THE BOOK OF JOB

Prologue

1 THERE LIVED IN THE LAND OF UZ a man of blameless and upright life named Job, who feared God and set his face against wrongdoing. 2 He had seven sons and three daughters; 3 and he owned seven thousand sheep and three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen and five hundred asses, with a large number of slaves. Thus Job was the greatest man in all the East.

4 Now his sons used to foregather and give, each in turn, a feast in his own house; and they used to send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them. 5 Then, when a round of feasts was finished, Job sent for his children and sanctified them, rising early in the morning and sacrificing a whole-offering for each of them; for he thought that they might somehow have sinned against God and committed blasphemy in their hearts. This he always did.

6 The day came when the members of the court of heaven took their places in the presence of the LORD, and Satan [Or the adversary] was there among them. 7 The LORD asked him where he had been. ‘Ranging over the earth’, he said, ‘from end to end.’ 8 Then the LORD asked Satan, ‘Have you considered my servant Job? You will find no one like him on earth, a man of blameless and upright life, who fears God and sets his face against wrongdoing.’ 9 Satan answered the LORD, ‘Has not Job good reason to be God-fearing? 10 Have you not hedged him round on every side with your protection, him and his family and all his possessions? Whatever he does you have blessed, and his herds have increased beyond measure. 11 But stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and then he will curse you to your face.’ 12 Then the LORD said to Satan, ‘So be it. All that he has is in your hands; only Job himself you must not touch.’ And Satan left the LORD’s presence.

13 When the day came that Job’s sons and daughters were eating and drinking in the eldest brother’s house, 14 a messenger came running to Job and said, ‘The oxen were ploughing and the asses were grazing near them, 15 when the Sabaeans swooped down and carried them off, after putting the herdsmen to the sword; and I am the only one to escape and tell the tale.’ 16 While he was still speaking, another messenger arrived and said, ‘God’s fire flashed from heaven. It struck the sheep and the shepherds and burnt them up; and I am the only one to escape and tell the tale.’ 17 While he was still speaking, another arrived and said, ‘The Chaldaeans, three bands of them, have made a raid on the camels and carried them off’, after putting the drivers to the sword; and I am the only one to escape and tell the tale.’ 18 While this man was speaking, yet another arrived and said, ‘Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking in the eldest brother’s house, 19 when suddenly a whirlwind swept across from the desert and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell on the young people and killed them; and I am the only one to escape and tell the tale.’ 20 At this Job stood up and rent his cloak; then he shaved his head and fell prostrate on the ground, saying:
Naked I came from the womb,
naked I shall return whence I came.
The LORD gives and the LORD takes away;
blessed be the name of the LORD.

22 Throughout all this Job did not sin; he did not charge God with unreason.

2 Once again the day came when the members of the court of heaven took their places in the presence of the LORD, and Satan was there among them. 2 The LORD asked him where he had been. ‘Ranging over the earth’, he said, ‘from end to end.’ 3 Then the LORD asked Satan, ‘Have you considered my servant Job? You will find no one like him on earth, a man of blameless and upright life, who fears God and sets his face against wrongdoing. You incited me to ruin him without a cause, but his integrity is still unshaken.’ 4 Satan answered the LORD, ‘Skin for skin! There is nothing the man will grudge to save himself. 5 But stretch out your hand and touch his bone and his flesh, and see if he will not curse you to your face.’

6 Then the LORD said to Satan, ‘So be it. He is in your hands; but spare his life.’ 7 And Satan left the LORD’s presence, and he smote Job with running sores from head to foot, 8 so that he took a piece of a broken pot to scratch himself as he sat among the ashes. 9 Then his wife said to him, ‘Are you still unshaken in your integrity? Curse God and die!’ 10 But he answered, ‘You talk as any wicked fool of a woman might talk. If we accept good from God, shall we not accept evil?’ Throughout all this, Job did not utter one sinful word.

11 When Job’s three friends, Eliphaz of Teman, Bildad of Shuah, and Zophar of Naamah, heard of all these calamities which had overtaken him, they left their homes and arranged to come and condole with him and comfort him. 12 But when they first saw him from a distance, they did not recognize him; and they wept aloud, rent their cloaks and tossed dust into the air over their heads. 13 For seven days and seven nights they sat beside him on the ground, and none of them said a word to him; for they saw that his suffering was very great.

Job’s complaint to God

3 After this Job broke silence and cursed the day of his birth:

   3 Perish the day when I was born
   and the night which said, ‘A man is conceived’!
   4 May that day turn to darkness; may God above not look for it,
      nor light of dawn shine on it.
   5 May blackness sully it, and murk and gloom,
      cloud smother that day, swift darkness eclipse its sun.
   6 Blind darkness swallow up that night;
      count it not among the days of the year,
      reckon it not in the cycle of the months.
   7 That night, may it be barren for ever,
      no cry of joy be heard in it.
   8 Cursed be it by those whose magic binds even the monster of the deep,
who are ready to tame Leviathan himself with spells.

May no star shine out in its twilight; may it wait for a dawn that never comes, nor ever see the eyelids of the morning,
because it did not shut the doors of the womb that bore me and keep trouble away from my sight.

Why was I not still-born, why did I not die when I came out of the womb? Why was I ever laid on my mother’s knees or put to suck at her breasts?

Why was I not hidden like an untimely birth, like an infant that has not lived to see the light?

For then I should be lying in the quiet grave, asleep in death, at rest,

with kings and their ministers who built themselves palaces,

with princes rich in gold who filled their houses with silver.

There the wicked man chafes no more, there the tired labourer rests;

the captive too finds peace there and hears no taskmaster’s voice;

high and low are there, even the slave, free from his master.

Why should the sufferer be born to see the light? Why is life given to men who find it so bitter?

They wait for death but it does not come, they seek it more eagerly than hidden treasure.

They are glad when they reach the tomb, and when they come to the grave they exult.

Why should a man be born to wander blindly, hedged in by God on every side?

My sighing is all my food, and groans pour from me in a torrent.

Every terror that haunted me has caught up with me, and all that I feared has come upon me.

There is no peace of mind nor quiet for me; I chafe in torment and have no rest.

First cycle of speeches

Then Eliphaz the Temanite began:

If one ventures to speak with you, will you lose patience? For who could hold his tongue any longer?

Think how once you encouraged those who faltered,
how you braced feeble arms,
how a word from you upheld the stumblers
and put strength into weak knees.

But now that adversity comes upon you, you lose patience;
it touches you, and you are unmanned.

Is your religion no comfort to you?
Does your blameless life give you no hope?

For consider, what innocent man has ever perished?
Where have you seen the upright destroyed?

This I know, that those who plough mischief and sow trouble
reap as they have sown;
they perish at the blast of God
and are shrivelled by the breath of his nostrils.

The roar of the lion, the whimpering of his cubs, fall silent;
the teeth of the young lions are broken;
the lion perishes for lack of prey
and the whelps of the lioness are abandoned.

A word stole into my ears,
and they caught the whisper of it;
in the anxious visions of the night,
when a man sinks into deepest sleep,
terror seized me and shuddering;
the trembling of my body frightened me.

A wind brushed my face
and made the hairs bristle on my flesh;
and a figure stood there whose shape I could not discern,
an apparition loomed before me,
and I heard the sound of a low voice:
'Can mortal man be more righteous than God,
or the creature purer than his Maker?
If God mistrusts his own servants
and finds his messengers at fault,
how much more those that dwell in houses whose walls are clay,
whose foundations are dust,
which can be crushed like a bird’s nest
or torn down between dawn and dark,
how much more shall such men perish outright and unheeded,
[prob. rdg, transposing Their rich possessions are snatched from them to follow 5.4] die, without ever finding wisdom?’

Call if you will; is there any to answer you?
To which of the holy ones will you turn?
The fool is destroyed by his own angry passions,
and the end of childish resentment is death.
I have seen it for myself: a fool uprooted,
his home in sudden ruin about him [ruin about him: prob. rdg, Heb obscure],
4 his children past help,
browbeaten in court with none to save them.
[Line transposed from 4.21] Their rich possessions are snatched from them;
5 what they have harvested others hungrily devour;
the stronger man seizes it from the panniers,
panting, thirsting for their wealth.
6 Mischief does not grow out of the soil
nor trouble spring from the earth;
7 man is born to trouble,
as surely as birds fly [Or as sparks shoot] upwards.

8 For my part, I would make my petition to God
and lay my cause before him,
9 who does great and unsearchable things,
marvels without number.
10 He gives rain to the earth.
and sends water on the fields;
11 he raises the lowly to the heights,
the mourners are uplifted by victory;
12 he frustrates the plots of the crafty,
and they win no success,
13 he traps the cunning in their craftiness,
and the schemers’ plans are thrown into confusion.
14 In the daylight they run into darkness,
and grope at midday as though it were night.
15 He saves the destitute from their greed,
and the needy from the grip of the strong;
16 so the poor hope again,
and the unjust are sickened.

17 Happy the man whom God rebukes!
therefore do not reject the discipline of the Almighty.
18 For, though he wounds, he will bind up;
the hands that smite will heal.
19 You may meet disaster six times, and he will save you;
seven times, and no harm shall touch you.
20 In time of famine he will save you from death,
in battle from the sword.
21 You will be shielded from the lash of slander [from ... slander: or when slander is rife],
and when violence comes you need not fear.
22 You will laugh at violence and starvation
and have no need to fear wild beasts;
23 for you have a covenant with the stones to spare your fields,
and the weeds have been constrained to leave you at peace.
You will know that all is well with your household, you will look round your home and find nothing amiss; you will know, too, that your descendants will be many and your offspring like grass, thick upon the earth. You will come in sturdy old age to the grave as sheaves come in due season to the threshing-floor.

We have inquired into all this, and so it is; this we have heard, and you may know it for the truth.

Then Job answered:

O that the grounds for my resentment might be weighed, and my misfortunes set with them on the scales!

For they would outweigh the sands of the sea: what wonder if my words are wild? [what ... wild?: or therefore words fail me.]

The arrows of the Almighty find their mark in me, and their poison soaks into my spirit; God’s onslaughts wear me away.

Does the wild ass bray when he has grass or the ox low when he has fodder?

Can a man eat tasteless food unseasoned with salt, or find any flavour in the juice of mallows?

Food that should nourish me sticks in my throat, and my bowels rumble with an echoing sound.

O that I might have my request, that God would grant what I hope for:

that he would be pleased to crush me, to snatch me away with his hand and cut me off!

For that would bring me relief, and in the face of unsparing anguish I would leap for joy [prob. rdg, Heb adds I have not denied the words of the Holy One].

Have I the strength to wait? What end have I to expect, that I should be patient?

Is my strength the strength of stone, or is my flesh bronze?

Oh how shall I find help within myself? The power to aid myself is put out of my reach.

Devotion is due from his friends to one who despairs and loses faith in the Almighty; but my brothers have been treacherous as a mountain stream, like the channels of streams that run dry, which turn dark with ice or are hidden with piled-up snow; or they vanish the moment they are in spate,
dwindle in the heat and are gone.

18Then the caravans, winding hither and thither,
go up into the wilderness and perish [Or and are lost];

19the caravans of Tema look for their waters,
travelling merchants of Sheba hope for them;

20but they are disappointed, for all their confidence,
they reach them only to be balked.

21So treacherous have you now been to me [So ... to me: prob. rdg, Heb obscure]:
you felt dismay and were afraid.

22Did I ever say, ‘Give me this or that;
open your purses to save my life;

23rescue me from my enemy;
ransom me out of the hands of ruthless men’?

24Tell me plainly, and I will listen in silence;
show me where I have erred.

25How harsh are the words of the upright man!
What do the arguments of wise men [wise men: prob. rdg, Heb unintelligible] prove?

26Do you mean to argue about words
or to sift the utterance of a man past hope?

27Would you assail an orphan [Or a blameless man]?
Would you hurl yourselves on a friend?

28So now, I beg you, turn and look at me:
am I likely to lie to your faces?

29Think again, let me have no more injustice;
think again, for my integrity is in question.

30Do I ever give voice to injustice?
Does my sense not warn me when my words are wild?

71Has not man hard service on earth,
and are not his days like those of a hired labourer,
like those of a slave longing for the shade
or a servant kept waiting for his wages?

3So months of futility are my portion
troubled nights are my lot.

4When I lie down, I think,
‘When will it be day that I may rise?’
When the evening grows long and I lie down,
I do nothing but toss till morning twilight.

5My body is infested with worms,
and scabs cover my skin [prob. rdg, Heb adds it is cracked and discharging].

6My days are swifter than a shuttle [Or a fleeting odour]
and come to an end as the thread runs out [as ... out: or without hope].

7Remember, my life is but a breath of wind;
I shall never again see good days.
Thou wilt behold me no more with a seeing eye; under thy very eyes I shall disappear.

As clouds break up and disperse, so he that goes down to Sheol never comes back; he never returns home again, and his place will know him no more [Or and he will not be noticed any more in his place].

But I will not hold my peace; I will speak out in the distress of my mind and complain in the bitterness of my soul.

Am I the monster of the deep, am I the sea-serpent, that thou settest a watch over me?

When I think that my bed will comfort me, that sleep will relieve my complaining, thou dost terrify me with dreams and affright me with visions.

I would rather be choked outright; I would prefer death to all my sufferings.

I am in despair, I would not go on living; leave me alone, for my life is but a vapour.

What is man that thou makest much of him and turnest thy thoughts towards him, only to punish him morning by morning or to test him every hour of the day?

Wilt thou not look away from me for an instant? Wilt thou not let me be while I swallow my spittle?

If I have sinned, how do I injure thee, thou watcher of the hearts of men? Why hast thou made me thy butt, and why have I become thy target?

Why dost thou not pardon my offence and take away my guilt?

But now I shall lie down in the grave; seek me, and I shall not be.

Then Bildad the Shuhite began:

How long will you say such things, the long-winded ramblings of an old man? Does God pervert judgement? Does the Almighty pervert justice?

Your sons sinned against him, so he left them to be victims of their own iniquity.

If only you will seek God betimes and plead for the favour of the Almighty, if you are innocent and upright, then indeed will he watch over you and see your just intent fulfilled.
Then, though your beginnings were humble, your end will be great.

Inquire now of older generations and consider the experience of their fathers; for we ourselves are of yesterday and are transient; our days on earth are a shadow. Will not they speak to you and teach you and pour out the wisdom of their hearts?

Can rushes grow where there is no marsh? Can reeds flourish without water?

While they are still in flower and not ready to cut, they wither earlier than any green plant. Such is the fate of all who forget God; the godless man’s life-thread breaks off; his confidence is gossamer, and the ground of his trust a spider’s web.

He leans against his house but it does not stand; he clutches at it but it does not hold firm. His is the lush growth of a plant in the sun, pushing out shoots over the garden; but its roots become entangled in a stony patch and run against a bed of rock.

Then someone uproots it from its place, which disowns it and says, ‘I have never known you.’ That is how its life withers away, and other plants spring up from the earth.

Be sure, God will not spurn the blameless man, nor will he grasp the hand of the wrongdoer.

He will yet fill your mouth with laughter, and shouts of joy will be on your lips; your enemies shall be wrapped in confusion, and the tents of the wicked shall vanish away.

Then Job answered:

Indeed this I know for the truth, that no man can win his case against God. If a man chooses to argue with him, God will not answer one question in a thousand. He is wise, he is powerful; what man has stubbornly resisted him and survived? It is God who moves mountains, giving them no rest, turning them over in his wrath;
who makes the earth start from its place
so that its pillars are convulsed;
who commands the sun’s orb not to rise
and shuts up the stars under his seal;
who by himself spread out the heavens
and trod on the sea-monster’s back [Or on the crests of the waves];
who made Aldebaran and Orion,
the Pleiades and the circle of the southern stars;
who does great and unsearchable things,
marvels without number.

He passes by me, and I do not see him;
he moves on his way undiscerned by me;
if he hurries on, who can bring him back?
Who will ask him what he does?
God does not turn back his wrath;
the partisans of Rahab lie prostrate at his feet.
How much less can I answer him
or find words to dispute with him?
Though I am right, I get no answer,
though I plead with my accuser for mercy.
If I summoned him to court and he responded,
I do not believe that he would listen to my plea –
for he bears hard upon me for a trifle
and rains blows on me without cause;
he leaves me no respite to recover my breath
but fills me with bitter thoughts.
If the appeal is to force, see how strong he is;
if to justice, who can compel him to give me a hearing?
Though I am right, he condemns me out of my own mouth;
though I am blameless, he twists my words.
Blameless, I say; of myself
I reek nothing, I hold my life cheap.
But it is all one; therefore I say,
‘He destroys blameless and wicked alike.’
When a sudden flood brings death,
he mocks the plight of the innocent.
The land is given over to the power of the wicked,
and the eyes of its judges are blindfold [prob. rdg, Heb adds if not he, then who?]

My days have been swifter than a runner,
they have slipped away and seen no prosperity;
they have raced by like reed-built skiffs,
swift as vultures swooping on carrion.
If I think, ‘I will forget my grievers,
I will show a cheerful face and smile’,

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I tremble in every nerve [Or I am afraid of all that I must suffer];
I know that thou wilt not hold me innocent.
If I am to be accounted guilty,
why do I labour in vain?
Though I wash myself with soap
or cleanse my hands with lye,
thou wilt thrust me into the mud
and my clothes will make me loathsome.

He is not a man as I am, that I can answer him
or that we can confront one another in court.
If only there were one to arbitrate between us
and impose his authority on us both,
so that God might take his rod from my back,
and terror of him might not come on me suddenly.
I would then speak without fear of him;
for I know I am not what I am thought to be.

I am sickened of life;
I will give free rein to my griefs,
I will speak out in bitterness of soul.
I will say to God, 'Do not condemn me,
but tell me the ground of thy complaint against me.
Dost thou find any advantage in oppression,
in spurning the fruit of all thy labour
and smiling on the policy of wicked men?
Hast thou eyes of flesh
or dost thou see as mortal man sees?
Are thy days as those of a mortal
or thy years as the life of a man,
that thou lookest for guilt in me
and dost seek in me for sin,
though thou knowest that I am guiltless
and have none to save me from thee?

Thy hands gave me shape and made me;
and dost thou at once turn and destroy me?
Remember that thou didst knead me like clay;
and wouldst thou turn me back into dust?
Didst thou not pour me out like milk
and curdle me like cheese,
clothe me with skin and flesh
and knit me together with bones and sinews?
Thou hast given me life and continuing favour,
and thy providence has watched over my spirit.

Yet this was the secret purpose of thy heart,
and I know that this was thy intent:
that, if I sinned, thou wouldst be watching me and wouldst not acquit me of my guilt.

If I indeed am wicked, the worse for me!
If I am righteous, even so I may lift up my head [prob. rdg, Heb adds filled with shame and steeped in my affliction];

if I am proud as a lion, thou dost hunt me down and dost confront me again with marvellous power;

thou dost renew thy onslaught upon me, and with mounting anger against me bringest fresh forces to the attack.

Why didst thou bring me out of the womb?
O that I had ended there and no eye had seen me, that I had been carried from the womb to the grave and were as though I had not been born.

Is not my life short and fleeting?
Let me be, that I may be happy for a moment,

before I depart to a land of gloom, a land of deep darkness, never to return,

a land of gathering shadows, of deepening darkness, lit by no ray of light [lit ... light: or a place of disorder], dark [prob. rdg, Heb obscure] upon dark.’

Then Zophar the Naamathite began:

Should this spate of words not be answered?
Must a man of ready tongue be always right?

Is your endless talk to reduce men to silence? Are you to talk nonsense and no one rebuke you?

You claim that your opinions are sound; you say to God, ‘I am spotless in thy sight.’

But if only he would speak and open his lips to talk with you,

and expound to you the secrets of wisdom, for wonderful are its effects!

Know then that God exacts from you less than your sin deserves.

Can you fathom the mystery of God, can you fathom the perfection of the Almighty?

It is higher than heaven; you can do nothing. It is deeper than Sheol; you can know nothing.

Its measure is longer than the earth and broader than the sea.

If he passes by, he may keep secret his passing; if he proclaims it, who can turn him back?

He surely knows which men are false, and when he sees iniquity, does he not take note of it [does ... of it?: or he does not stand aloof]?

Can a fool grow wise?
can a wild ass’s foal be born a man?  
13If only you had directed your heart rightly  
and spread out your hands to pray to him!  
14If you have wrongdoing in hand, thrust it away;  
let no iniquity make its home with you.  
15Then you could hold up your head without fault,  
a man of iron, knowing no fear.  
16Then you will forget your trouble;  
you will remember it only as flood-waters that have passed;  
17life will be lasting, bright as noonday,  
and darkness will be turned to morning.  
18You will be confident, because there is hope;  
sure of protection, you will lie down in confidence [prob. rdg, Heb adds  
19and you will lie down unafraid];  
great men will seek your favour.  
20Blindness will fall on the wicked;  
the ways of escape are closed to them,  
and their hope is despair.

121Then Job answered:  
2No doubt you are perfect men [prob. rdg, Heb No doubt you are people]  
and absolute wisdom is yours!  
3But I have sense as well as you;  
in nothing do I fall short of you;  
what gifts indeed have you that others have not?  
4Yet I am a laughing-stock to my friend –  
a laughing-stock, though I am innocent and blameless,  
one that called upon God, and he answered [Or and he afflicted me].  
5Prosperity and ease look down on misfortune,  
on the blow that fells the man who is already reeling,  
6while the marauders’ tents are left undisturbed  
and those who provoke God live safe and sound [prob. rdg, Heb adds He  
brings it in full measure to whom he will (cp 21.17)].

7Go and ask the cattle,  
ask the birds of the air to inform you,  
8or tell the creatures that crawl to teach you,  
and the fishes of the sea to give you instruction.  
9Who cannot learn from all these  
that the LORD’s own hand has done this?  
11[v10 transposed to follow v12](Does not the ear test what is spoken  
as the palate savours food?  
12There is wisdom, remember, in age,  
and long life brings understanding.)

10In God’s hand are the souls of all that live,  
the spirits of all human kind.
13 Wisdom and might are his, 
with him are firmness and understanding. 
14 If he pulls down, there is no rebuilding; 
if he imprisons, there is no release. 
15 If he holds up the waters, there is drought; 
if he lets them go, they turn the land upside down. 
16 Strength and success belong to him, 
deceived and deceiver are his to use. 
17 He makes counsellors behave like idiots 
and drives judges mad; 
18 he looses the bonds imposed by kings 
and removes the girdle of office from their waists; 
19 he makes priests behave like idiots 
and overthrows men long in office; 
20 those who are trusted he strikes dumb, 
he takes away the judgement of old men; 
21 he heaps scorn on princes 
and abates the arrogance of nobles. 
23 [v22 transposed to follow v25] He leads peoples astray and destroys them, 
he lays them low, and there they lie. 
24 He takes away their wisdom from the rulers of the nations 
and leaves them wandering in a pathless wilderness; 
25 they grope in the darkness without light 
and are left to wander like a drunkard. 
22 He uncovers mysteries deep in obscurity 
and into thick darkness he brings light.

13 All this I have seen with my own eyes, 
with my own ears I have heard it, and understood it. 
2 What you know, I also know; 
in nothing do I fall short of you. 
3 But for my part I would speak with the Almighty 
and am ready to argue with God, 
4 while you like fools are smearing truth with your falsehoods, 
stitching a patchwork of lies, one and all. 
5 Ah, if you would only be silent 
and let silence be your wisdom! 
6 Now listen to my arguments 
and attend while I put my case. 
7 Is it on God’s behalf that you speak so wickedly, 
or in his defence that you allege what is false? 
8 Must you take God’s part, 
or put his case for him? 
9 Will all be well when he examines you? 
Will you quibble with him as you quibble with a man?

10 He will most surely expose you
if you take his part by falsely accusing me.

11 Will not God’s majesty strike you with dread, and terror of him overwhelm you?

12 Your pompous talk is dust and ashes, your defences will crumble like clay.

13 Be silent, leave me to speak my mind, and let what may come upon me!

14 I will put my neck in the noose and take my life in my hands.

15 If he would slay me, I should not hesitate; I should still argue my cause to his face.

16 This at least assures my success, that no godless man may appear before him.

17 Listen then, listen to my words, and give a hearing to my exposition.

18 Be sure of this: once I have stated my case I know that I shall be acquitted.

19 Who is there that can argue so forcibly with me that he could reduce me straightway to silence and death?

20 Grant me these two conditions only, and then I will not hide myself out of thy sight:

21 take thy heavy hand clean away from me and let not the fear of thee strike me with dread.

22 Then summon me, and I will answer; or I will speak first, and do thou answer me.

23 How many iniquities and sins are laid to my charge? let me know my offences and my sin.

24 Why dost thou hide thy face and treat me as thy enemy?

25 Wilt thou chase a driven leaf, wilt thou pursue dry chaff,

26 prescribing punishment for me and making me heir to the iniquities of my youth,

27 putting my feet in the stocks [prob. rdg, Heb adds keeping a close watch on all I do]

and setting a slave-mark on the arches of my feet? [prob. rdg, Heb adds v28 he is like … have eaten, now transposed to follow 14.2]

14 Man born of woman is short-lived and full of disquiet.

2 He blossoms like a flower and then he withers; he slips away like a shadow and does not stay;

28 [he is like … have eaten: 13.28 transposed here] he is like a wine-skin that perishes or a garment that moths have eaten.

3 Dost thou fix thine eyes on such a creature, and wilt thou bring him into court to confront thee?
So one Heb manuscript; others add 4 Who can produce pure out of unclean? No one.

5 The days of his life are determined, and the number of his months is known to thee; thou hast laid down a limit, which he cannot pass.

6 Look away from him therefore and leave him alone counting the hours day by day like a hired labourer.

7 If a tree is cut down, there is hope that it will sprout again and fresh shoots will not fail.

8 Though its roots grow old in the earth, and its stump is dying in the ground, if it scents water it may break into bud and make new growth like a young plant.

10 But a man dies, and he disappears [Or and is powerless]; man comes to his end, and where is he?

11 As the waters of a lake dwindle, or as a river shrinks and runs dry,

12 so mortal man lies down, never to rise until the very sky splits open.

Line transposed from beginning of v14] If a man dies, can he live again? He shall never be roused from his sleep.

13 If only thou wouldst hide me in Sheol and conceal me till thy anger turns aside, if thou wouldst fix a limit for my time there, and then remember me!

14 [See note on v12] Then I would not lose hope, however long my service, waiting for my relief to come.

15 Thou wouldst summon me, and I would answer thee; thou wouldst long to see the creature thou hast made.

16 But now thou dost count every step I take, watching all my course.

17 Every offence of mine is stored in thy bag; thou dost keep my iniquity under seal.

18 Yet as a falling mountain-side is swept away, and a rock is dislodged from its place,

19 as water wears away stones, and a rain-storm scources the soil from the land, so thou hast wiped out the hope of frail man;

20 thou dost overpower him finally, and he is gone; his face is changed, and he is banished from thy sight.

[Line transposed from v21 and v22 transposed] His flesh upon him becomes black, and his life-blood dries up within him [His flesh ... within him: or His own kin, maybe, regret him, and his slaves mourn his loss].

21 His sons rise to honour, and he sees nothing of it; they sink into obscurity, and he knows it not.
Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered:

1Would a man of sense give vent to such foolish notions and answer with a bellyful of wind?
2Would he bandy useless words and arguments so unprofitable?
3Why! you even banish the fear of God from your mind, usurping the sole right to speak in his presence;
4your iniquity dictates what you say, and deceit is the language of your choice.
5You are condemned out of your own mouth, not by me; your own lips give evidence against you.

7Were you born first of mankind? were you brought forth before the hills?
8Do you listen in God’s secret council or usurp all wisdom for yourself alone?
9What do you know that we do not know? What insight have you that we do not share?
10We have age and white hairs in our company, men older than your father,
11Does not the consolation of God suffice you, a word whispered quietly in your ear?
12What makes you so bold at heart, and why do your eyes flash,
13that you vent your anger on God and pour out such a torrent of words?
14What is frail man that he should be innocent, or any child of woman that he should be justified?
15If God puts no trust in his holy ones, and the heavens are not innocent in his sight,
16how much less so is man, who is loathsome and rotten and laps up evil like water!

17I will tell you, if only you will listen, and I will describe what I have seen
18what has been handed down by wise men and was not concealed from them by their fathers;
19to them alone the land was given, and no foreigner settled among them:
20the wicked are racked with anxiety all their days, the ruthless man for all the years in store for him.
21The noise of the hunter’s scare rings in his ears, and in time of peace the raider falls on him;
22he cannot hope to escape from dark death; he is marked down for the sword;
he is flung out as food for vultures; such a man knows that his destruction is certain.

Suddenly a black day comes upon him, distress and anxiety overwhelm him
{like a king ready for battle};

for he has lifted his hand against God and is pitting himself against the Almighty,
charging him head down, with the full weight of his bossed shield.

Heavy though his jowl is and gross, and though his sides bulge with fat,
the city where he lives will lie in ruins, his house will be deserted;
it will soon become a heap of rubble.

He will no longer be rich, his wealth will not last, and he will strike no root in the earth [prob. rdg, Heb adds 30he will not escape from darkness];
scorching heat will shrivel his shoots, and his blossom will be shaken off by the wind.

He deceives himself, trusting in his high rank, for all his dealings will come to nothing.

His palm-trees will wither unseasonably, and his branches will not spread;
he will be like a vine that sheds its unripe grapes, like an olive-tree that drops its blossom.

For the godless, one and all, are barren, and their homes, enriched by bribery, are destroyed by fire;

they conceive mischief and give birth to trouble, and the child of their womb is deceit.

Then Job answered:

I have heard such things often before,
you who make trouble, all of you, with every breath,
saying, ‘Will this windbag never have done? What makes him so stubborn in argument?’

If you and I were to change places,
I could talk like you;
how I could harangue you and wag my head at you!

But no, I would speak words of encouragement, and then my condolences would flow in streams.

If I speak, my pain is not eased;
if I am silent, it does not leave me.

Meanwhile, my friend wearies me with false sympathy;
they tear me to pieces, he and his [prob. rdg, Heb my] fellows. He has come forward to give evidence against me;
the liar testifies against me to my face,
in his wrath he wears me down, his hatred is plain to see;
he grinds his teeth at me.

My enemies look daggers at me,
they bare their teeth to rend me,
they slash my cheeks with knives;
they are all in league against me.
God has left me at the mercy of malefactors
and cast me into the clutches of wicked men.
I was at ease, but he set upon me and mauled me,
seized me by the neck and worried me.
He set me up as his target;
his arrows rained upon me from every side;
pitiless, he cut deep into my vitals,
he spilt my gall on the ground.
He made breach after breach in my defences;
he fell upon me like a fighting man.

I stitched sackcloth together to cover my body
and I buried my forelock in the dust;
my cheeks were flushed with weeping
and dark shadows were round my eyes,
yet my hands were free from violence
and my prayer was sincere.

O earth, cover not my blood
and let my cry for justice find no rest!
For look! my witness is in heaven;
there is one on high ready to answer for me.
My appeal will come before God,
while my eyes turn again and again to him.
If only there were one to arbitrate between man and God,
as between a man and his neighbour!
For there are but few years to come
before I take the road from which I shall not return.

My mind is distraught, my days are numbered,
and the grave is waiting for me.
Wherever I turn, men taunt me,
and my day is darkened by their sneers.
Be thou my surety with thyself,
for who else can pledge himself for me?
Thou wilt not let those men triumph,
whose minds thou hast sunk in ignorance;
if such a man denounces his friends to their ruin,
his sons’ eyes shall grow dim.
6 I am held up as a byword in every land,
a portent for all to see;
7 my eyes are dim with grief,
my limbs wasted to a shadow.
8 Honest men are bewildered at this,
and the innocent are indignant at my plight.
9 In spite of all, the righteous man maintains his course,
and he whose hands are clean grows strong again.

10 But come on, one and all, try again!
I shall not find a wise man among you.

11 My days die away like an echo;
my heart-strings [prob. rdg, Heb the desires of my heart] are snapped.
12 Day is turned into night,
and morning [morning: prob. rdg, Heb near] light is darkened before me.
13 If I measure Sheol for my house,
if I spread my couch in the darkness,
14 if I call the grave my father
and the worm my mother or my sister,
15 where, then, will my hope be,
and who will take account of my piety?
16 I cannot take them down to Sheol with me,
nor can they descend with me into the earth.

18 Then Bildad the Shuhite answered:
2 How soon will you bridle [bridle: prob. rdg, Heb unintelligible] your tongue?
Do but think, and then we will talk.
3 What do you mean by treating us as cattle?
Are we nothing but brute beasts to you [prob. rdg, Heb adds 4 rending
himself in his anger]?
Is the earth to be deserted to prove you right,
or the rocks to be moved from their place?

5 No, it is the wicked whose light is extinguished,
from whose fire no flame will rekindle;
6 the light fades in his tent,
and his lamp dies down and fails him.
7 In his iniquity his steps totter,
and his disobedience trips him up;
8 he rushes headlong into a net
and steps through the hurdle that covers a pit;
9 his heel is caught in a snare,
the noose grips him tight;
10 a cord lies hidden in the ground for him
and a trap in the path.
11 The terrors of death suddenly beset him
and make him piss over his feet.
12 For all his vigour he is paralysed with fear;
strong as he is, disaster awaits him.
13 Disease eats away his skin,
Death’s eldest child devours his limbs.
14 He is torn from the safety of his home,
and Death’s terrors escort him to their king [Or and you conduct him to the king of terrors].
15 Magic herbs lie strewn about his tent,
and his home is sprinkled with sulphur to protect it.
16 His roots beneath dry up,
and above, his branches wither.
17 His memory vanishes from the face of the earth
and he leaves no name in the world.
18 He is driven from light into darkness
and banished from the land of the living.
19 He leaves no issue or offspring among his people,
no survivor in his earthly home;
20 in the west men hear of his doom and are appalled;
in the east they shudder with horror.
21 Such is the fate of the dwellings of evildoers,
and of the homes of those who care nothing for God.

19 Then Job answered:
2 How long will you exhaust me
and pulverize me with words?
3 Time and time again you have insulted me
and shamelessly done me wrong.
4 If in fact I had erred,
the error would still be mine.
5 But if indeed you lord it over me
and try to justify the reproaches levelled at me,
6 I tell you, God himself has put me in the wrong,
he has drawn the net round me.
7 If I cry ‘Murder!’ no one answers;
if I appeal for help, I get no justice.
8 He has walled in my path so that I cannot break away,
and he has hedged in the road before me.
9 He has stripped me of all honour
and has taken the crown from my head.
10 On every side he beats me down and I am gone;
he has pulled up my tent-rope [Or he has uprooted my hope] like a tree.
11 His anger is hot against me
and he counts me his enemy.
12 His raiders gather in force [prob. rdg, Heb adds they raise an earthwork against me]
and encamp about my tent.
13 My brothers hold aloof from me, my friends are utterly estranged from me;  
14-15 my kinsmen and intimates fall away, my retainers have forgotten me; my slave-girls treat me as a stranger, I have become an alien in their eyes.  
16 I summon my slave, but he does not answer, though I entreat him as a favour.  
17 My breath is noisome to my wife, and I stink in the nostrils of my own family.  
18 Mere children despise me and, when I rise, turn their backs on me;  
19 my intimate companions loathe me, and those whom I love have turned against me.  
20 My bones stick out through my skin [prob. rdg, Heb adds and my flesh], and I gnaw my under-lip with my teeth.  

21 Pity me, pity me, you that are my friends; for the hand of God has touched me.  
22 Why do you pursue me as God pursues me? Have you not had your teeth in me long enough?  
23 O that my words might be inscribed, O that they might be engraved in an inscription, 
24 cut with an iron tool and filled with lead to be a witness [to ... witness: or for ever] in hard rock!  
25 But in my heart I know that my vindicator lives and that he will rise last to speak in court;  
26 and I shall discern my witness standing at my side [my witness ... side: prob. rdg, Heb unintelligible] and see my defending counsel, even God himself, 
27 whom I shall see with my own eyes, I myself and no other.

My heart failed me when you said, ‘What a train of disaster he has brought on himself! The root of the trouble lies in him.’  
29 Beware of the sword that points at you, the sword that sweeps away all iniquity; then you will know that there is a judge [Or judgement].

20 Then Zophar the Naamathite answered:  
2 My distress of mind forces me to reply, and this is why [this is why: prob. rdg, Heb obscure] I hasten to speak:  
3 I have heard arguments that are a reproach to me, a spirit beyond my understanding gives me the answers.  
4 Surely you know that this has been so since time began, since man was first set on the earth:
5 the triumph of the wicked is short-lived,
the glee of the godless lasts but a moment?
6 Though he stands high as heaven,
and his head touches the clouds,
7 he will be swept utterly away like his own dung,
and all that saw him will say, 'Where is he?'
8 He will fly away like a dream and be lost,
driven off like a vision of the night;
9 the eye which glimpsed him shall do so no more
and shall never again see him in his place.
10 [v10 and v11 transposed] The youth and strength which filled his bones
shall lie with him in the dust.
11 His sons will pay court to the poor,
and their [prob. rdg, Heb his] hands will give back his wealth.
12 Though evil tastes sweet in his mouth,
and he savours it, rolling it round his tongue,
13 though he lingers over it and will not let it go,
and holds it back on his palate,
14 yet his food turns in his stomach,
changing to asps' venom within him.
15 He gulps down wealth, then vomits it up,
or God makes him discharge it.
16 He sucks the poison of asps,
and the tongue of the viper kills him.
17 Not for him to swill down rivers of cream [rivers of cream: prob. rdg, Heb obscure]
or torrents of honey and curds;
18 he must give back his gains without swallowing them,
and spew up his profit undigested;
19 for he has hounded and harassed the poor,
he has seized houses which he did not build.
20 Because his appetite gave him no rest,
and he cannot escape his own desires,
21 nothing is left for him to eat,
and so his well-being does not last;
22 with every need satisfied his troubles begin,
and the full force of hardship strikes him.
23 God vents his anger upon him
and rains on him cruel blows.
24 He is wounded by weapons of iron
and pierced by a bronze-tipped arrow;
25 out at his back the point comes,
the gleaming tip from his gall-bladder.
26 Darkness unrelieved awaits him,
a fire that needs no fanning will consume him.
{Woe betide any survivor in his tent !}
27 The heavens will lay bare his guilt,
and earth will rise up to condemn him.  
28A flood will sweep away his house,  
rushing waters on the day of wrath.  
29Such is God’s reward for the wicked man  
and the lot appointed for the rebel [the rebel: prob. rdg, Heb his word] by God.  

211Then Job answered:  
2Listen to me, do but listen,  
and let that be the comfort you offer me.  
3Bear with me while I have my say;  
when I have finished, you may mock.  
4May not I too voice [May ... voice: prob. rdg, Heb obscure] my thoughts?  
Have not I as good cause to be impatient?  
5Look at my plight, and be aghast;  
clap your hand to your mouth.  
6When I stop to think, I am filled with horror,  
and my whole body is convulsed.  

7Why do the wicked enjoy long life,  
hale in old age, and great and powerful?  
8They live to see their children settled,  
their kinsfolk and descendants flourishing;  
9their families are secure and safe;  
the rod of God’s justice does not reach them.  
10Their bull mounts and fails not of its purpose;  
their cow calves and does not miscarry.  
11Their children like lambs run out to play,  
and their little ones skip and dance;  
12they rejoice with tambourine and harp  
and make merry to the sound of the flute.  
13Their lives close in prosperity,  
and they go down to Sheol in peace.  
14To God they say, ‘Leave us alone;  
we do not want to know your ways.  
15What is the Almighty that we should worship him,  
or what should we gain by seeking his favour?’  

16Is not the prosperity of the wicked in their own hands?  
Are not their purposes very different from God’s [God’s: prob. rdg, Heb mine]?  
17How often is the lamp of the wicked snuffed out,  
and how often does their ruin come upon them?  
How often does God in his anger deal out suffering,  
[Line transposed from 12.6] bringing it in full measure to whom he will?  
18How often is that man like a wisp of straw before the wind,  
like chaff which the storm-wind whirls away?
You say, 'The trouble he has earned, God will keep for his sons'; no, let him be paid for it in full and be punished.

Let his own eyes see damnation come upon him, and the wrath of the Almighty be the cup he drinks.

What joy shall he have in his children after him, if his very months and days are numbered?

Can any man teach God, God who judges even those in heaven above?

One man, I tell you, dies crowned with success, lapped in security and comfort,
his loins full of vigour
and the marrow juicy in his bones;
another dies in bitterness of soul
and never tastes prosperity;
side by side they are laid in earth,
and worms are the shroud of both.

I know well what you are thinking and the arguments you are marshalling against me,
I know you will ask, 'Where is the great man’s home now, what has become of the home of the wicked?’
Have you never questioned travellers? Can you not learn from the signs they offer,
that the wicked is spared when disaster comes and conveyed to safety before the day of wrath?
No one denounces his conduct to his face, no one requites him for what he has done.
When he is carried to the grave, all the world escorts him, before and behind;
the dust of earth is sweet to him, and thousands keep watch at his tomb.
How futile, then, is the comfort you offer me! How false your answers ring!

Third cycle of speeches

Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered:
Can man be any benefit to God?
Can even a wise man benefit him?
Is it an asset to the Almighty if you are righteous? Does he gain if your conduct is perfect?
Do not think that he reproves you because you are pious, that on this count he brings you to trial.
No: it is because you are a very wicked man, and your depravity passes all bounds.
6 Without due cause you take a brother in pledge,
you strip men of their clothes and leave them naked.
7 When a man is weary, you give him no water to drink
and you refuse bread to the hungry.
8 Is the earth, then, the preserve of the strong
and a domain for the favoured few?
9 Widows you have sent away empty-handed,
orphans you have struck defenceless.
10 No wonder that there are pitfalls in your path,
that scares are set to fill you with sudden fear.
11 The light is turned into darkness, and you cannot see;
the flood-waters cover you.
12 Surely God is at the zenith of the heavens
and looks down on all the stars, high as they are.
13 But you say, 'What does God know?
Can he see through thick darkness to judge?
14 His eyes cannot pierce the curtain of the clouds
as he walks to and fro on the vault of heaven.'
15 Consider the course of the wicked man,
the path the miscreant treads:
16 see how they are carried off before their time,
their very foundation flowing away like a river;
17 these men said to God, 'Leave us alone;
what can the Almighty do to us?'
18 Yet it was he that filled their houses with good things,
although their purposes and his were very different.
19 The righteous see their fate and exult,
the innocent make game of them;
20 for their riches are swept away,
and the profusion of their wealth is destroyed by fire.

21 Come to terms with God and you will prosper;
that is the way to mend your fortune.
22 Take instruction from his mouth
and store his words in your heart.
23 If you come back to the Almighty in true sincerity,
if you banish wrongdoing from your home,
24 if you treat your precious metal as dust [prob. rdg, Heb if you put your
precious metal on dust]
and the gold of Ophir as stones from the river-bed,
25 then the Almighty himself will be your precious metal;
he will be your silver in double measure.
26 Then, with sure trust in [with ... in: or delighting in] the Almighty,
you will raise your face to God;
27 you will pray to him, and he will hear you,
and you will have cause to fulfil your vows.
28 In all your designs you will succeed,
and light will shine on your path;
but God brings down the pride of the haughty [but ... haughty: *prob. rdg, Heb obscure*]
and keeps safe the man of modest looks.
He will deliver the innocent [*prob. rdg, Heb* the not innocent],
and you will be delivered, because your hands are clean.

23 Then Job answered:
2 My thoughts today are resentful,
for God’s hand is heavy on me in my trouble.
3 If only I knew how to find him,
how to enter his court,
4 I would state my case before him
and set out my arguments in full;
5 then I should learn what answer he would give
and find out what he had to say.
6 Would he exert his great power to browbeat me?
No; God himself would never bring a charge against me.
7 There the upright are vindicated before him,
and I shall win from my judge an absolute discharge.
8 If I go forward [Or east], he is not there;
if backward [Or west], I cannot find him;
9 when I turn [prob. rdg, Heb he turns] left [Or north], I do not descry him;
I face right [Or south], but I see him not.
10 But he knows me in action or at rest;
when he tests me, I prove to be gold.
11 My feet have kept to the path he has set me,
I have followed his way and not turned from it.
12 I do not ignore the commands that come from his lips,
I have stored in my heart what he says.
13 He decides [He decides: *prob. rdg, Heb* He in one], and who can turn him
from his purpose?
He does what his own heart desires.
14 What he determines, that he carries out;
his mind is full of plans like these.
15 Therefore I am fearful of meeting him;
when I think about him [when ... him: or I stand aloof], I am afraid;
16 it is God who makes me faint-hearted
and the Almighty who fills me with fear,
17 yet I am not reduced to silence by the darkness
nor [yet I am not ...nor: or indeed I am ... and] by the mystery which hides him.

24 [prob. rdg, Heb prefixes Why] The day of reckoning is no secret to the Almighty,
though those who know him have no hint of its date.
2 Wicked men move boundary-stones
and carry away flocks and their shepherds.

6 [vv3-9 re-arranged to restore the natural order] In the field they reap what is not theirs,
and filch the late grapes from the rich [Or wicked] man’s vineyard.
3 They drive off the orphan’s ass
and lead away the widow’s ox with a rope.
9 They snatch the fatherless infant from the breast
and take the poor man’s child in pledge.
4 They jostle the poor out of the way;
the destitute huddle together, hiding from them.
5 The poor rise early like the wild ass,
when it scours the wilderness for food;
but though they work till nightfall [prob. rdg, Heb Arabah],
their children go hungry [go hungry: prob. rdg, Heb to it food].
7 Naked and bare they pass the night;
in the cold they have nothing to cover them.
8 They are drenched by rain-storms from the hills
and hug the rock, their only shelter.
10 Naked and bare they go about their work,
and hungry they carry the sheaves;
11 they press the oil in the shade where two walls meet,
they tread the winepress but themselves go thirsty.
12 Far from the city, they groan like dying men,
and like wounded men they cry out;
but God pays no heed to their prayer.
13 Some there are who rebel against the light of day,
who know nothing of its ways
and do not linger in the paths of light.
14 The murderer rises before daylight
to kill some miserable wretch. [See note on v15]
15 The seducer watches eagerly for twilight,
thinking, ‘No eye will catch sight of me.’
[Line transposed from end of v14] The thief prowls [The thief prowls: prob. rdg, Heb Let him be like a thief] by night,
his face covered with a mask,
16 and in the darkness breaks into houses
which he has marked down in the day.
One and all [One and all: transposed from after but in next verse], they are strangers to the daylight,
17 but dark night is morning to them;
and in the welter of night they are at home.
18 Such men are scum on the surface of the water;
their fields have a bad name throughout the land,
and no labourer will go near their vineyards.
19 As drought and heat make away with snow,
so the waters of Sheol [snow ... Sheol: prob. rdg, Heb snow-water, Sheol] make away with the sinner.
20 The womb forgets him, the worm sucks him dry;
he will not be remembered ever after [prob. rdg, Heb here adds iniquity is snapped like a stick (see note on v24)].

21 He may have wronged the barren childless woman and been no help to the widow;
22 yet God in his strength carries off even the mighty; they may rise, but they have no firm hope of life.
23 He lulls them into security and confidence; but his eyes are fixed on their ways.
24 For a moment they rise to the heights, but are soon gone;
[Line transposed from end of v20] iniquity is snapped like a stick.
They are laid low and wilt like a mallow-flower; they droop like an ear of corn on the stalk.
25 If this is not so, who will prove me wrong and make nonsense of my argument?

25 Then Bildad the Shuhite answered:
2 Authority and awe rest with him who has established peace in his realm on high.
3 His squadrons are without number; at whom will they not spring from ambush?
4 How then can a man be justified in God’s sight, or one born of woman be innocent?
5 If the circling moon is found wanting, and the stars are not innocent in his eyes,
6 much more so man who is but a maggot, mortal man who is only a worm.

26 Then Job answered:
2 What help you have given to the man without resource, what deliverance you have brought to the powerless!
3 What counsel you offer to a man at his wit’s end, what sound advice to the foolish!
4 Who has prompted you to say such things, and whose spirit is expressed in your speech?
5 In the underworld the shades writhe in fear, the waters and all that live in them are struck with terror [are struck with terror: prob. rdg, Heb omitted].
6 Sheol is laid bare, and Abaddon uncovered before him.
7 God spreads the canopy of the sky over chaos and suspends earth in the void.
8 He keeps the waters penned in dense cloud-masses, and the clouds do not burst open under their weight.
9 He covers the face of the full moon [Or He overlays the surface of his throne], unrolling his clouds across it.
He has fixed the horizon on the surface of the waters at the farthest limit of light and darkness.

The pillars of heaven quake and are aghast at his rebuke.

With his strong arm he cleft the sea-monster, and struck down the Rahab by his skill.

At his breath the skies are clear, and his hand breaks the twisting [Or primeval] sea-serpent.

These are but the fringe of his power; and how faint the whisper that we hear of him!

{Who could fathom the thunder of his might?}

Then Job resumed his discourse:

I swear by God, who has denied me justice, and by the Almighty, who has filled me with bitterness: so long as there is any life left in me and God’s breath is in my nostrils,

no untrue word shall pass my lips and my tongue shall utter no falsehood.

God forbid that I should allow you to be right; till death, I will not abandon my claim to innocence.

I will maintain the rightness of my cause, I will never give up; so long as I live, I will not change.

May my enemy meet the fate of the wicked, and my antagonist the doom of the wrongdoer!

What hope has a godless man, when he is cut off [Or What is a godless man’s thread of life when it is cut], when God takes away his life?

Will God listen to his cry when trouble overtakes him?

Will he trust himself to the Almighty and call upon God at all times?

I will teach you what is in God’s power, I will not conceal the purpose of the Almighty.

If all of you have seen these things, why then do you talk such empty nonsense?

This is the lot prescribed by God for the wicked, and the ruthless man’s reward from the Almighty.

He may have many sons, but they will fall by the sword, and his offspring will go hungry;

the survivors will be brought to the grave by pestilence, and no widows will weep for them.

He may heap up silver like dirt and get himself piles of clothes;
he may get them, but the righteous will wear them, and his silver will be shared among the innocent. The house he builds is flimsy as a bird’s nest or a shelter put up by a watchman. He may lie down rich one day, but never again; he opens his eyes and all is gone. Disaster overtakes him like a flood, and a storm snatches him away in the night; the east wind lifts him up and he is gone; it whirls him far from home; it flings itself on him without mercy, and he is battered and buffeted by its force; it snaps its fingers at him and whistles over him wherever he may be.

God’s unfathomable wisdom

There are mines for silver and places where men refine gold; where iron is won from the earth and copper smelted from the ore; the end of the seam lies in darkness, and it is followed to its farthest limit [prob. rdg, Heb adds stones of darkness and deep darkness]. Strangers cut the galleries [Strangers ... galleries: prob. rdg, Heb obscure]; they are forgotten as they drive forward far from men [prob. rdg, Heb adds languishing without foothold]. While corn is springing from the earth above, what lies beneath is raked over like a fire, and out of its rocks comes lapis lazuli, dusted with flecks of gold. No bird of prey knows the way there, and the falcon’s keen eye cannot descry it; proud beasts do not set foot on it, and no serpent comes that way. Man sets his hand to the granite rock and lays bare the roots of the mountains; he cuts galleries in the rocks, and gems of every kind meet his eye; he dams up the sources of the streams and brings the hidden riches of the earth to light. But where can wisdom be found? And where is the source of understanding? No man knows the way to it; it is not found in the land of living men. The depths of ocean say, ‘It is not in us’,
and the sea says, ‘It is not with me.’

Red gold cannot buy it,
nor can its price be weighed out in silver;
it cannot be set in the scales against gold of Ophir,
against precious cornelian or lapis lazuli;
gold and crystal are not to be matched with it,
no work in fine gold can be bartered for it;
black coral and alabaster are not worth mention,
and a parcel of wisdom fetches more than red coral;
topaz [Or chrysolite] from Ethiopia is not to be matched with it,
it cannot be set in the scales against pure gold.
Where then does wisdom come from,
and where is the source of understanding?
No creature on earth can see it,
and it is hidden from the birds of the air.
Destruction and death say,
‘We know of it only by report.’
But God understands the way to it,
he alone knows its source;
for he can see to the ends of the earth
and he surveys everything under heaven.
When he made a counterpoise for the wind
and measured out the waters in proportion,
when he laid down a limit for the rain
and a path for the thunderstorm,
even then he saw wisdom and took stock of it,
he considered it, and fathomed its very depths.
And he said to man:
The fear of the Lord is wisdom,
and to turn from evil is understanding.

Job’s final survey of his case

Then Job resumed his discourse:
If I could only go back to the old days,
to the time when God was watching over me,
when his lamp shone above my head,
and by its light I walked through the darkness!
If I could be as in the days of my prime,
when God protected my home,
while the Almighty was still there at my side,
and my servants stood round me,
while my path flowed with milk,
and the rocks streamed oil!
If I went through the gate out of the town
to take my seat in the public square,
8 young men saw me and kept out of sight; old men rose to their feet,  
9 men in authority broke off their talk and put their hands to their lips;  
10 the voices of the nobles died away, and every man held his tongue.  

21 [vv21-25 transposed to this point] They listened to me expectantly and waited in silence for my opinion.  
22 When I had spoken, no one spoke again; my words fell gently on them;  
23 they waited for them as for rain and drank them in like showers in spring.  
24 When I smiled on them, they took heart; when my face lit up, they lost their gloomy looks.  
25 I presided over them, planning their course, like a king encamped with his troops [prob. rdg, Heb adds as when one comforts mourners].

11 Whoever heard of me spoke in my favour, and those who saw me bore witness to my merit,  
12 how I saved the poor man when he called for help and the orphan who had no protector.  
13 The man threatened with ruin blessed me, and I made the widow’s heart sing for joy.  
14 I put on righteousness as a garment and it clothed me; justice, like a cloak or a turban, wrapped me round.  
15 I was eyes to the blind and feet to the lame;  
16 I was a father to the needy, and I took up the stranger’s cause.  
17 I broke the fangs of the miscreant and rescued the prey from his teeth.  
18 I thought, ‘I shall die with my powers unimpaired and my days uncounted as the grains of sand [Or as those of the phoenix],  
19 with my roots spreading out to the water and the dew lying on my branches,  
20 with the bow always new in my grasp and the arrow ever ready to my hand.’ [vv21-25 transposed to follow v10]

30 But now I am laughed to scorn by men of a younger generation, men whose fathers I would have disdained to put with the dogs who kept my flock.  
2 What use were their strong arms to me, since their sturdy vigour had wasted away?  
3 They gnawed roots [roots: prob. rdg, Heb omitted] in the desert, gaunt with want and hunger [prob. rdg, Heb adds yesterday waste and
derelict land],
4 they plucked saltwort and wormwood
and root of broom [root of broom: probably fungus on broom root] for their
food.
5 Driven out from the society of men [the society of men: prob. rdg, Heb obscure],
pursued like thieves with hue and cry,
6 they lived in gullies and ravines,
holes in the earth and rocky clefts;
7 they howled like beasts among the bushes,
huddled together beneath the scrub,
8 vile base-born wretches,
hounded from the haunts of men.
9 Now I have become the target of their taunts,
my name is a byword among them.
10 They loathe me, they shrink from me,
they dare to spit in my face.
11 They run wild and savage [They run ... savage: prob. rdg, Heb He runs ... savages] me;
at sight of me they throw off all restraint.
12 On my right flank they attack in a mob [prob. rdg, Heb adds they let loose my feet];
they raise their siege-ramps against me,
13 they tear down my crumbling defences to my undoing,
and scramble up against me unhindered;
14 they burst in through the gaping breach;
at the moment of the crash they come rolling in.
15 Terror upon terror overwhelms me,
it sweeps away my resolution like the wind,
and my hope of victory vanishes like a cloud.
16 So now my soul is in turmoil within me,
and misery has me daily in its grip.
17 By night pain pierces my very bones,
and there is ceaseless throbbing in my veins;
18 my garments are all bespattered with my phlegm,
which chokes me like the collar of a shirt.
19 God himself [God himself: prob. rdg, Heb omitted] has flung me down in
the mud,
no better than dust or ashes.

20 I call for thy help, but thou dost not answer;
I stand up to plead, but thou sittest aloof;
21 thou hast turned cruelly against me
and with thy strong hand pursueth me in hatred;
22 thou dost snatch me up and set me astride the wind,
and the tempest [the tempest: prob. rdg, Heb unintelligible] tosses me up
and down.
23 I know that thou wilt hand me over to death,
to the place appointed for all mortal men
Yet no beggar held out his hand
but was relieved [was relieved: prob. rdg, Heb unintelligible] by me in his
distress.
Did I not weep for the man whose life was hard?
Did not my heart grieve for the poor?
Evil has come though I expected good;
I looked for light but there came darkness.
My bowels are in ferment and know no peace;
days of misery stretch out before me.
I go about dejected and friendless;
I rise in the assembly, only to appeal for help.
The wolf is now my brother,
the owls of the desert have become my companions.
My blackened skin peels off,
and my body is scorched by the heat.
My harp has been tuned for a dirge,
my flute to the voice of those who weep.

What is the lot prescribed by God above,
the reward from the Almighty on high?
Is not ruin prescribed for the miscreant
and calamity for the wrongdoer?
Yet does not God himself see my ways
and count my every step?

I swear I have had no dealings with falsehood
and have not embarked on a course of deceit.
I have come to terms with my eyes,
ever to take notice of a girl.
Let God weigh me in the scales of justice,
and he will know that I am innocent!
If my steps have wandered from the way,
if my heart has followed my eyes,
or any dirt stuck to my hands,
may another eat what I sow,
and may my crops be pulled up by the roots!
If my heart has been enticed by a woman
or I have lain in wait at my neighbour’s door,
may my wife be another man’s slave,
and may other men enjoy her.
But that is a wicked act, an offence before the law;
it would be a consuming and destructive fire,
raging [prob. rdg, Heb uprooting] among my crops.}
If I have ever rejected the plea of my slave
or of my slave-girl, when they brought their complaint to me,
what shall I do if God appears?
What shall I answer if he intervenes?
Did not he who made me in the womb make them?
Did not the same God create us in the belly?
If I have withheld their needs from the poor
or let the widow’s eye grow dim with tears,
if I have eaten my crust alone,
and the orphan has not shared it with me –
the orphan who from boyhood honoured me like a father,
whom I guided from the day of his birth –
if I have seen anyone perish for lack of clothing,
or a poor man with nothing to cover him,
if his body had no cause to bless me,
because he was not kept warm with a fleece from my flock,
if I have raised my hand against the innocent,
knowing that men would side with me in court,
then may my shoulder-blade be torn from my shoulder,
my arm be wrenched out of its socket!
But the terror of God was heavy upon me
and for fear of his majesty I could do none of these things.
If I have put my faith in gold
and my trust in the gold of Nubia,
if I have rejoiced in my great wealth
and in the increase of riches;
if I ever looked on the sun in splendour
or the moon moving in her glory,
and was led astray in my secret heart
and raised my hand in homage;
this would have been an offence before the law,
for I should have been unfaithful to God on high.
If my land has cried out in reproach at me,
and its furrows have joined in weeping,
if I have eaten its produce without payment
and have disappointed my creditors,
may thistles spring up instead of wheat,
and weeds instead of barley!

Have I rejoiced at the ruin of the man that hated me
or been filled with malice when trouble overtook him,
even though I did not allow my tongue to sin
by demanding his life with a curse?
Have the men of my household never said,
‘Let none of us speak ill of him!
No stranger has spent the night in the street’?
For I have kept open house for the traveller.
Have I ever concealed my misdeeds as men do,
keeping my guilt to myself,
because I feared the gossip of the town
or dreaded the scorn of my fellow-citizens?
Let me but call a witness in my defence!
Let the Almighty state his case against me!
If my accuser had written out his indictment,
I would not keep silence and remain indoors.
No! I would flaunt it on my shoulder
and wear it like a crown on my head;
and present that in court as my defence. [vv38-40 transposed to follow verse 28 (except for last line)]

[The last line of verse 40 retained here] Job’s speeches are finished.

Speeches of Elihu

321So these three men gave up answering Job; for he continued to think himself righteous. 2Then Elihu son of Barakel the Buzite, of the family of Ram, grew angry; angry because Job had made himself out more righteous than God [Or had justified himself with God], 3and angry with the three friends because they had found no answer to Job and had let God appear wrong [Prob. original rdg, altered in Heb to and had not proved Job wrong]. 4Now Elihu had hung back while they were talking with Job because they were older than he; 5but, when he saw that the three had no answer, he could no longer contain his anger. 6So Elihu son of Barakel the Buzite began to speak:
   I am young in years,
   and you are old;
   that is why I held back and shrank
   from displaying my knowledge in front of you.
   I said to myself, ‘Let age speak,
   and length of years expound wisdom.’
8But the spirit of God himself is in man,
and the breath of the Almighty gives him understanding;
9it is not only the old who are wise
or the aged who understand what is right.
10Therefore I say: Listen to me;
I too will display my knowledge.
11Look, I have been waiting upon your words,
listening for the conclusions of your thoughts,
while you sought for phrases;
12I have been giving thought to your conclusions,
but not one of you refutes Job or answers his arguments.
13Take care then not to claim that you have found wisdom;
God will rebut him, not man.
14I will not string [prob. rdg, Heb He has not strung] words together like you [prob. rdg, Heb towards me]
If these men are confounded and no longer answer, if words fail them, am I to wait because they do not speak, because they stand there and no longer answer? I, too, have a furrow to plough; I will express my opinion; for I am bursting with words, a bellyful of wind gripes me. My stomach is distended as if with wine, bulging like a blacksmith’s bellows; I must speak to find relief, I must open my mouth and answer; I will show no favour to anyone, I will flatter no one, God or man [prob. rdg, Heb I will not flatter man]; for I cannot use flattering titles, or my Maker would soon do away with me.

Come now, Job, listen to my words and attend carefully to everything I say. Look, I am ready to answer; the words are on the tip of my tongue. My heart assures me that I speak with knowledge, and that my lips speak with sincerity. For the spirit of God made me, and the breath of the Almighty gave me life. Answer me if you can, marshal your arguments and confront me. In God’s sight [In God’s sight: or In strength] I am just what you are; I too am only a handful of clay. Fear of me need not abash you, nor any pressure from me overawe you. You have said your say and I heard you; I have listened to the sound of your words: ‘I am innocent’, you said, ‘and free from offence, blameless and without guilt. Yet God finds occasions to put me in the wrong and counts me his enemy; he puts my feet in the stocks and keeps a close watch on all I do.’

Well, this is my answer: You are wrong. God is greater than man; why then plead your case with him? for no one can answer his arguments. Indeed, once God has spoken
he does not speak a second time to confirm it.

15In dreams, in visions of the night, when deepest sleep falls upon men, while they sleep on their beds, God makes them listen, and his correction strikes them with terror.

17To turn a man from reckless conduct, to check the pride of mortal man, at the edge of the pit he holds him back alive and stops him from crossing the river of death.

19Or again, man learns his lesson on a bed of pain, tormented by a ceaseless ague in his bones; he turns from his food with loathing and has no relish for the choicest meats; his flesh hangs loose upon him, his bones are loosened and out of joint, his soul draws near to the pit, his life to the ministers of death.

23Yet if an angel, one of thousands, stands by him, a mediator between him and God, to expound what he has done right and to secure mortal man his due;

24If he speaks in the man’s favour and says, ‘Reprieve him, let him not go down to the pit, I have the price of his release’;

25then that man will grow sturdier than he was in youth, he will return to the days of his prime.

26If he entreats God to show him favour, to let him see his face and shout for joy; if he declares before all men, ‘I have sinned, turned right into wrong and thought nothing of it’;

28then he saves himself from going down to the pit, he lives and sees the light.

29All these things God may do to a man, again and yet again, bringing him back from the pit to enjoy the full light of life.

31Listen, Job, and attend to me; be silent, and I myself will speak.

32If you have any arguments, answer me; speak, and I would gladly find you proved right; but if you have none, listen to me: keep silence, and I will teach you wisdom.

34Then Elihu went on to say:

2Mark my words, you wise men;
you men of long experience, listen to me;
3 for the ear tests what is spoken
as the palate savours food.
4 Let us then examine for ourselves what is right;
let us together establish the true good.
5 Job has said, ‘I am innocent,
but God has deprived me of justice,
6 he has falsified my case;
my state is desperate, yet I have done no wrong.’
7 Was there ever a man like Job
with his thirst for irreverent talk,
8 choosing bad company to share his journeys,
a fellow-traveller with wicked men?
9 For he says that it brings a man no profit
to find favour with God.
10 But listen to me, you men of good sense.
Far be it from God to do evil
or the Almighty to play false!
11 For he pays a man according to his work
and sees that he gets what his conduct deserves.
12 The truth is, God does no wrong,
the Almighty does not pervert justice.
13 Who committed the earth to his keeping?
Who but he established the whole world?
14 If he were to turn his thoughts inwards
and recall his life-giving spirit,
15 all that lives would perish on the instant,
and man return again to dust.

16 Now Job, if you have the wit, consider this;
listen to the words I speak.
17 Can it be that a hater of justice holds the reins?
Do you disparage a sovereign whose rule is so fair,
18 who will say to a prince, ‘You scoundrel’,
and call his magnates blackguards to their faces;
19 who does not show special favour to those in office
and thinks no more of rich than of poor?
All alike are God’s creatures,
20 who may die in a moment, in the middle of the night;
at his touch the rich are no more,
and the mighty vanish though no hand is laid on them.
21 His eyes are on the ways of men,
and he sees every step they take;
22 there is nowhere so dark, so deep in shadow,
that wrongdoers may hide from him.
25 Therefore he repudiates all that they do;
he turns on them in the night, and they are crushed.
There are no appointed days for men
to appear before God for judgement.
He holds no inquiry, but breaks the powerful
and sets up others in their place.

For their crimes he strikes them down [he strikes them down: prob. rdg, Heb omitted]
and makes them disgorge their bloated wealth [Or and chastises them where people see],
because they have ceased to obey him
and pay no heed to his ways.
Then the cry of the poor reaches his ears,
and he hears the cry of the distressed.
{Even if he is silent, who can condemn him?
If he looks away, who can find fault?
What though he makes a godless man king
over a stubborn nation and all its people?}

But suppose you were to say to God,
'I have overstepped the mark; I will do no more [more: prob. rdg, Heb obscure] mischief.
Vile wretch that I am, be thou my guide;
whatever wrong I have done, I will do wrong no more.’
Will he, at these words, condone your rejection of him?
It is for you to decide, not me:
but what can you answer?
Men of good sense will say,
any intelligent hearer will tell me,
Job talks with no knowledge,
and there is no sense in what he says.
If only Job could be put to the test once and for all
for answers that are meant to make mischief!
He is a sinner and a rebel as well [prob. rdg, Heb adds between us it is enough]
with his endless ranting against God.’

Then Elihu went on to say:
Do you think that this is a sound plea
or maintain that you are in the right against God? –
If you say, ‘What would be the advantage to me?
how much should I gain from sinning?’
I will bring arguments myself against you,
you and your three friends.
Look up at the sky and then consider,
observe the rain-clouds towering above you.
How does it touch him if you have sinned?
However many your misdeeds, what does it mean to him?
If you do right, what good do you bring him,
or what does he gain from you?
8 Your wickedness touches only men, such as you are; the right that you do affects none but mortal man.

9 Men will cry out beneath the burdens of oppression and call for help against the power of the great; but none of them asks, ‘Where is God my Maker who gives protection by night, who grants us more knowledge than the beasts of the earth and makes us wiser than the birds of the air?’

10 So, when they cry out, he does not answer, because they are self-willed and proud.

11 All to no purpose! God does not listen, the Almighty does not see.

12 The worse for you when you say, ‘He does not see me!’ Humble yourself [Humble yourself: prob. rdg, Heb Judge] in his presence and wait for his word.

13 But now, because God does not grow angry and punish and because he lets folly pass unheeded,

14 Job gives vent to windy nonsense and makes a parade of empty words.

36 1 Then Elihu went on to say:

2 Be patient a little longer, and let me enlighten you; there is still something more to be said on God’s side.

3 I will search far and wide to support my conclusions, as I defend the justice of my Maker.

4 There are no flaws in my reasoning; before you stands one whose conclusions are sound.

5 God [prob. rdg, Heb adds a mighty one and not], I say, repudiates the high and [and: prob. rdg, Heb omitted] mighty

6 and does not let the wicked prosper, but allows the just claims of the poor and suffering;

7 he does not deprive the sufferer of his due [deprive ... due: or withdraw his gaze from the righteous].

Look at kings on their thrones: when God gives them sovereign power, they grow arrogant.

8 Next you may see them loaded with fetters, held fast in captives’ chains:

9 he denounces their conduct to them, showing how insolence and tyranny was their offence;

10 his warnings sound in their ears and summon them to turn back from their evil courses.

11 If they listen to him, they spend [prob. rdg, Heb adds they end] their days in prosperity

and their years in comfort.
But, if they do not listen, they die, their lesson unlearnt, and cross the river of death.

Proud men rage against him and do not cry to him for help when caught in his toils; so they die in their prime, like male prostitutes [cp Deut. 23.17], worn out [worn out: prob. rdg, Heb unintelligible].

Those who suffer he rescues through suffering and teaches them by the discipline of affliction.

Beware, if you are tempted to exchange hardship for comfort [for comfort: prob. rdg, Heb omitted], for unlimited plenty spread before you, and a generous table;

if you eat your fill of a rich man’s fare when you are occupied with the business of the law,
do not be led astray by lavish gifts of wine and do not let bribery warp your judgement.

Will that wealth of yours, however great, avail you, or all the resources of your high position?

Take care not to turn to mischief; for that is why you are tried by affliction.

Have no fear if in the breathless terrors of the night you see nations vanish where they stand.

God towers in majesty above us; who wields such sovereign power as he?

Who has prescribed his course for him? Who has said to him, ‘Thou hast done wrong’?

Remember then to sing the praises of his work, as men have always sung them.

All men stand back from [Or gaze at] him; the race of mortals look on from afar.

Consider; God is so great that we cannot know him; the number of his years is beyond reckoning.

He draws up drops of water from the sea [from the sea:prob. rdg, Heb omitted]
and distils rain from the mist he has made;
the rain-clouds pour down in torrents [in torrents: prob. rdg, Heb which], they descend in showers on mankind;
thus he sustains the nations and gives them food in plenty.

Can any man read the secret of the sailing clouds, spread like a carpet under [spread ... under: prob. rdg, Heb crashing noises] his pavilion?

See how he unrolls the mist across the waters, and its streamers [its streamers: prob. rdg, Heb the roots of] cover the sea.

He charges the thunderbolts with flame
and launches them straight [and.., straight: prob. rdg, Heb and gives orders concerning it] at the mark;
33in his anger he calls up the tempest,
and the thunder is the herald of its coming [in his anger ... coming: prob. rdg, Heb obscure].

371This too makes my heart beat wildly
and start from its place.
2Listen, listen to the thunder of God’s voice
and the rumbling of his utterance.
3Under the vault of heaven he lets it roll,
and his lightning reaches the ends of the earth;
4there follows a sound of roaring
as he thunders with the voice of majesty. [Some words transposed to v6]
5God’s voice is marvellous in its working [prob. rdg, Heb thundering];
he does great deeds that pass our knowledge.
6For he says to the snow, ‘Fall to earth’,
and to the rainstorms, ‘Be fierce.’
And when his voice is heard,
the floods of rain pour down unchecked [And when ... unchecked: prob. rdg, some words in these lines transposed from v4].
7He shuts every man fast indoors [indoors: prob. rdg, Heb obscure],
and all men whom he has made must stand idle;
8the beasts withdraw into their lairs
and take refuge in their dens.
9The hurricane bursts from its prison,
and the rain-winds bring bitter cold;
10at the breath of God the ice-sheet is formed,
and the wide waters are frozen hard as iron.
11He gives the dense clouds their load of moisture,
and the clouds spread his mist abroad,
12as they travel round in their courses,
steered by his guiding hand
to do his bidding
all over the habitable world

[prob. rdg, Heb adds 13whether he makes him attain the rod, or his earth, or constant love].

14Listen, Job, to this argument;
stand still, and consider God’s wonderful works.
15Do you know how God assigns them their tasks,
how he sends light flashing from his clouds?
16Do you know why the clouds hang poised overhead,
a wonderful work of his consummate skill,
17sweating there in your stifling clothes,
when the earth lies sultry under the south wind?
18Can you beat out the vault of the skies, as he does,
hard as a mirror of cast metal?
19Teach us then what to say to him;.
for all is dark, and we cannot marshal our thoughts.

20 Can any man dictate to God when he is [prob. rdg, Heb I am] to speak? or command him to make proclamation?

21 At one moment the light is not seen, it is overcast with clouds and rain; then the wind passes by and clears them away,

22 and a golden glow comes from the north [prob. rdg, Heb adds this refers to God, terrible in majesty].

23 But the Almighty we cannot find; his power is beyond our ken, and his righteousness not slow to do justice.

24 Therefore mortal men pay him reverence, and all who are wise look to him.

God’s answer and Job’s submission

38 Then the LORD answered Job out of the tempest:

2 Who is this whose ignorant words cloud my design in darkness?

3 Brace yourself and stand up like a man; I will ask questions, and you shall answer.

4 Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundations? Tell me, if you know and understand.

5 Who settled its dimensions? Surely you should know. Who stretched his measuring-line over it?

6 On what do its supporting pillars rest? Who set its corner-stone in place,

7 when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted aloud?

8 Who watched over the birth of the sea [Who ... sea: prob. rdg, Heb And he held back the sea with two doors], when it burst in flood from the womb? –

9 when I wrapped it in a blanket of cloud and cradled it in fog,

10 when I established its bounds, fixing its doors and bars in place,

11 and said, ‘Thus far shall you come and no farther, and here your surging waves shall halt [prob. rdg, Heb here one shall set on your surging waves].’

12 In all your life have you ever called up the dawn or shown the morning its place?

13 Have you taught it to grasp the fringes of the earth and shake the Dog-star from its place;

14 to bring up the horizon in relief as clay under a seal, until all things stand out like the folds of a cloak,

15 when the light of the Dog-star is dimmed and the stars of the Navigator’s Line go out one by one?
Have you descended to the springs of the sea or walked in the unfathomable deep?

Have the gates of death been revealed to you? Have you ever seen the door-keepers of the place of darkness?

Have you comprehended the vast expanse of the world? Come, tell me all this, if you know.

Which is the way to the home of light and where does darkness dwell?

And can you then take each to its appointed bound and escort it on its homeward path?

Doubtless you know all this; for you were born already, so long is the span of your life!

Have you visited the storehouse of the snow or seen the arsenal where hail is stored, which I have kept ready for the day of calamity, for war and for the hour of battle?

By what paths is the heat spread abroad or the east wind carried far and wide over the earth?

Who has cut channels for the downpour and cleared a passage for the thunderstorm, for rain to fall on land where no man lives and on the deserted wilderness, clothing lands waste and derelict with green and making grass grow on thirsty ground?

Has the rain a father? Who sired the drops of dew?

Whose womb gave birth to the ice, and who was the mother of the frost from heaven, which lays a stony cover over the waters and freezes the expanse of ocean?

Can you bind the cluster of the Pleiades or loose Orion’s belt?

Can you bring out the signs of the zodiac in their season or guide Aldebaran and its train?

Did you proclaim the rules that govern the heavens, or determine the laws of nature on earth?

Can you command the dense clouds to cover you with their weight of waters?

If you bid lightning speed on its way, will it say to you, ‘I am ready’?

Who put wisdom in depths of darkness and veiled understanding in secrecy?

Who is wise enough to marshal the rain-clouds and empty the cisterns of heaven
when the dusty soil sets hard as iron,
and the clods of earth cling together?
Do you hunt her prey for the lioness
and satisfy the hunger of young lions,
as they crouch in the lair
or lie in wait in the covert?
Who provides the raven with its quarry
when its fledglings croak [prob. rdg, Heb adds they cry to God] for lack of food?

Do you know when the mountain-goats are born
or attend the wild doe when she is in labour?
Do you count the months that they carry their young
or know the time of their delivery,
when they crouch down to open their wombs
and bring their offspring to the birth,
when the fawns grow and thrive in the open forest,
and go forth and do not return?
Who has let the wild ass of Syria range at will
and given the wild ass of Arabia its freedom?
whose home I have made in the wilderness
and its lair in the salttings;
it disdains the noise of the city
and is deaf to the driver’s shouting;
it roams the hills as its pasture
and searches for anything green.
Does the wild ox consent to serve you,
does it spend the night in your stall?
Can you harness its strength [prob. rdg, Heb transposes strength and furrows] with ropes,
or will it harrow the furrows [prob. rdg, Heb transposes strength and furrows] after you?
Can you depend on it, strong as it is,
or leave your labour to it?
Do you trust it to come back
and bring home your grain to the threshing-floor?

The wings of the ostrich are stunted [are stunted: prob. rdg, Heb unintelligible];
[prob. rdg, Heb prefixes if] her pinions and plumage are so scanty [prob. rdg, Heb godly or stork]
that she abandons her eggs to the ground,
letting them be kept warm by the sand.
She forgets that a foot may crush them,
or a wild beast trample on them,
she treats her chicks heartlessly as if they were not hers,
not caring if her labour is wasted
(for God has denied her wisdom and left her without sense),
while like a cock she struts over the uplands, scorning both horse and rider.

Did you give the horse his strength? Did you clothe his neck with a mane? 
Do you make him quiver like a locust’s wings, when his shrill neighing strikes terror? 
He shows his mettle as he paws and prances; he charges the armoured line with all his might. 
He scorns alarms and knows no dismay; he does not flinch before the sword. 
The quiver rattles at his side, the spear and sabre flash. 
Trembling with eagerness, he devours the ground and cannot be held in when he hears the horn; 
at the blast of the horn he cries ‘Aha!’ and from afar he scents the battle [prob. rdg, Heb adds the thunder of the captains and the shouting].
Does your skill teach the hawk to use its pinions and spread its wings towards the south? 
Do you instruct the vulture to fly high and build its nest aloft? 
It dwells among the rocks and there it lodges; its station is a crevice in the rock; 
from there it searches for food, keenly scanning the distance, 
that its brood may be gorged with blood; and where the slain are, there the vulture is.

Can you pull out the whale [Or Leviathan] with a gaff or can you slip a noose round its tongue? 
Can you pass a cord through its nose or put a hook through its jaw? 
Will it plead with you for mercy or beg its life with soft words? 
Will it enter into an agreement with you to become your slave for life? 
Will you toy with it as with a bird or keep it on a string like a song-bird for your maidens? 
Do trading-partners haggle over it or merchants share it out?

Then the LORD said to Job:
Is it for a man who disputes with the Almighty to be stubborn? Should he that argues with God answer back?
And Job answered the LORD:

4 What reply can I give thee, I who carry no weight?
I put my finger to my lips.
5 I have spoken once and now will not answer again;
twice have I spoken, and I will do so no more.

6 Then the LORD answered Job out of the tempest:

7 Brace yourself and stand up like a man;
I will ask questions, and you shall answer.
8 Dare you deny that I am just
or put me in the wrong that you may be right?

9 Have you an arm like God’s arm,
can you thunder with a voice like his?
10 Deck yourself out, if you can, in pride and dignity,
array yourself in pomp and splendour;
11 unleash the fury of your wrath,
look upon the proud man and humble him;
12 look upon every proud man and bring him low,
throw down the wicked where they stand;
13 hide them in the dust together,
and shroud them in an unknown grave.
14 Then I in my turn will acknowledge
that your own right hand can save you.

15 Consider the chief of the beasts, the crocodile [chief ... crocodile: prob. rdg, Heb beasts (behemoth) which I have made with you],
who devours cattle as if they were grass [cattle ... grass: prob. rdg, Heb grass like cattle]:
16 what strength is in his loins!
what power in the muscles of his belly!
17 His tail is rigid as [Or He bends his tail like] a cedar,
the sinews of his flanks are closely knit,
18 his bones are tubes of bronze,
and his limbs like bars of iron.
19 He is the chief of God’s works,
made to be a tyrant over his peers [prob. rdg, Heb his sword];
20 for he takes [prob. rdg, Heb they take] the cattle of the hills for his prey
and in his jaws he crunches all wild beasts.
21 There under the thorny lotus he lies,
hidden in the reeds and the marsh;
22 the lotus conceals him in its shadow,
the poplars of the stream surround him.
23 If the river is in spate, he is not scared,
he sprawls at his ease though the stream is in flood.
24 Can a man blind [Can a man blind: prob. rdg, Heb obscure] his eyes and
take him
or pierce his nose with the teeth of a trap?

41 Can you fill his skin with harpoons
or his head with fish-hooks?

If ever you lift your hand against him,
think of the struggle that awaits you, and let be.

9 No, such a man is in desperate case,
hurled headlong at the very sight of him.
10 How fierce he is when he is roused!
Who is there to stand up to him?
11 Who has ever attacked him [prob. rdg, Heb me] unscathed?
Not a man [prob. rdg, Heb He is mine] under the wide heaven.
12 I will not pass over in silence his limbs,
his prowess and the grace of his proportions.
13 Who has ever undone his outer garment
or penetrated his doublet of hide?
14 Who has ever opened the portals of his face?
for there is terror in his arching teeth.
15 His back [prob. rdg, Heb pride] is row upon row of shields,
enclosed in a wall [prob. rdg, Heb seal] of flints;
16 one presses so close on the other
that air cannot pass between them,
17 each so firmly clamped to its neighbour
that they hold and cannot spring apart.
18 His sneezing sends out sprays of light,
and his eyes gleam like the shimmer of dawn.
19 Firebrands shoot from his mouth,
and sparks come streaming out;
20 his nostrils pour forth smoke
like a cauldron on a fire blown to full heat.
21 His breath sets burning coals ablaze,
and flames flash from his mouth.
22 Strength is lodged in his neck,
and untiring energy dances ahead of him.
23 Close knit is his underbelly,
no pressure will make it yield.
24 His heart is firm as a rock,
firm as the nether millstone.
25 When he raises himself, strong men [strong men: or leaders or gods] take
fright,
bewildered at the lashings of his tail.
26 Sword or spear, dagger or javelin,
if they touch him, they have no effect.
27 Iron he counts as straw,
and bronze as rotting wood.
28 No arrow can pierce him,
and for him sling-stones are turned into chaff;
and he laughs at the swish of the sabre.
Armoured beneath with jagged sherds,
he sprawls on the mud like a threshing-sledge.
He makes the deep water boil like a cauldron,
he whips up the lake like ointment in a mixing-bowl.
He leaves a shining trail behind him,
and the great river is like white hair in his wake.
He has no equal on earth;
for he is made quite without fear.
He looks down on all creatures, even the highest;
he is king over all proud beasts.

42 Then Job answered the LORD:
I know that thou canst do all things
and that no purpose is beyond thee.
But I have spoken of great things which I have not understood,
things too wonderful for me to know.
[prob. rdg, Heb adds 4 O listen, and let me speak; I will ask questions, and you shall answer]
I knew of thee then only by report,
but now I see thee with my own eyes.
Therefore I melt away [Or despise myself];
I repent in dust and ashes.

Epilogue

7 When the LORD had finished speaking to Job, he said to Eliphaz the Temanite, ‘I am angry with you and your two friends, because you have not spoken as you ought about me, as my servant Job has done. 8 So now take seven bulls and seven rams, go to my servant Job and offer a whole-offering for yourselves, and he will intercede for you; I will surely show him favour by not being harsh with you because you have not spoken as you ought about me, as he has done.’ 9 Then Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went and carried out the LORD’s command, and the LORD showed favour to Job when he had interceded for his friends. 10 So the LORD restored Job’s fortunes and doubled all his possessions.

11 Then all Job’s brothers and sisters and his former acquaintance came and feasted with him in his home, and they consoled and comforted him for all the misfortunes which the LORD had brought on him; and each of them gave him a sheep [Or piece of money] and a gold ring. 12 Furthermore, the LORD blessed the end of Job’s life more than the beginning; and he had fourteen thousand head of small cattle and six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of oxen and as many she-asses. 13 He had seven [Or fourteen] sons and three daughters; 14 and he named his eldest daughter Jemimah, the second Keziah and the third Keren-happuch. 15 There were no women in all the world so beautiful as
Job’s daughters; and their father gave them an inheritance with their brothers.

16 Thereafter Job lived another hundred and forty years, he saw his sons and his grandsons to four generations, 17 and died at a very great age.