation comes at the eleventh hour, when a course of more chastening has brought man to the brink of the pit (v. 19-22). Then there is remarkable restoration of the blessings of righteousness (v. 25,29), celebrated by a psalm of confession and thanksgiving (vv. 27,28, ASV). Such deliverances are accomplished by the contradiction of man with his waywardness, i.e., the straight, right way for him (v. 25b; cf. v. 18), and by the man's repentance. This process is the reason (v. 24c) which is found if God is gracious unto him (v. 24a). In the light of past revelation vouchsafed to God's servants, Elihu labels the course as chastening (v. 19). 31-33. The interpretation of suffering as chastisement is applicable in Job's case (see concluding comments on ch. 31). Elijaphar, too, had suggested chastening as one reason for affliction (5:17), but he regarded chastening as meted out in proportion to sin. Though severe chastening might actually be "blessed," never- theless it stigmaizes a believer as sitting humilitatingly low in the community of the sainted! Elihu saw chastening in its redemptive context, as informing and governed by the principle of sovereign grace. Since grace is by its very nature sovereignly free, it may bestow the blessing of chastening most abundantly on the saint who has relatively least need! Elihu does not reflect upon wicked men, but his discovery that suffering is a working of God's free grace is clearly the key to the unpredictable, seemingly arbitrary variety in their sufferings, and in their prosperity as well. For them, too, suffering is a gracious dispensation warning them away from the eternal pit. Thus Elihu removes the sting from the mystery of the suffering of the righteous and the prosperity of the wicked. Job's heart leaps for joy. But shame fills him as he recalls the calling accusations he has shouted against the God of grace, and so he holds his peace (v. 35). 34:1-37. The structure of chapter 33 is repeated: an introductory call to bear (v. 24), quotation from Job's complaints (vv. 25-30), an answer thereto (vv. 31-35), and a closing challenge (vv. 28-37). 24. It appears from 34:34 that Elihu calls for the attention of a wider circle of listeners than the three friends. 5-9. Elihu once more sets up as his target Job's complaint that God prevents justice by affliction with incurable wounds though he is without transgression. This accurately summarizes much in Job's speeches (for v. 5a, cf. esp. 13:18, 23-19, 27-6, for v. 6, 9, 20, 6:14, 16:13, for v. 9, cf. 26:5, 10:3, 21:7f, 24:1f.). 10-28. The perversity of Job's charge is proved by a consideration of the righteousness of God. Elihu begins with a direct denial that God is unjust (v. 10-12). Logically, this may be the question, but that only demonstrates the limitations of human logic. For Elihu's appeal is to the sense of deity in God's image-bearer, and that is the only ultimately sound procedure in declaring God's name. Confirmation of the Creator's perfect justice is found in his omnipotence and omniscience (v. 13f.). Pure impartiality is the correlate of his tran-
34:13. God’s transcendent immutability is not equivalent to indifference to human virtue and vice; it is not a distant disinterest in the multitudes who cry... because of the pride of evil men (v. 12, a.e.), as Job had complained (cf. 24:12). Such prayer rather goes unanswered because God will not hear an empty cry (v. 13a, ASV), a mere animal cry (v. 11) for physical relief. None such. Where is God my maker, who giveth songs in the night (v. 10)? It is not that God is indifferent to men but that men are indifferent to God. They do not seek God for God’s sake, content to sing doublings in the midst of desolation if only to be their portion, Eliphaz summons Job to the wisdom of his original response of faith (cf. 1:21).

34:14. If God’s judgment troubles (v. 14; cf. 19:7; 23:8f.; 30:20), and his wrath is restrained the while (v. 15, ASV, cf. 21:7f.), Job ought not jump to vain conclusions (v. 16).

34:1-37:24. Continuing the theme of God’s righteousness, Eliphaz expands further the gracious design of the afflictions of the righteous, exhorting Job to be probitably exercised thereby (36:1-25; cf. 33:19f.). In the closing verses of this exhortation, the appeal shifts to the excellency of God’s power (cf. 34:12f.), and that becomes the grand subject of Eliphaz’s conclusion (36:25-37:24). the herald’s cry before the advent of the Lord (ch. 38f.).

36:1-25. Eliphaz characterizes his theology as complete truth (v. 24f.). Possibly 4b refers to God (cf. 37:10). God’s greatness is a greatness of goodness (v. 3), of grace bestowed impartially and grace bestowed abundantly on the righteous (v. 6f.). Here again Eliphaz might seem to lapse into the approach of the friends, but the difference between them appears in his interpretation of the apparent exceptions to the general pattern observable in divine government (8f., cf. comments on 33:12-30). Afflictions call the righteous to more ardent spiritual strivings and thus are an effective means of deliverance from sin and its consequences (vv. 8f.10f.). They conform when their specific purpose is realized (v. 11), and only then (v. 12). Similarly, if the godless prospers (v. 12). Eliphaz’s counsel to a long-suffering God’s afflictive warnings with selfish rage (v. 13), they may expect only to be early fatalities of their debaucheries (v. 14). Let not the great-
JOB 36:18–36:3

ness of the ransom turn you aside (v. 18a, RSV, cf. 33:24). The overwhelming love extorted in Job's heart to allure him away from the instruction (lit., month) of affliction (v. 16a; cf. 15b) into a response of angry judgment and scoffing (vv. 17,18a, RSV). Will thy cry prevail, that thou be not in distress? (v. 19a, ASV) In Job's angry complaint, with its bitter lashing for the night of the grave, (v. 20), he spans the satanizing work of affliction (v. 21). Let him, therefore, consider the excised works of God (vv. 22a,23), attend submissively to the instruction he sends (vv. 22b, 23), and so transform complaint into doxology (v. 24; cf. 35:10).

36:26–37:4. adopting his own counsel (36:24). Elihu utters psalmic praise to the Lord of creation. The divine rule is illustrated by various atmospheric phenomena: the rain cycle of evaporation and precipitation (36:26–28), fearfully majestic thunderstorms (36:29–37:4), and frosty winter's ice and snow (37:5–13). Each of these is introduced by an affirmation of the incomprehensibility of God's works (36:26–27, 37:5). Elihu observes that the elemental forces once unleashed do not escape God's control; but, like the expertly harnessed horse in the chariot (from the Old Testament), they perform God's bidding (37:12), whether as a curse (36:31a; 37:13a; cf. 1:10, 19) or as blessing (36:31b; 37:13b; cf. 37:7).

The intimate relation thus suggested between God's rule of nature and his rule of history prepares for Elihu's concluding application to Job: If man cannot comprehend God's natural rule, he ought not expect to comprehend God's moral rule. By a series of humbling questions (37:15ff.) Elihu impresses on Job his creaturehood, reminding him that by his finite standards he cannot judge God, all of whose ways are infinitely higher than human thought. Hence the folly of disputing his government (37:19,20,24b). The way of wisdom is not the way of him who is incomprehensible and excellent in all his attributes (vv. 23,24a).

His ministry accomplished, Elihu retires from the scene. He has prepared the way of the Lord in the hearts of Job and his friends. From the literary perspective, Elihu discourse forms an eminently successful transition to the following theocracy. The younger man's vivid description of the fury of the elements sets the mood for (perhaps was actually inspired by) the approaching whirlwind vehicle of God. His thematic concentration on natural phenomena is continued by the Lord, as it is also in the interrogating style of his final exhortation (cf. 38:3). In judging Job's controversy with his friends (cf. 32:7–9), the Lord does not mention Elihu, because the younger man was not party to the dispute of the older ones, nor had he been seen as such to require excision. Though the Speaker from the whirlwind does not mention Elihu by name, he does not ignore him. For by continuing Elihu's essential argument and exploring his judgments concerning both Job (cf. 32:2 and 40:3) and the friends (cf. 32:3 and 42:7–8), the Lord owes Elihu as his forerunner.

B. The Voice of God. 38:1–41:34. The verdicts passed on Job by men had darkened the way of wisdom and Elihu spoke. That way is now fully illuminated by the Voice from the whirlwind. It is eminently appropriate that the Lord's approach to Job is in the form of challenge. So also he had confronted Satan, (v. 178; 2:2) God challenged both Satan and Job by confronting them with his wondrous works. And since Job himself is the vine work by which Satan was challenged, it is through the success of his challenge to Satan that God perfects the triumph of his challenge to Satan. God's challenge to Job proceeds in two stages (38:1–40:2 and 40:6–41:34), with a pause midway, marked by Job's note of submission (40:3–5).

1) The Divine Challenge. 38:1–41:3. Out of the whirlwind (v. 1). This characteristic vehicle of theophany (cf. Ps. 18:7,8; 50:3; Ezek. 1:4, 26, 30; 3:13; Hab. 3:3; Zech. 9:14) was such as to dramatize the spoken revelation. It announces: Who is this that darkeneth counsel (v. 2). The absurdity of Job's criticism of God's counsel lies in the respective identities. The creator is not the creature! God upbraids the man as a man (v. 3a). The imagery of the divine challenge is drawn from the popular ancient sport of belt-wrestling. This figure is especially suitable in this text because belt-wrestling was a game as an ordeal in court, and it is by ordeal...
that Job's case is being settled.

38:34-39:30. The ordeal to which the
Creator challenges his creature is a
test of wisdom. Many of God's ques-
tions deal with executive power, but
the OT concept of wisdom includes the
craftsman's talent. Attention is drawn
to the Creator's unsearchable wisdom
discerned—on the earth (38:42),
in the heavens (38:22-38), and
in the animal kingdom (38:39-39:30),
the sequence of narration being, in main
outline, the same that this Speaker
echoed in Genesis 1. Job becomes in-
creasingly impressed with the insufficiency
of his own ignorance and impotence.

39:4-21. Where wast thou (v. 4a).
His knowledge of the earth suffers
from his spatial and temporal limitations.
The section opens and closes with refer-
ences to Job's nonexistence at creation
(cf. 4:11; cf. 19:12; contrast "Wisdom"
in 2:5; 6:22E.). Hence his ignorance
of how the earth was founded (Job
38:6-7) or the sea bounded (vv. 8-11),
or how earth's days are rounded by
the cycle of dawn and darkness (vv. 12-15,
18-21). Neither has Job sounded the
depth of the sea nor measured the
breadth of the land (vv. 16-18).

39:23-37. Canst thou set the dominion
therein to the earth? (v. 33b). To qualify
as director and judge of man's life on
earth, one must be able to govern the
beasts that rule the earth (cf. Gen
1:24-25). Note the repeated men-
tion of the influence of the atmospheric
and astral heavens on earthly affairs
(jobs 38:32, 36:27, 33:34, 34:38). But Job has
so overwhelmed the waters above as
to whether, when, where, or how
they will precipitate. The lightning will
not grant Bellone more than an obedient
 sermon (v. 35); nor has he the re-
current influence upon heaven's seasonal
agents (v. 35).

39:39-39:30. Again in this
section on wisdom creation, the purpose is
to convince Job of his incompetence for
the role of world governor, while
magnifying the wisdom of Him who actually
is creation's Ruler (cf. 12:7). The cre-
tative and providential activity of God
manifests wild creatures beyond man's
capability, just as, in the inanimate spere,
shapes the wilderness beyond man's
acquaintance (cf. 39:20, 27). Lions and
men are not available or likely sub-
jects for man's charity (39:38-41), nor
the wild goats for the solicitous care of
the animal husbandman (39:1-4). Man
cannot bring the elusive wild ass (39:11)
under his yoke. Even the stupid ostrich
scorns the proud horsemen (39:13-18),
while the horse, in turn, scorcs the human
battle host and the boast of Lamanch (39:
17-20; cf. Gen 4:22-24). The final vignette
directs Job's eyes on high, toward his
Creator's throne—to the rapacious hawk
and eagle, waiting to be called by God
to His judgment feast, with its prey of
rebel men, kings and captives, horses
and riders together (Job 39:26-30; cf.
Eccl 9:17-18). Here is the
ultimate vanity of all the efforts of hu-
man wisdom—that man is reduced to
food for the subhuman creature. "God hath
cleaned the foolish things of the
world to confound the wise" (1 Cor
1:27). Even the wildlings laugh at
man's cultural strivings (vv. 7, 18, 22).
40:1-2. Will the critic contend
with the Almighty? (v. 5a). The first "fall"
of the wrestling ordeal is about to be
decided. God demands that Job admit
defeat. This would be still clearer ac-
cording to a reading reflected in some
ancient versions: "Will the contend-
er with the Almighty yield?"

2) Job's Submission. 40:3-5.
Behold, I am of small account (v. 7, ASV). The Creator's surpassing wisdom
has been so effectively impressed on Job
that he knows not further dispute God's
ways as he had once and again (v. 5),
for less will he approach God as a prince
(cf. 31:37). Job's practice henceforth to
adorn again the doctrine of wisdom he has confessed (cf. 29:8).

3) The Divine Challenge Renewed. 40:6-41:34.
40:6-7. An aim of belt-wrestling was
to strip the opponent of his belt, but
a contest was not always terminated by
one such "fall." Thus Job, in a figure,
to fasten on the belt again and renew
the ordeal. His initial submission (40:
3-5) was good but only the beginning
of his repentance. He must recognize
not only the unsearchableness but also
the indispensability of the Almighty.
40:8-14. Hast thou an arm like God?
(v. 9a). The redemptive power of God
by which he saves his people and judges
their enemies is often pictured as
an outstretched arm and a mighty band
(cf. v. 14b). Job's criticism of God's
government, especially his boast that he
will overcome the Lord's imagined op-
position to his justification, was, in
principle, a usurpation of the divine prerogative of world government, a listing after godlike knowledge of good and evil (cf. Gen 3:5), a self-dedication. Let Job prove his ability to execute the sentence of condemnation against wicked men, whose progeny seems to him unjust (Job 40:10-13). Then God will worship at the cult of Job, acknowledging that he possesses the divine power of redemptive judgment whereby he can justify and save himself (v. 14).

40:14—41:54. (Heb. text, 40:15—41:26). Since Job obviously cannot avert the heavenly throne to try his hand at judging the wicked, God proposes a more feasible test. The motif of the deity commissioning an animal champion to battle a human hero is paralleled in ancient mythology. (Cf. Gilgamesh Epic, in which Ishtar sends the bull of heaven against Gilgamesh.) In Mesopotamian art, moreover, the bull of heaven is depicted wearing the wrestling-hilt. Behemoth (40:15ff.) is commonly identified with the hippopotamus, leviathan (41:1ff., Heb. text 40:22ff.), with the crocodile. These two are found together in Egyptian art. It is not necessary to demon- strate the presence of hippopotamus or crocodile in the Jordan area of old, since purdco (40:23h) is apparently a common name meaning “river” (cf. the parallel in v. 23a). Many other identifica- tions have been suggested, recently, for example, of behemoth with the croco- dile and leviathan with the whale. If behemoth can successfully be identified as a crocodile (cf. 40:17, 24a, Heb.), it ought to be considered whether the entire passage describes only one creature, i.e., leviathan. The designation, behemoth, taken in a plural intensive, “the heart of excellence,” would be an epithet like chief of the ways of God (x. 19a). Note the similar supreme claims made for leviathan (41:33, 34). Certain descriptive details do not fit any real creature. This has led to the view that not zoological creatures are intended but mytho- logical chaos monsters conceived along the lines of stylized hippopotamus and crocodile. Then 40:15ff. would be a symbolic elaboration of the preceding challenge to qual rebellious proud men (40:9-14). Compare the use of the dragon symbol for Satan in Revelation.

Contextually suitable as this mythical interpretation is, the passage is more naturally understood as a picture of real creatures painted with some highly figurative strokes (e.g., 41:19ff.). Note especi- ally that God presents behemoth as one which I made as I made you (40:15b, RSV). Here, indeed, is the point of the passage: Job is to discover from his inability to vanquish even a fallen creature the folly of aspiring to the Creator’s throne. The a fortiori concep- tion becomes explicit in 41:10b. Who then is able to stand before me? The absolute divine transcendence contra- dicts Job’s assumed right of claim against God because it precludes the possibility of Job’s having given anything to God.

Who hath first given unto me, that I should repay him? Whatsoever is under the whole heaven is mine (41:11, ASV).

Since the occasion of this extended demonstration of God’s power is his engaging Job in a court ordeal, the demonstration is clearly offered as a de- ference of God’s justice. Accordingly, it is introduced by the question: Who then shall diameal my judgment? Will thou condemn me, that thou mayest be right? (40:8, cf. 38:2). Not that the at- tribute of justice can be absolutely de- fended from that of omnipotence. Atten- tion is rather directed to the mighty divine works as compelling witnesses to God—not just to one attribute but to God himself, the God who has revealed himself to man from within and without, by general and special revelation, the living God, infinite, eternal, and un- changeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth, the God whose veracity and justice were the presupposition of Job’s trial by ordeal, who swears by himself because he can swear by no greater.


42:1-6. This confession is the counter- balance to Job’s complaint (ch. 3). It acknowledges the sinful rebelliousness which began with that complaint. It is not an admission of sins prior to his sufferings such as would support the friends’ accusation. By this unreserved commitment of himself to his Lord, a commitment made while he was still in his sufferings, not having received either explanation of the mystery of the past or promise for the future, Job shows
himself a true covenant servant, ready to serve his God for nought. The con-
fusion thereby marks Job's final "brin-
ging" of Satan, the final vindication of
God's redemptive power.

The purpose of these can be restrained (v. 23, ASV). This is not bare resigna-
tion under omnipotent pressure, but praise of the living God and a trusting ac-
quiescence in his wise purposes. In
42:3-4 Job quotes God's words (cf. 38:39, 40:7), directing their convicting
light upon himself, and then re-
sponds, "I am the man" (42:3b, 5f). Things too wonderful for me (v. 3c). Fi-
mans may not pose as final arbiters, for
in God and his ways there is mystery beyond human comprehension. But now
also eye seeth thee (v. 5b). For the contrast between hearing and seeing in
relation to knowledge, see 26:24, 28:21-
27. No form of God had appeared in the
whirlwind; but the revelation of the
Voice had been a transforming experi-
en, illuminating all other divine reve-
lation, whether general or such fuller, special revelation as had been trans-
mitted to Job. By this new light Job
finds again the way of wisdom. Where-
fore I abhor myself, and repent in dust
and ashes (v. 6). Godly hatred of his
own defilement is the natural accom-
paniment of the believer's confrontation with God's holiness (cf. Isa 6:5). The
philosophical Why? has not been an-
swered, but God, by the confessions of
Job, has assured Job of his gracious con-
cern. That is enough for Job.


The Lord works deliverance from Job's
reins in the reverse order of their incur-
rance and in the obscure order of their
cause. Job's false sense of God's instigation had been the first evil cor-
rected. Now the defamation of Job's
name among men is dealt with, and
afterwards family and wealth are re-
stored.

To have not spoken of me the things
that are right, as my servant Job hath (v.
7e, ASV). If they were translated unto
me, there would be a clear reference to
Job's confession. But even if it is trans-
lated of me, it seems necessary to think
primarily of Job's confession and the
final lack of such repentance in re-
sponse to the theophany. For in terms
of the theology expressed in their debate,
the difference between them was merely one of degree. The words of all of them
were in part contemptible. Agreeably to
the remedy is that Job should meditate for
their inoffering sacrifice, which was a
mode of expressing public repentance in
OT times (v. 8). The proportion of the
offering were commensurate with the sta-
 tus of the offenders and the solemnity of
the occasion (cf. Num 29:8). Job is
vindicated and the friends are rebuked,
but in such a way that the friends are
forgiven by Job as well as by God. For
the very form of Job's vindication is the privi-
lege of praying for those who have de-
spitefully used him (cf. Ezek 14:14-20).
God's vindicatory acknowledgment of
Job as his servant appeared to Job's
faith in his heavenly Kinman and an-
ticipated the eschatological, "Well done,
good and faithful servant" (Mt 25:21
E). Further, it was the confirmation of
God's original intent to Satan (Job 1:8;
2:3), and so crowns His triumph over the
evil one.

Religion is not a means to prosperity as
an end. But God's creation is good, and
the inheritance of the earth promised to the seed is an integral part of the
total beatitude of the whole man. As
the book of job itself teaches, in this world prosperity and suffering can be
companions. But under the government of the righteous Creator, righteous men
must ultimately be given beauty for
ashes. The life of Job was shaped by
God to be a prophetic sign of "the end
of the Lord" (cf. Jas 5:11) for the water
manna encouragement of the promise
in Jesus in that early period of redemptive rev-
olution when the end was yet very far off
(cf. Ezek's rapture, Gen 5:24).

Significantly, the turning point in Job's external circumstances, his deliverance
from the hands of Satan, was marked by
the act in which he spiritually exem-
plified the righteousness of God's king-
dom (cf. Mt 5:33) and ceremonially
offered the Mosaic sacrifice which estab-
lishes that righteousness (Job 32:
16). The double blessing (v. 10b; cf.
Isa 40:17, Zech 9:12), extends to Job's
property (Job 42:12) and family (vv.
13-15), for the dead children are still
Job's in his hope of immortality (cf. also
v. 16b). Possibly the prolongation of
his life to patriarchal fulness (vv. 16,
17; cf. Gen 25:7, 35:28,29) is a

489
JOB 42:17

doubling of a previous seventy years (cf. Ps 90:10). It certainly suggests the recovery of health, as the reference... inheritance among their brethren (Job 42:15b) suggests the restoration of Job's earlier family felicity.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


