

THE BOOK OF JOB

Prologue

1¹THERE LIVED IN THE LAND OF UZ a man of blameless and upright life named Job, who feared God and set his face against wrongdoing. ²He had seven sons and three daughters; ³and 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.

⁴Now 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. ⁵Then, 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.

⁶The 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. ⁷The LORD asked him where he had been. 'Ranging over the earth', he said, 'from end to end.' ⁸Then 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.' ⁹Satan answered the LORD, 'Has not Job good reason to be God-fearing? ¹⁰Have 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. ¹¹But stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and then he will curse you to your face.' ¹²Then 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.

¹³When the day came that Job's sons and daughters were eating and drinking in the eldest brother's house, ¹⁴a messenger came running to Job and said, 'The oxen were ploughing and the asses were grazing near them, ¹⁵when 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.' ¹⁶While 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.' ¹⁷While 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.' ¹⁸While this man was speaking, yet another arrived and said, 'Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking in the eldest brother's house, ¹⁹when 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.' ²⁰At this Job stood up and rent his cloak; then he shaved his head and fell prostrate on the ground, ²¹saying:

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.

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

²¹Once 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. ²The LORD asked him where he had been. 'Ranging over the earth', he said, 'from end to end.' ³Then 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.' ⁴Satan answered the LORD, 'Skin for skin! There is nothing the man will grudge to save himself. ⁵But stretch out your hand and touch his bone and his flesh, and see if he will not curse you to your face.'

⁶Then the LORD said to Satan, 'So be it. He is in your hands; but spare his life.' ⁷And Satan left the LORD's presence, and he smote Job with running sores from head to foot, ⁸so that he took a piece of a broken pot to scratch himself as he sat among the ashes. ⁹Then his wife said to him, 'Are you still unshaken in your integrity? Curse God and die!' ¹⁰But 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.

¹¹When 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. ¹²But 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. ¹³For 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

3¹⁻²After this Job broke silence and cursed the day of his birth:

³Perish the day when I was born
and the night which said, 'A man is conceived'!

⁴May that day turn to darkness; may God above not look for it,
nor light of dawn shine on it.

⁵May blackness sully it, and murk and gloom,
cloud smother that day, swift darkness eclipse its sun.

⁶Blind darkness swallow up that night;
count it not among the days of the year,
reckon it not in the cycle of the months.

⁷That night, may it be barren for ever,
no cry of joy be heard in it.

⁸Cursed be it by those whose magic binds even the monster of the deep,

who are ready to tame Leviathan himself with spells.

⁹May no star shine out in its twilight;
may it wait for a dawn that never comes,
nor ever see the eyelids of the morning,

¹⁰because it did not shut the doors of the womb that bore me
and keep trouble away from my sight.

¹¹Why was I not still-born,
why did I not die when I came out of the womb?

¹²Why was I ever laid on my mother's knees
or put to suck at her breasts?

¹⁶ Why was I not hidden like an untimely birth,
like an infant that has not lived to see the light?

¹³For then I should be lying in the quiet grave,
asleep in death, at rest,

¹⁴with kings and their ministers
who built themselves palaces,

¹⁵with princes rich in gold
who filled their houses with silver.

¹⁷*[v16 transposed to follow v12]* There the wicked man chafes no more,
there the tired labourer rests;

¹⁸the captive too finds peace there
and hears no taskmaster's voice;

¹⁹high and low are there,
even the slave, free from his master.

²⁰Why should the sufferer be born to see the light?
Why is life given to men who find it so bitter?

²¹They wait for death but it does not come,
they seek it more eagerly than *[Or seek it among]* hidden treasure.

²²They are glad when they reach the tomb,
and when they come to the grave they exult.

²³Why should a man be born to wander blindly,
hedged in by God on every side?

²⁴My sighing is all my food,
and groans pour from me in a torrent.

²⁵Every terror that haunted me has caught up with me,
and all that I feared has come upon me.

²⁶There is no peace of mind nor quiet for me;
I chafe in torment and have no rest.

First cycle of speeches

4¹Then Eliphaz the Temanite began:

²If one ventures to speak with you, will you lose patience?
For who could hold his tongue any longer?

³Think how once you encouraged those who faltered,

how you braced feeble arms,

⁴how a word from you upheld the stumblers
and put strength into weak knees.

⁵But now that adversity comes upon you, you lose patience;
it touches you, and you are unmanned.

⁶Is your religion no comfort to you?
Does your blameless life give you no hope?

⁷For consider, what innocent man has ever perished?
Where have you seen the upright destroyed?

⁸This I know, that those who plough mischief and sow trouble
reap as they have sown;

⁹they perish at the blast of God
and are shrivelled by the breath of his nostrils.

¹⁰The roar of the lion, the whimpering of his cubs, fall silent;
the teeth of the young lions are broken;

¹¹the lion perishes for lack of prey
and the whelps of the lioness are abandoned.

¹²A word stole into my ears,
and they caught the whisper of it;

¹³in the anxious visions of the night,
when a man sinks into deepest sleep,

¹⁴terror seized me and shuddering;
the trembling of my body frightened me.

¹⁵A wind brushed my face
and made the hairs bristle on my flesh;

¹⁶and a figure stood there whose shape I could not discern,
an apparition loomed before me,
and I heard the sound of a low voice:

¹⁷Can mortal man be more righteous than God,
or the creature purer than his Maker?

¹⁸If God mistrusts his own servants
and finds his messengers at fault,

¹⁹how much more those that dwell in houses whose walls are clay,
whose foundations are dust,
which can be crushed like a bird's nest

²⁰or torn down between dawn and dark,
how much more shall such men perish outright and unheeded,

²¹*[prob. rdg, transposing Their rich possessions are snatched from them to follow 5.4]* die, without ever finding wisdom?

5¹Call if you will; is there any to answer you?
To which of the holy ones will you turn?

²The fool is destroyed by his own angry passions,
and the end of childish resentment is death.

³I have seen it for myself: a fool uprooted,

his home in sudden ruin about him [ruin about him: *prob. rdg, Heb obscure*],

⁴his children past help,
browbeaten in court with none to save them.

[*Line transposed from 4.21*] Their rich possessions are snatched from them;

⁵what they have harvested others hungrily devour;
the stronger man seizes it from the panniers,
panting, thirsting for their wealth.

⁶Mischief does not grow out of the soil
nor trouble spring from the earth;

⁷man is born to trouble,
as surely as birds fly [*Or as sparks shoot*] upwards.

⁸For my part, I would make my petition to God
and lay my cause before him,

⁹who does great and unsearchable things,
marvels without number.

¹⁰He gives rain to the earth.
and sends water on the fields;

¹¹he raises the lowly to the heights,
the mourners are uplifted by victory;

¹²he frustrates the plots of the crafty,
and they win no success,

¹³he traps the cunning in their craftiness,
and the schemers' plans are thrown into confusion.

¹⁴In the daylight they run into darkness,
and grope at midday as though it were night.

¹⁵He saves the destitute from their greed,
and the needy from the grip of the strong;

¹⁶so the poor hope again,
and the unjust are sickened.

¹⁷Happy the man whom God rebukes!
therefore do not reject the discipline of the Almighty.

¹⁸For, though he wounds, he will bind up;
the hands that smite will heal.

¹⁹You may meet disaster six times, and he will save you;
seven times, and no harm shall touch you.

²⁰In time of famine he will save you from death,
in battle from the sword.

²¹You will be shielded from the lash of slander [*from ... slander: or when slander is rife*],
and when violence comes you need not fear.

²²You will laugh at violence and starvation
and have no need to fear wild beasts;

²³for you have a covenant with the stones to spare your fields,
and the weeds have been constrained to leave you at peace.

²⁴You will know that all is well with your household,
you will look round your home and find nothing amiss;
²⁵you will know, too, that your descendants will be many
and your offspring like grass, thick upon the earth.
²⁶You will come in sturdy old age to the grave
as sheaves come in due season to the threshing-floor.

²⁷We have inquired into all this, and so it is;
this we have heard, and you may know it for the truth.

6¹Then Job answered:

²O that the grounds for my resentment might be weighed,
and my misfortunes set with them on the scales!

³For they would outweigh the sands of the sea:
what wonder if my words are wild? [what ... wild?: *or* therefore words fail
me.]

⁴The arrows of the Almighty find their mark in me,
and their poison soaks into my spirit;
God's onslaughts wear me away.

⁵Does the wild ass bray when he has grass
or the ox low when he has fodder?

⁶Can a man eat tasteless food unseasoned with salt,
or find any flavour in the juice of mallows?

⁷Food that should nourish me sticks in my throat,
and my bowels rumble with an echoing sound.

⁸O that I might have my request,
that God would grant what I hope for:

⁹that he would be pleased to crush me,
to snatch me away with his hand and cut me off!

¹⁰For 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*].

¹¹Have I the strength to wait?
What end have I to expect, that I should be patient?

¹²Is my strength the strength of stone,
or is my flesh bronze?

¹³Oh how shall I find help within myself?
The power to aid myself is put out of my reach.

¹⁴Devotion is due from his friends
to one who despairs and loses faith in the Almighty;

¹⁵but my brothers have been treacherous as a mountain stream,
like the channels of streams that run dry,

¹⁶which turn dark with ice
or are hidden with piled-up snow;

¹⁷or 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,

²like 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.

⁸Thou wilt behold me no more with a seeing eye;
under thy very eyes I shall disappear.

⁹As clouds break up and disperse,
so he that goes down to Sheol never comes back;

¹⁰he never returns home again,
and his place will know him no more [*Or* and he will not be noticed any more
in his place].

¹¹But I will not hold my peace;
I will speak out in the distress of my mind
and complain in the bitterness of my soul.

¹²Am I the monster of the deep, am I the sea-serpent,
that thou settest a watch over me?

¹³When I think that my bed will comfort me,
that sleep will relieve my complaining,

¹⁴thou dost terrify me with dreams
and affright me with visions.

¹⁵I would rather be choked outright;
I would prefer death to all my sufferings.

¹⁶I am in despair, I would not go on living;
leave me alone, for my life is but a vapour.

¹⁷What is man that thou makest much of him
and turnest thy thoughts towards him,

¹⁸only to punish him morning by morning
or to test him every hour of the day?

¹⁹Wilt thou not look away from me for an instant?
Wilt thou not let me be while I swallow my spittle?

²⁰If 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?

²¹Why 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.

8¹Then Bildad the Shuhite began:

²How long will you say such things,
the long-winded ramblings of an old man?

³Does God pervert judgement?
Does the Almighty pervert justice?

⁴Your sons sinned against him,
so he left them to be victims of their own iniquity.

⁵If only you will seek God betimes
and plead for the favour of the Almighty,

⁶if you are innocent and upright,
then indeed will he watch over you
and see your just intent fulfilled.

⁷Then, though your beginnings were humble,
your end will be great.

⁸Inquire now of older generations
and consider the experience of their fathers;
⁹for we ourselves are of yesterday and are transient;
our days on earth are a shadow.

¹⁰Will not they speak to you and teach you
and pour out the wisdom of their hearts?

¹¹Can rushes grow where there is no marsh?
Can reeds flourish without water?

¹²While they are still in flower and not ready to cut [and ... cut: *or they are surely cut*],
they wither earlier than [*Or wither like*] any green plant.

¹³Such is the fate of all who forget God;
the godless man's life-thread breaks off;

¹⁴his confidence is gossamer,
and the ground of his trust a spider's web.

¹⁵He leans against his house but it does not stand;
he clutches at it but it does not hold firm.

¹⁶His is the lush growth of a plant in the sun,
pushing out shoots over the garden;

¹⁷but its roots become entangled in a stony patch
and run against a bed of rock.

¹⁸Then someone uproots it from its place,
which [*Or and*] disowns it and says, 'I have never known you.'

¹⁹That is how its life withers away,
and other plants spring up from the earth.

²⁰Be sure, God will not spurn the blameless man,
nor will he grasp the hand of the wrongdoer.

²¹He will yet fill your mouth with laughter,
and shouts of joy will be on your lips;

²²your enemies shall be wrapped in confusion,
and the tents of the wicked shall vanish away.

9¹Then Job answered:

²Indeed this I know for the truth,
that no man can win his case against God.

³If a man chooses to argue with him,
God will not answer one question in a thousand [*If a man ... thousand: or If God is pleased to argue with him, man cannot answer one question in a thousand*].

⁴He is wise, he is powerful;
what man has stubbornly resisted him and survived?

⁵It is God who moves mountains, giving them no rest,
turning them over in his wrath;

⁶who makes the earth start from its place
so that its pillars are convulsed;
⁷who commands the sun's orb not to rise
and shuts up the stars under his seal;
⁸who by himself spread out the heavens
and trod on the sea-monster's back [*Or on the crests of the waves*];
⁹who made Aldebaran and Orion,
the Pleiades and the circle of the southern stars;
¹⁰who does great and unsearchable things,
marvels without number.

¹¹He passes by me, and I do not see him;
he moves on his way undiscerned by me;
¹²if he hurries on, who can bring him back?
Who will ask him what he does?
¹³God does not turn back his wrath;
the partisans of Rahab lie prostrate at his feet.
¹⁴How much less can I answer him
or find words to dispute with him?
¹⁵Though I am right, I get no answer,
though I plead with my accuser for mercy.
¹⁶If I summoned him to court and he responded,
I do not believe that he would listen to my plea –
¹⁷for he bears hard upon me for a trifle
and rains blows on me without cause;
¹⁸he leaves me no respite to recover my breath
but fills me with bitter thoughts.
¹⁹If the appeal is to force, see how strong he is;
if to justice, who can compel him to give me a hearing?
²⁰Though I am right, he condemns me out of my own mouth;
though I am blameless, he twists my words.
²¹Blameless, I say; of myself
I reek nothing, I hold my life cheap.
²²But it is all one; therefore I say,
'He destroys blameless and wicked alike.'
²³When a sudden flood brings death,
he mocks the plight of the innocent.
²⁴The 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?*]

²⁵My days have been swifter than a runner,
they have slipped away and seen no prosperity;
²⁶they have raced by like reed-built skiffs,
swift as vultures swooping on carrion.
²⁷If I think, 'I will forget my griefs,
I will show a cheerful face and smile',

²⁸I tremble in every nerve [*Or I am afraid of all that I must suffer*];
I know that thou wilt not hold me innocent.

²⁹If I am to be accounted guilty,
why do I labour in vain?

³⁰Though I wash myself with soap
or cleanse my hands with lye,

³¹thou wilt thrust me into the mud
and my clothes will make me loathsome.

³²He is not a man as I am, that I can answer him
or that we can confront one another in court.

³³If only there were one to arbitrate between us
and impose his authority on us both,

³⁴so that God might take his rod from my back,
and terror of him might not come on me suddenly.

³⁵I would then speak without fear of him;
for I know I am not what I am thought to be.

10¹I am sickened of life;
I will give free rein to my griefs,
I will speak out in bitterness of soul.

²I will say to God, 'Do not condemn me,
but tell me the ground of thy complaint against me.

³Dost thou find any advantage in oppression,
in spurning the fruit of all thy labour
and smiling on the policy of wicked men?

⁴Hast thou eyes of flesh
or dost thou see as mortal man sees?

⁵Are thy days as those of a mortal
or thy years as the life of a man,

⁶that thou lookest for guilt in me
and dost seek in me for sin,

⁷though thou knowest that I am guiltless
and have none to save me from thee?

⁸Thy hands gave me shape and made me;
and dost thou at once turn and destroy me?

⁹Remember that thou didst knead me like clay;
and wouldst thou turn me back into dust?

¹⁰Didst thou not pour me out like milk
and curdle me like cheese,

¹¹clothe me with skin and flesh
and knit me together with bones and sinews?

¹²Thou hast given me life and continuing favour,
and thy providence has watched over my spirit.

¹³Yet this was the secret purpose of thy heart,
and I know that this was thy intent:

¹⁴that, if I sinned, thou wouldst be watching me
and wouldst not acquit me of my guilt.

¹⁵If 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*];

¹⁶if I am proud as a lion, thou dost hunt me down
and dost confront me again with marvellous power;

¹⁷thou dost renew thy onslaught upon me,
and with mounting anger against me
bringest fresh forces to the attack.

¹⁸Why didst thou bring me out of the womb?

¹⁹O 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.

²⁰Is not my life short and fleeting?

Let me be, that I may be happy for a moment,

²¹before I depart to a land of gloom,
a land of deep darkness, never to return,

²²a 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.'

11¹Then Zophar the Naamathite began:

²Should this spate of words not be answered?

Must a man of ready tongue be always right?

³Is your endless talk to reduce men to silence?

Are you to talk nonsense and no one rebuke you?

⁴You claim that your opinions are sound;
you say to God, 'I am spotless in thy sight.'

⁵But if only he would speak
and open his lips to talk with you,

⁶and expound to you the secrets of wisdom,
for wonderful are its effects!

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

⁷Can you fathom the mystery of God,
can you fathom the perfection of the Almighty?

⁸It is higher than heaven; you can do nothing.

It is deeper than Sheol; you can know nothing.

⁹Its measure is longer than the earth
and broader than the sea.

¹⁰If he passes by, he may keep secret his passing;
if he proclaims it, who can turn him back?

¹¹He 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*]?

¹²Can 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.

¹³Wisdom and might are his,
with him are firmness and understanding.
¹⁴If he pulls down, there is no rebuilding;
if he imprisons, there is no release.
¹⁵If he holds up the waters, there is drought;
if he lets them go, they turn the land upside down.
¹⁶Strength and success belong to him,
deceived and deceiver are his to use.
¹⁷He makes counsellors behave like idiots
and drives judges mad;
¹⁸he looses the bonds imposed by kings
and removes the girdle of office from their waists;
¹⁹he makes priests behave like idiots
and overthrows men long in office;
²⁰those who are trusted he strikes dumb,
he takes away the judgement of old men;
²¹he 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.
²⁴He takes away their wisdom from the rulers of the nations
and leaves them wandering in a pathless wilderness;
²⁵they grope in the darkness without light
and are left to wander like a drunkard.
²²He uncovers mysteries deep in obscurity
and into thick darkness he brings light.

13¹All this I have seen with my own eyes,
with my own ears I have heard it, and understood it.
²What you know, I also know;
in nothing do I fall short of you.
³But for my part I would speak with the Almighty
and am ready to argue with God,
⁴while you like fools are smearing truth with your falsehoods,
stitching a patchwork of lies, one and all.
⁵Ah, if you would only be silent
and let silence be your wisdom!
⁶Now listen to my arguments
and attend while I put my case.
⁷Is it on God's behalf that you speak so wickedly,
or in his defence that you allege what is false?
⁸Must you take God's part,
or put his case for him?
⁹Will all be well when he examines you?
Will you quibble with him as you quibble with a man?
¹⁰He will most surely expose you

if you take his part by falsely accusing me.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

²⁷putting 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*]

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

²He 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.

³Dost thou fix thine eyes on such a creature,
and wilt thou bring him into court to confront thee?

[*So one Heb manuscript; others add* ⁴Who can produce pure out of unclean?
No one]

⁵The 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.

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

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

⁸Though its roots grow old in the earth,
and its stump is dying in the ground,
⁹if it scents water it may break into bud
and make new growth like a young plant.

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

¹¹As the waters of a lake dwindle,
or as a river shrinks and runs dry,
¹²so 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.

¹³If 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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

²² [*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*].

²¹His sons rise to honour, and he sees nothing of it;
they sink into obscurity, and he knows it not.

Second cycle of speeches

15¹Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered:

²Would a man of sense give vent to such foolish notions
and answer with a bellyful of wind?

³Would he bandy useless words
and arguments so unprofitable?

⁴Why! you even banish the fear of God from your mind,
usurping the sole right to speak in his presence;

⁵your iniquity dictates what you say,
and deceit is the language of your choice.

⁶You 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;

²³he is flung out as food for vultures;
such a man knows that his destruction is certain.

²⁴Suddenly a black day comes upon him,
distress and anxiety overwhelm him
{like a king ready for battle};

²⁵for he has lifted his hand against God
and is pitting himself against the Almighty,

²⁶charging him head down,
with the full weight of his bossed shield.

²⁷Heavy though his jowl is and gross,
and though his sides bulge with fat,

²⁸the city where he lives will lie in ruins,
his house will be deserted;
it will soon become a heap of rubble.

²⁹He 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.

³¹He deceives himself, trusting in his high rank,
for all his dealings will come to nothing.

³²His palm-trees will wither unseasonably,
and his branches will not spread;

³³he will be like a vine that sheds its unripe grapes,
like an olive-tree that drops its blossom.

³⁴For the godless, one and all, are barren,
and their homes, enriched by bribery, are destroyed by fire;

³⁵they conceive mischief and give birth to trouble,
and the child of their womb is deceit.

16¹Then Job answered:

²I have heard such things often before,
you who make trouble, all of you, with every breath,

³saying, 'Will this windbag never have done?
What makes him so stubborn in argument?'

⁴If you and I were to change places,
I could talk like you;
how I could harangue you
and wag my head at you!

⁵But no, I would speak words of encouragement,
and then my condolences would flow in streams.

⁶If I speak, my pain is not eased;
if I am silent, it does not leave me.

⁷Meanwhile, my friend wearies me with false sympathy;

⁸they 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,
⁹in his wrath he wears me down, his hatred is plain to see;
he grinds his teeth at me.

My enemies look daggers at me,
¹⁰they bare their teeth to rend me,
they slash my cheeks with knives;
they are all in league against me.

¹¹God has left me at the mercy of malefactors
and cast me into the clutches of wicked men.

¹²I 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;

¹³his arrows rained upon me from every side;
pitiless, he cut deep into my vitals,
he spilt my gall on the ground.

¹⁴He made breach after breach in my defences;
he fell upon me like a fighting man.

¹⁵I stitched sackcloth together to cover my body
and I buried my forelock in the dust;

¹⁶my cheeks were flushed with weeping
and dark shadows were round my eyes,

¹⁷yet my hands were free from violence
and my prayer was sincere.

¹⁸O earth, cover not my blood
and let my cry for justice find no rest!

¹⁹For look! my witness is in heaven;
there is one on high ready to answer for me.

²⁰My appeal will come before God,
while my eyes turn again and again to him.

²¹If only there were one to arbitrate between man and God,
as between a man and his neighbour!

²²For there are but few years to come
before I take the road from which I shall not return.

17¹My mind is distraught, my days are numbered,
and the grave is waiting for me.

²Wherever I turn, men taunt me,
and my day is darkened by their sneers.

³Be thou my surety with thyself,
for who else can pledge himself for me?

⁴Thou wilt not let those men triumph,
whose minds thou hast sunk in ignorance;

⁵if such a man denounces his friends to their ruin,
his sons' eyes shall grow dim.

⁶I am held up as a byword in every land,
a portent for all to see;

⁷my eyes are dim with grief,
my limbs wasted to a shadow.

⁸Honest men are bewildered at this,
and the innocent are indignant at my plight.

⁹In spite of all, the righteous man maintains his course,
and he whose hands are clean grows strong again.

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

¹¹My days die away like an echo;
my heart-strings [*prob. rdg, Heb the desires of my heart*] are snapped.

¹²Day is turned into night,
and morning [*morning: prob. rdg, Heb near*] light is darkened before me.

¹³If I measure Sheol for my house,
if I spread my couch in the darkness,

¹⁴if I call the grave my father
and the worm my mother or my sister,

¹⁵where, then, will my hope be,
and who will take account of my piety?

¹⁶I cannot take them down to Sheol with me,
nor can they descend with me into the earth.

18¹Then Bildad the Shuhite answered:

²How soon will you bridle [*bridle: prob. rdg, Heb unintelligible*] your tongue?
Do but think, and then we will talk.

³What do you mean by treating us as cattle?

Are we nothing but brute beasts to you [*prob. rdg, Heb adds ⁴rending himself in his anger*]?

Is the earth to be deserted to prove you right,
or the rocks to be moved from their place?

⁵No, it is the wicked whose light is extinguished,
from whose fire no flame will rekindle;

⁶the light fades in his tent,
and his lamp dies down and fails him.

⁷In his iniquity his steps totter,
and his disobedience trips him up;

⁸he rushes headlong into a net
and steps through the hurdle that covers a pit;

⁹his heel is caught in a snare,
the noose grips him tight;

¹⁰a cord lies hidden in the ground for him
and a trap in the path.

¹¹The terrors of death suddenly beset him

and make him piss over his feet.

¹²For all his vigour he is paralysed with fear;
strong as he is, disaster awaits him.

¹³Disease eats away his skin,
Death's eldest child devours his limbs.

¹⁴He 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*].

¹⁵Magic herbs lie strewn about his tent,
and his home is sprinkled with sulphur to protect it.

¹⁶His roots beneath dry up,
and above, his branches wither.

¹⁷His memory vanishes from the face of the earth
and he leaves no name in the world.

¹⁸He is driven from light into darkness
and banished from the land of the living.

¹⁹He leaves no issue or offspring among his people,
no survivor in his earthly home;

²⁰in the west men hear of his doom and are appalled;
in the east they shudder with horror.

²¹Such is the fate of the dwellings of evildoers,
and of the homes of those who care nothing for God.

19¹Then Job answered:

²How long will you exhaust me
and pulverize me with words?

³Time and time again you have insulted me
and shamelessly done me wrong.

⁴If in fact I had erred,
the error would still be mine.

⁵But if indeed you lord it over me
and try to justify the reproaches levelled at me,

⁶I tell you, God himself has put me in the wrong,
he has drawn the net round me.

⁷If I cry 'Murder!' no one answers;
if I appeal for help, I get no justice.

⁸He has walled in my path so that I cannot break away,
and he has hedged in the road before me.

⁹He has stripped me of all honour
and has taken the crown from my head.

¹⁰On 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.

¹¹His anger is hot against me
and he counts me his enemy.

¹²His raiders gather in force [*prob. rdg, Heb adds they raise an earthwork
against me*]
and encamp about my tent.

¹³My brothers hold aloof from me,
my friends are utterly estranged from me;
¹⁴⁻¹⁵my 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.
¹⁶I summon my slave, but he does not answer,
though I entreat him as a favour.
¹⁷My breath is noisome to my wife,
and I stink in the nostrils of my own family.
¹⁸Mere children despise me
and, when I rise, turn their backs on me;
¹⁹my intimate companions loathe me,
and those whom I love have turned against me.
²⁰My bones stick out through my skin [*prob. rdg, Heb adds and my flesh*],
and I gnaw my under-lip with my teeth.

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

My heart failed me ²⁸when you said,
'What a train of disaster he has brought on himself!
The root of the trouble lies in him.'
²⁹Beware 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*].

20¹Then Zophar the Naamathite answered:

²My distress of mind forces me to reply,
and this is why [*this is why: prob. rdg, Heb obscure*] I hasten to speak:
³I have heard arguments that are a reproach to me,
a spirit beyond my understanding gives me the answers.
⁴Surely you know that this has been so since time began,
since man was first set on the earth:

⁵the triumph of the wicked is short-lived,
the glee of the godless lasts but a moment?

⁶Though he stands high as heaven,
and his head touches the clouds,

⁷he will be swept utterly away like his own dung,
and all that saw him will say, 'Where is he?'

⁸He will fly away like a dream and be lost,
driven off like a vision of the night;

⁹the eye which glimpsed him shall do so no more
and shall never again see him in his place.

¹¹ [*v10 and v11 transposed*]The youth and strength which filled his bones
shall lie with him in the dust.

¹⁰His sons will pay court to the poor,
and their [*prob. rdg, Heb his*] hands will give back his wealth.

¹²Though evil tastes sweet in his mouth,
and he savours it, rolling it round his tongue,

¹³though he lingers over it and will not let it go,
and holds it back on his palate,

¹⁴yet his food turns in his stomach,
changing to asps' venom within him.

¹⁵He gulps down wealth, then vomits it up,
or God makes him discharge it.

¹⁶He sucks the poison of asps,
and the tongue of the viper kills him.

¹⁷Not for him to swill down rivers of cream [*rivers of cream: prob. rdg, Heb
obscure*]

or torrents of honey and curds;

¹⁸he must give back his gains without swallowing them,
and spew up his profit undigested;

¹⁹for he has hounded and harassed the poor,
he has seized houses which he did not build.

²⁰Because his appetite gave him no rest,
and he cannot escape his own desires,

²¹nothing is left for him to eat,
and so his well-being does not last;

²²with every need satisfied his troubles begin,
and the full force of hardship strikes him.

²³God vents his anger upon him
and rains on him cruel blows.

²⁴He is wounded by weapons of iron
and pierced by a bronze-tipped arrow;

²⁵out at his back the point comes,
the gleaming tip from his gall-bladder.

²⁶Darkness unrelieved awaits him,
a fire that needs no fanning will consume him.

{Woe betide any survivor in his tent !}

²⁷The 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?

¹⁹You say, 'The trouble he has earned, God will keep for his sons';
no, let him be paid for it in full and be punished.

²⁰Let his own eyes see damnation come upon him,
and the wrath of the Almighty be the cup he drinks.

²¹What joy shall he have in his children after him,
if his very months and days are numbered?

²²Can any man teach God,
God who judges even those in heaven above?

²³One man, I tell you, dies crowned with success,
lapped in security and comfort,

²⁴his loins full of vigour
and the marrow juicy in his bones;

²⁵another dies in bitterness of soul
and never tastes prosperity;

²⁶side by side they are laid in earth,
and worms are the shroud of both.

²⁷I know well what you are thinking
and the arguments you are marshalling against me,

²⁸I know you will ask, 'Where is the great man's home now,
what has become of the home of the wicked?'

²⁹Have you never questioned travellers?

Can you not learn from the signs they offer,

³⁰that the wicked is spared when disaster comes
and conveyed to safety before the day of wrath?

³¹No one denounces his conduct to his face,
no one requites him for what he has done.

³²⁻³³When 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.

³⁴How futile, then, is the comfort you offer me!
How false your answers ring!

Third cycle of speeches

22¹Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered:

²Can man be any benefit to God?

Can even a wise man benefit him?

³Is it an asset to the Almighty if you are righteous?

Does he gain if your conduct is perfect?

⁴Do not think that he reproves you because you are pious,
that on this count he brings you to trial.

⁵No: it is because you are a very wicked man,
and your depravity passes all bounds.

⁶Without due cause you take a brother in pledge,
you strip men of their clothes and leave them naked.

⁷When a man is weary, you give him no water to drink
and you refuse bread to the hungry.

⁸Is the earth, then, the preserve of the strong
and a domain for the favoured few?

⁹Widows you have sent away empty-handed,
orphans you have struck defenceless.

¹⁰No wonder that there are pitfalls in your path,
that scares are set to fill you with sudden fear.

¹¹The light is turned into darkness, and you cannot see;
the flood-waters cover you.

¹²Surely God is at the zenith of the heavens
and looks down on all the stars, high as they are.

¹³But you say, 'What does God know?
Can he see through thick darkness to judge?

¹⁴His eyes cannot pierce the curtain of the clouds
as he walks to and fro on the vault of heaven.'

¹⁵Consider the course of the wicked man,
the path the miscreant treads:

¹⁶see how they are carried off before their time,
their very foundation flowing away like a river;

¹⁷these men said to God, 'Leave us alone;
what can the Almighty do to us?'

¹⁸Yet it was he that filled their houses with good things,
although their purposes and his were very different.

¹⁹The righteous see their fate and exult,
the innocent make game of them;

²⁰for their riches are swept away,
and the profusion of their wealth is destroyed by fire.

²¹Come to terms with God and you will prosper;
that is the way to mend your fortune.

²²Take instruction from his mouth
and store his words in your heart.

²³If you come back to the Almighty in true sincerity,
if you banish wrongdoing from your home,

²⁴if 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,

²⁵then the Almighty himself will be your precious metal;
he will be your silver in double measure.

²⁶Then, with sure trust in [*with ... in: or delighting in*] the Almighty,
you will raise your face to God;

²⁷you will pray to him, and he will hear you,
and you will have cause to fulfil your vows.

²⁸In all your designs you will succeed,

and light will shine on your path;

²⁹but God brings down the pride of the haughty [but ... haughty: *prob. rdg, Heb obscure*]

and keeps safe the man of modest looks.

³⁰He will deliver the innocent [*prob. rdg, Heb the not innocent*],
and you will be delivered, because your hands are clean.

23¹Then Job answered:

²My thoughts today are resentful,
for God's hand is heavy on me in my trouble.

³If only I knew how to find him,
how to enter his court,

⁴I would state my case before him
and set out my arguments in full;

⁵then I should learn what answer he would give
and find out what he had to say.

⁶Would he exert his great power to browbeat me?
No; God himself would never bring a charge against me.

⁷There the upright are vindicated before him,
and I shall win from my judge an absolute discharge.

⁸If I go forward [*Or east*], he is not there;
if backward [*Or west*], I cannot find him;

⁹when 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.

¹⁰But he knows me in action or at rest;
when he tests me, I prove to be gold.

¹¹My feet have kept to the path he has set me,
I have followed his way and not turned from it.

¹²I do not ignore the commands that come from his lips,
I have stored in my heart what he says.

¹³He decides [*He decides: prob. rdg, Heb He in one*], and who can turn him
from his purpose?
He does what his own heart desires.

¹⁴What he determines, that he carries out;
his mind is full of plans like these.

¹⁵Therefore I am fearful of meeting him;
when I think about him [*when ... him: or I stand aloof*], I am afraid;

¹⁶it is God who makes me faint-hearted
and the Almighty who fills me with fear,

¹⁷yet 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.

24¹[*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.

²Wicked 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.

³They drive off the orphan's ass

and lead away the widow's ox with a rope.

⁹They snatch the fatherless infant from the breast

and take the poor man's child in pledge.

⁴They jostle the poor out of the way;

the destitute huddle together, hiding from them.

⁵The 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*].

⁷Naked and bare they pass the night;

in the cold they have nothing to cover them.

⁸They are drenched by rain-storms from the hills

and hug the rock, their only shelter.

¹⁰Naked and bare they go about their work,

and hungry they carry the sheaves;

¹¹they press the oil in the shade where two walls meet,

they tread the winepress but themselves go thirsty.

¹²Far from the city, they groan like dying men,

and like wounded men they cry out;

but God pays no heed to their prayer.

¹³Some there are who rebel against the light of day,

who know nothing of its ways

and do not linger in the paths of light.

¹⁴The murderer rises before daylight

to kill some miserable wretch. [*See note on v15*]

¹⁵The 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,

¹⁶and 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,

¹⁷but dark night is morning to them;

and in the welter of night they are at home.

¹⁸Such 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.

¹⁹As 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.

²⁰The 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)*].

²¹He may have wronged the barren childless woman
and been no help to the widow;

²²yet God in his strength carries off even the mighty;
they may rise, but they have no firm hope of life.

²³He lulls them into security and confidence;
but his eyes are fixed on their ways.

²⁴For 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.

²⁵If this is not so, who will prove me wrong
and make nonsense of my argument?

25¹Then Bildad the Shuhite answered:

²Authority and awe rest with him
who has established peace in his realm on high.

³His squadrons are without number;
at whom will they not spring from ambush?

⁴How then can a man be justified in God's sight,
or one born of woman be innocent?

⁵If the circling moon is found wanting,
and the stars are not innocent in his eyes,

⁶much more so man who is but a maggot,
mortal man who is only a worm.

26¹Then Job answered:

²What help you have given to the man without resource,
what deliverance you have brought to the powerless!

³What counsel you offer to a man at his wit's end,
what sound advice to the foolish!

⁴Who has prompted you to say such things,
and whose spirit is expressed in your speech?

⁵In 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*].

⁶Sheol is laid bare,
and Abaddon uncovered before him.

⁷God spreads the canopy of the sky over chaos
and suspends earth in the void.

⁸He keeps the waters penned in dense cloud-masses,
and the clouds do not burst open under their weight.

⁹He covers the face of the full moon [*Or He overlays the surface of his throne*],
unrolling his clouds across it.

¹⁰He has fixed the horizon on the surface of the waters
at the farthest limit of light and darkness.

¹¹The pillars of heaven quake
and are aghast at his rebuke.

¹²With his strong arm he cleft the sea-monster,
and struck down the Rahab by his skill.

¹³At his breath the skies are clear,
and his hand breaks the twisting [*Or primeval*] sea-serpent.

¹⁴These 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?}

27¹Then Job resumed his discourse:

²I swear by God, who has denied me justice,
and by the Almighty, who has filled me with bitterness:

³so long as there is any life left in me
and God's breath is in my nostrils,

⁴no untrue word shall pass my lips
and my tongue shall utter no falsehood.

⁵God forbid that I should allow you to be right;
till death, I will not abandon my claim to innocence.

⁶I will maintain the rightness of my cause, I will never give up;
so long as I live, I will not change.

⁷May my enemy meet the fate of the wicked,
and my antagonist the doom of the wrongdoer!

⁸What 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?

⁹Will God listen to his cry
when trouble overtakes him?

¹⁰Will he trust himself to the Almighty
and call upon God at all times?

¹¹I will teach you what is in God's power,
I will not conceal the purpose of the Almighty.

¹²If all of you have seen these things,
why then do you talk such empty nonsense?

¹³This is the lot prescribed by God for the wicked,
and the ruthless man's reward from the Almighty.

¹⁴He may have many sons, but they will fall by the sword,
and his offspring will go hungry;

¹⁵the survivors will be brought to the grave by pestilence,
and no widows will weep for them.

¹⁶He may heap up silver like dirt
and get himself piles of clothes;

¹⁷he may get them, but the righteous will wear them,
and his silver will be shared among the innocent.

¹⁸The house he builds is flimsy as a bird's nest
or a shelter put up by a watchman.

¹⁹He may lie down rich one day, but never again;
he opens his eyes and all is gone.

²⁰Disaster overtakes him like a flood,
and a storm snatches him away in the night;

²¹the east wind lifts him up and he is gone;
it whirls him far from home;

²²it flings itself on him without mercy,
and he is battered and buffeted by its force;

²³it snaps its fingers at him
and whistles over him wherever he may be.

God 's unfathomable wisdom

28¹There are mines for silver
and places where men refine gold;
²where iron is won from the earth
and copper smelted from the ore;
³the 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*].

⁴Strangers 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*].

⁵While corn is springing from the earth above,
what lies beneath is raked over like a fire,

⁶and out of its rocks comes lapis lazuli,
dusted with flecks of gold.

⁷No bird of prey knows the way there,
and the falcon's keen eye cannot descry it;

⁸proud beasts do not set foot on it,
and no serpent comes that way.

⁹Man sets his hand to the granite rock
and lays bare the roots of the mountains;

¹⁰he cuts galleries in the rocks,
and gems of every kind meet his eye;

¹¹he dams up the sources of the streams
and brings the hidden riches of the earth to light.

¹²But where can wisdom be found?
And where is the source of understanding?

¹³No man knows the way to it;
it is not found in the land of living men.

¹⁴The depths of ocean say, 'It is not in us',

and the sea says, 'It is not with me.'
¹⁵Red gold cannot buy it,
nor can its price be weighed out in silver;
¹⁶it cannot be set in the scales against gold of Ophir,
against precious cornelian or lapis lazuli;
¹⁷gold and crystal are not to be matched with it,
no work in fine gold can be bartered for it;
¹⁸black coral and alabaster are not worth mention,
and a parcel of wisdom fetches more than red coral;
¹⁹topaz [*Or chrysolite*] from Ethiopia is not to be matched with it,
it cannot be set in the scales against pure gold.
²⁰Where then does wisdom come from,
and where is the source of understanding?
²¹No creature on earth can see it,
and it is hidden from the birds of the air.
²²Destruction and death say,
'We know of it only by report.'
²³But God understands the way to it,
he alone knows its source;
²⁴for he can see to the ends of the earth
and he surveys everything under heaven.
²⁵When he made a counterpoise for the wind
and measured out the waters in proportion,
²⁶when he laid down a limit for the rain
and a path for the thunderstorm,
²⁷even then he saw wisdom and took stock of it,
he considered it, and fathomed its very depths.
²⁸And 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

29¹Then Job resumed his discourse:
²If I could only go back to the old days,
to the time when God was watching over me,
³when his lamp shone above my head,
and by its light I walked through the darkness!
⁴If I could be as in the days of my prime,
when God protected my home,
⁵while the Almighty was still there at my side,
and my servants stood round me,
⁶while my path flowed with milk,
and the rocks streamed oil!
⁷If I went through the gate out of the town
to take my seat in the public square,

⁸young men saw me and kept out of sight;
old men rose to their feet,
⁹men in authority broke off their talk
and put their hands to their lips;
¹⁰the 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.

²²When I had spoken, no one spoke again;
my words fell gently on them;

²³they waited for them as for rain
and drank them in like showers in spring.

²⁴When I smiled on them, they took heart;
when my face lit up, they lost their gloomy looks.

²⁵I presided over them, planning their course,
like a king encamped with his troops *[prob. rdg, Heb adds as when one
comforts mourners]*.

¹¹Whoever heard of me spoke in my favour,
and those who saw me bore witness to my merit,

¹²how I saved the poor man when he called for help
and the orphan who had no protector.

¹³The man threatened with ruin blessed me,
and I made the widow's heart sing for joy.

¹⁴I put on righteousness as a garment and it clothed me;
justice, like a cloak or a turban, wrapped me round.

¹⁵I was eyes to the blind
and feet to the lame;

¹⁶I was a father to the needy,
and I took up the stranger's cause.

¹⁷I broke the fangs of the miscreant
and rescued the prey from his teeth.

¹⁸I thought, 'I shall die with my powers unimpaired
and my days uncounted as the grains of sand *[Or as those of the phoenix]*,

¹⁹with my roots spreading out to the water
and the dew lying on my branches,

²⁰with the bow always new in my grasp
and the arrow ever ready to my hand. *[vv21-25 transposed to follow v10]*

30¹But 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.

²What use were their strong arms to me,
since their sturdy vigour had wasted away?

³They gnawed roots *[roots: prob. rdg, Heb omitted]* in the desert,
gaunt with want and hunger *[prob. rdg, Heb adds yesterday waste and*

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

20I call for thy help, but thou dost not answer;
I stand up to plead, but thou sittest aloof;
21thou hast turned cruelly against me
and with thy strong hand pursuest me in hatred;
22thou dost snatch me up and set me astride the wind,
and the tempest [the tempest: *prob. rdg, Heb unintelligible*] tosses me up
and down.
23I know that thou wilt hand me over to death,

to the place appointed for all mortal men

²⁴Yet no beggar held out his hand

but was relieved [*was relieved: prob. rdg, Heb unintelligible*] by me in his distress.

²⁵Did I not weep for the man whose life was hard?

Did not my heart grieve for the poor?

²⁶Evil has come though I expected good;

I looked for light but there came darkness.

²⁷My bowels are in ferment and know no peace;

days of misery stretch out before me.

²⁸I go about dejected and friendless;

I rise in the assembly, only to appeal for help.

²⁹The wolf is now my brother,

the owls of the desert have become my companions.

³⁰My blackened skin peels off,

and my body is scorched by the heat.

³¹My harp has been tuned for a dirge,

my flute to the voice of those who weep.

31²[*v1 transposed to follow v5*] What is the lot prescribed by God above,
the reward from the Almighty on high?

³Is not ruin prescribed for the miscreant
and calamity for the wrongdoer?

⁴Yet does not God himself see my ways
and count my every step?

⁵I swear I have had no dealings with falsehood
and have not embarked on a course of deceit.

¹I have come to terms with my eyes,
never to take notice of a girl.

⁶Let God weigh me in the scales of justice,
and he will know that I am innocent!

⁷If my steps have wandered from the way,
if my heart has followed my eyes,
or any dirt stuck to my hands,

⁸may another eat what I sow,
and may my crops be pulled up by the roots!

⁹If my heart has been enticed by a woman
or I have lain in wait at my neighbour's door,

¹⁰may my wife be another man's slave,
and may other men enjoy her.

{¹¹But that is a wicked act, an offence before the law;

¹²it would be a consuming and destructive fire,
raging [*prob. rdg, Heb uprooting*] among my crops.}

¹³If I have ever rejected the plea of my slave

or of my slave-girl, when they brought their complaint to me,

¹⁴what shall I do if God appears?

What shall I answer if he intervenes?

¹⁵Did not he who made me in the womb make them?

Did not the same God create us in the belly?

¹⁶If I have withheld their needs from the poor
or let the widow's eye grow dim with tears,

¹⁷if I have eaten my crust alone,
and the orphan has not shared it with me –

¹⁸the orphan who from boyhood honoured me like a father,
whom I guided from the day of his [*prob. rdg, Heb my*] birth –

¹⁹if I have seen anyone perish for lack of clothing,
or a poor man with nothing to cover him,

²⁰if his body had no cause to bless me,
because he was not kept warm with a fleece from my flock,

²¹if I have raised [*Or waved*] my hand against the innocent [*Or orphan*],
knowing that men would side with me in court,

²²then may my shoulder-blade be torn from my shoulder,
my arm be wrenched out of its socket!

²³But the terror of God was heavy upon me [*prob. rdg, Heb A fear towards
me is a disaster from God*],

and for fear of his majesty I could do none of these things.

²⁴If I have put my faith in gold
and my trust in the gold of Nubia,

²⁵if I have rejoiced in my great wealth
and in the increase of riches;

²⁶if I ever looked on the sun in splendour
or the moon moving in her glory,

²⁷and was led astray in my secret heart
and raised my hand in homage;

²⁸this would have been an offence before the law,
for I should have been unfaithful to God on high.

³⁸[*vv38-40 transposed (except for last line retained in place)*] If my land has cried out in
reproach at me,

and its furrows have joined in weeping,

³⁹if I have eaten its produce without payment
and have disappointed my creditors,

⁴⁰may thistles spring up instead of wheat,
and weeds instead of barley!

²⁹Have I rejoiced at the ruin of the man that hated me
or been filled with malice when trouble overtook him,

³⁰even though I did not allow my tongue to sin
by demanding his life with a curse?

³¹Have the men of my household never said,
'Let none of us speak ill of him!

³²No stranger has spent the night in the street'?
For I have kept open house for the traveller.

³³Have I ever concealed my misdeeds as men do,

keeping my guilt to myself,

³⁴because I feared the gossip of the town
or dreaded the scorn of my fellow-citizens?

³⁵Let me but call a witness in my defence!
Let the Almighty state his case against me!
If my accuser had written out his indictment,

[*Line transposed from v34*] I would not keep silence and remain indoors.

³⁶No! I would flaunt it on my shoulder
and wear it like a crown on my head;

³⁷I would plead the whole record of my life
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.

⁷I 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*]

or answer him as you have done.

¹⁵If these men are confounded and no longer answer,
if words fail them,

¹⁶am I to wait because they do not speak,
because they stand there and no longer answer?

¹⁷I, too, have a furrow to plough;
I will express my opinion;

¹⁸for I am bursting with words,
a bellyful of wind gripes me.

¹⁹My stomach is distended as if with wine,
bulging like a blacksmith's bellows;

²⁰I must speak to find relief,
I must open my mouth and answer;

²¹I will show no favour to anyone,
I will flatter no one, God or man [*prob. rdg, Heb I will not flatter man*];

²²for I cannot use flattering titles,
or my Maker would soon do away with me.

33¹Come now, Job, listen to my words
and attend carefully to everything I say.

²Look, I am ready to answer;
the words are on the tip of my tongue.

³My heart assures me that I speak with knowledge,
and that my lips speak with sincerity.

⁴For the spirit of God made me,
and the breath of the Almighty gave me life.

⁵Answer me if you can,
marshal your arguments and confront me.

⁶In God's sight [*In God's sight: or In strength*] I am just what you are;
I too am only a handful of clay.

⁷Fear of me need not abash you,
nor any pressure from me overawe you.

⁸You have said your say and I heard you;
I have listened to the sound of your words:

⁹'I am innocent', you said, 'and free from offence,
blameless and without guilt.

¹⁰Yet God finds occasions to put me in the wrong
and counts me his enemy;

¹¹he puts my feet in the stocks
and keeps a close watch on all I do.'

¹²Well, this is my answer: You are wrong.
God is greater than man;

¹³why then plead your case with him?
for no one can answer his arguments.

¹⁴Indeed, 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, ¹⁶God makes them listen,
and his correction strikes them with terror.

¹⁷To turn a man from reckless conduct,
to check the pride [*the pride: prob. rdg, Heb obscure*] of mortal man,

¹⁸at 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;

²⁰he turns from his food with loathing
and has no relish for the choicest meats;

²¹his flesh hangs loose upon him,
his bones are loosened and out of joint,

²²his 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

[*Line transposed from v26*] 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 [*will grow sturdier: prob. rdg, Heb unintelligible*] 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; [*See note on verse 23*]

²⁷if 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,

³⁰bringing 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;

³³but if you have none, listen to me:
keep silence, and I will teach you wisdom.

34¹Then Elihu went on to say:

²Mark my words, you wise men;

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

¹⁶Now Job, if you have the wit, consider this;
listen to the words I speak.
¹⁷Can it be that a hater of justice holds the reins?
Do you disparage a sovereign whose rule is so fair,
¹⁸who will say to a prince, 'You scoundrel',
and call his magnates blackguards to their faces;
¹⁹who does not show special favour to those in office
and thinks no more of rich than of poor?
All alike are God's creatures,
²⁰who 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.
²¹His eyes are on the ways of men,
and he sees every step they take;
²²there is nowhere so dark, so deep in shadow,
that wrongdoers may hide from him.
²⁵Therefore he repudiates all that they do;
he turns on them in the night, and they are crushed.

²³There are no appointed days for men
to appear before God for judgement.

²⁴He holds no inquiry, but breaks the powerful
and sets up others in their place.

²⁶[v25 transposed to follow v22]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],

²⁷because they have ceased to obey him
and pay no heed to his ways.

²⁸Then the cry of the poor reaches his ears,
and he hears the cry of the distressed.

²⁹⁻³⁰{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?}

³¹But suppose you were to say to God,
'I have overstepped the mark; I will do no more [*more: prob. rdg, Heb
obscure*] mischief.

³²Vile wretch that I am, be thou my guide;
whatever wrong I have done, I will do wrong no more.'

³³Will he, at these words, condone your rejection of him?
It is for you to decide, not me:
but what can you answer?

³⁴Men of good sense will say,
any intelligent hearer will tell me,

³⁵Job talks with no knowledge,
and there is no sense in what he says.

³⁶If only Job could be put to the test once and for all
for answers that are meant to make mischief!

³⁷He is a sinner and a rebel as well [*prob. rdg, Heb adds between us it is
enough*]
with his endless ranting against God.'

35¹Then Elihu went on to say:

²Do you think that this is a sound plea
or maintain that you are in the right against God? –

³if you say, 'What would be the advantage to me?
how much should I gain from sinning?'

⁴I will bring arguments myself against you,
you and your three friends.

⁵Look up at the sky and then consider,
observe the rain-clouds towering above you.

⁶How does it touch him if you have sinned?
However many your misdeeds, what does it mean to him?

⁷If you do right, what good do you bring him,
or what does he gain from you?

⁸Your wickedness touches only men, such as you are;
the right that you do affects none but mortal man.

⁹Men will cry out beneath the burdens of oppression
and call for help against the power of the great;

¹⁰but none of them asks, 'Where is God my Maker
who gives protection by night,

¹¹who grants us more knowledge than the beasts of the earth
and makes us wiser than the birds of the air?'

¹²So, when they cry out, he does not answer,
because they are self-willed and proud.

¹³All to no purpose! God does not listen,
the Almighty does not see.

¹⁴The 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.

¹⁵But now, because God does not grow angry and punish
and because he lets folly pass unheeded,

¹⁶Job gives vent to windy nonsense
and makes a parade of empty words.

36¹Then Elihu went on to say:

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

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

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

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

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

⁷he 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.

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

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

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

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

¹²But, if they do not listen, they die, their lesson unlearned,
and cross the river of death.

¹³Proud men rage against him
and do not cry to him for help when caught in his toils;

¹⁴so they die in their prime,
like male prostitutes [*cp Deut. 23.17*], worn out [*worn out: prob. rdg, Heb unintelligible*].

¹⁵Those who suffer he rescues through suffering
and teaches them by the discipline of affliction.

¹⁶Beware, 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;

¹⁷if you eat your fill of a rich man's fare
when you are occupied with the business of the law,

¹⁸do not be led astray by lavish gifts of wine
and do not let bribery warp your judgement.

¹⁹Will that wealth of yours, however great, avail you,
or all the resources of your high position?

²¹[*v20 and v21 transposed*] Take care not to turn to mischief;
for that is why you are tried by affliction.

²⁰Have no fear if in the breathless terrors of the night
you see nations vanish where they stand.

²²God towers in majesty above us;
who wields such sovereign power as he?

²³Who has prescribed his course for him?
Who has said to him, 'Thou hast done wrong'?

²⁴Remember then to sing the praises of his work,
as men have always sung them.

²⁵All men stand back from [*Or gaze at*] him;
the race of mortals look on from afar.

²⁶Consider; God is so great that we cannot know him;
the number of his years is beyond reckoning.

²⁷He draws up drops of water from the sea [*from the sea: prob. rdg, Heb omitted*]

and distils rain from the mist he has made;

²⁸the rain-clouds pour down in torrents [*in torrents: prob. rdg, Heb which*],
they descend in showers on mankind;

³¹thus he sustains the nations
and gives them food in plenty.

²⁹Can any man read the secret of the sailing clouds,
spread like a carpet under [*spread ... under: prob. rdg, Heb crashing noises*]
his pavilion?

³⁰See how he unrolls the mist across the waters,
and its streamers [*its streamers: prob. rdg, Heb the roots of*] cover the sea.

³²[*v31 transposed to follow v28*] 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.

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

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

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

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

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

God 's answer and Job's submission

38¹Then the LORD answered Job out of the tempest:

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁸Who 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? –

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

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

¹¹and 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*].'

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

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

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

¹⁵when the light of the Dog-star is dimmed
and the stars of the Navigator's Line go out one by one?

¹⁶Have you descended to the springs of the sea
or walked in the unfathomable deep?
¹⁷Have the gates of death been revealed to you?
Have you ever seen the door-keepers of the place of darkness?
¹⁸Have you comprehended the vast expanse of the world?
Come, tell me all this, if you know.
¹⁹Which is the way to the home of light
and where does darkness dwell?
²⁰And can you then take each to its appointed bound
and escort it on its homeward path?
²¹Doubtless you know all this; for you were born already,
so long is the span of your life!

²²Have you visited the storehouse of the snow
or seen the arsenal where hail is stored,
²³which I have kept ready for the day of calamity,
for war and for the hour of battle?
²⁴By what paths is the heat spread abroad
or the east wind carried far and wide over the earth?
²⁵Who has cut channels for the downpour
and cleared a passage for the thunderstorm,
²⁶for rain to fall on land where no man lives
and on the deserted wilderness,
²⁷clothing lands waste and derelict with green
and making grass grow on thirsty ground [*thirsty ground: prob. rdg, Heb source*]?
²⁸Has the rain a father?
Who sired the drops of dew?
²⁹Whose womb gave birth to the ice,
and who was the mother of the frost from heaven,
³⁰which lays a stony cover over the waters
and freezes the expanse of ocean?
³¹Can you bind the cluster of the Pleiades
or loose Orion's belt?
³²Can you bring out the signs of the zodiac in their season
or guide Aldebaran and its train?
³³Did you proclaim the rules that govern the heavens,
or determine the laws of nature on earth?
³⁴Can you command the dense clouds
to cover you with their weight of waters?
³⁵If you bid lightning speed on its way,
will it say to you, 'I am ready'?
³⁶Who put wisdom in depths of darkness
and veiled understanding in secrecy [*secrecy: prob. rdg, Heb word unknown*]?
³⁷Who is wise enough to marshal the rain-clouds
and empty the cisterns of heaven

³⁸when the dusty soil sets hard as iron,
and the clods of earth cling together?

³⁹Do you hunt her prey for the lioness
and satisfy the hunger of young lions,

⁴⁰as they crouch in the lair
or lie in wait in the covert?

⁴¹Who provides the raven with its quarry
when its fledglings croak [*prob. rdg, Heb adds they cry to God*] for lack of
food?

39¹Do you know when the mountain-goats are born
or attend the wild doe when she is in labour?

²Do you count the months that they carry their young
or know the time of their delivery,

³when they crouch down to open their wombs
and bring their offspring to the birth,

⁴when the fawns grow and thrive in the open forest,
and go forth and do not return?

⁵Who has let the wild ass of Syria range at will
and given the wild ass of Arabia its freedom? –

⁶whose home I have made in the wilderness
and its lair in the saltings;

⁷it disdains the noise of the city
and is deaf to the driver's shouting;

⁸it roams the hills as its pasture
and searches for anything green.

⁹Does the wild ox consent to serve you,
does it spend the night in your stall?

¹⁰Can 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?

¹¹Can you depend on it, strong as it is,
or leave your labour to it?

¹²Do you trust it to come back
and bring home your grain to the threshing-floor?

¹³The 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*]

¹⁴that she abandons her eggs to the ground,
letting them be kept warm by the sand.

¹⁵She forgets that a foot may crush them,
or a wild beast trample on them,

¹⁶she treats her chicks heartlessly as if they were not hers,
not caring if her labour is wasted

¹⁷(for God has denied her wisdom
and left her without sense),
¹⁸while like a cock she struts over the uplands,
scorning both horse and rider.

¹⁹Did you give the horse his strength?
Did you clothe his neck with a mane?

²⁰Do you make him quiver like a locust's wings,
when his shrill neighing strikes terror?

²¹He shows his mettle as he paws and prances;
he charges the armoured line with all his might.

²²He scorns alarms and knows no dismay;
he does not flinch before the sword.

²³The quiver rattles at his side,
the spear and sabre flash.

²⁴Trembling with eagerness, he devours the ground
and cannot be held in when he hears the horn;

²⁵at 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*].

²⁶Does your skill teach the hawk to use its pinions
and spread its wings towards the south?

²⁷Do you instruct the vulture to fly high
and build its nest aloft?

²⁸It dwells among the rocks and there it lodges;
its station is a crevice in the rock;

²⁹from there it searches for food,
keenly scanning the distance,

³⁰that its brood may be gorged with blood;
and where the slain are, there the vulture is.

41¹[*vv41.1-6 (in Heb vv40.25-30) transposed to this point*] Can you pull out the whale
[Or Leviathan] with a gaff
or can you slip a noose round its tongue?

²Can you pass a cord through its nose
or put a hook through its jaw?

³Will it plead with you for mercy
or beg its life with soft words?

⁴Will it enter into an agreement with you
to become your slave for life?

⁵Will you toy with it as with a bird
or keep it on a string like a song-bird for your maidens?

⁶Do trading-partners haggle over it
or merchants share it out?

40¹Then the LORD said to Job:

²Is it for a man who disputes with the Almighty to be stubborn?
Should he that argues with God answer back?

³And Job answered the LORD:

⁴What reply can I give thee, I who carry no weight?
I put my finger to my lips.

⁵I have spoken once and now will not answer again;
twice have I spoken, and I will do so no more.

⁶Then the LORD answered Job out of the tempest:

⁷Brace yourself and stand up like a man;
I will ask questions, and you shall answer.

⁸Dare you deny that I am just
or put me in the wrong that you may be right?

⁹Have you an arm like God's arm,
can you thunder with a voice like his?

¹⁰Deck yourself out, if you can, in pride and dignity,
array yourself in pomp and splendour;

¹¹unleash the fury of your wrath,
look upon the proud man and humble him;

¹²look upon every proud man and bring him low,
throw down the wicked where they stand;

¹³hide them in the dust together,
and shroud them in an unknown grave.

¹⁴Then I in my turn will acknowledge
that your own right hand can save you.

¹⁵Consider 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]:

¹⁶what strength is in his loins!
what power in the muscles of his belly!

¹⁷His tail is rigid as [*Or He bends his tail like*] a cedar,
the sinews of his flanks are closely knit,

¹⁸his bones are tubes of bronze,
and his limbs like bars of iron.

¹⁹He is the chief of God's works,
made to be a tyrant over his peers [*prob. rdg, Heb* his sword];

²⁰for he takes [*prob. rdg, Heb* they take] the cattle of the hills for his prey
and in his jaws he crunches all wild beasts.

²¹There under the thorny lotus he lies,
hidden in the reeds and the marsh;

²²the lotus conceals him in its shadow,
the poplars of the stream surround him.

²³If the river is in spate, he is not scared,
he sprawls at his ease though the stream is in flood.

²⁴Can 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?

41⁷[vv1-6 transposed to follow 39.30] Can you fill his skin with harpoons
or his head with fish-hooks?

⁸If ever you lift your hand against him,
think of the struggle that awaits you, and let be.

⁹No, such a man is in desperate case,
hurled headlong at the very sight of him.

¹⁰How fierce he is when he is roused!
Who is there to stand up to him?

¹¹Who has ever attacked him [*prob. rdg, Heb me*] unscathed?
Not a man [*prob. rdg, Heb He is mine*] under the wide heaven.

¹²I will not pass over in silence his limbs,
his prowess and the grace of his proportions.

¹³Who has ever undone his outer garment
or penetrated his doublet of hide?

¹⁴Who has ever opened the portals of his face?
for there is terror in his arching teeth.

¹⁵His back [*prob. rdg, Heb pride*] is row upon row of shields,
enclosed in a wall [*prob. rdg, Heb seal*] of flints;

¹⁶one presses so close on the other
that air cannot pass between them,

¹⁷each so firmly clamped to its neighbour
that they hold and cannot spring apart.

¹⁸His sneezing sends out sprays of light,
and his eyes gleam like the shimmer of dawn.

¹⁹Firebrands shoot from his mouth,
and sparks come streaming out;

²⁰his nostrils pour forth smoke
like a cauldron on a fire blown to full heat.

²¹His breath sets burning coals ablaze,
and flames flash from his mouth.

²²Strength is lodged in his neck,
and untiring energy dances ahead of him.

²³Close knit is his underbelly,
no pressure will make it yield.

²⁴His heart is firm as a rock,
firm as the nether millstone.

²⁵When he raises himself, strong men [*strong men: or leaders or gods*] take
fright,
bewildered at the lashings of his tail.

²⁶Sword or spear, dagger or javelin,
if they touch him, they have no effect.

²⁷Iron he counts as straw,
and bronze as rotting wood.

²⁸No arrow can pierce him,

and for him sling-stones are turned into chaff;

²⁹to him a club is a mere reed,
and he laughs at the swish of the sabre.

³⁰Armoured beneath with jagged sherds,
he sprawls on the mud like a threshing-sledge.

³¹He makes the deep water boil like a cauldron,
he whips up the lake like ointment in a mixing-bowl.

³²He leaves a shining trail behind him,
and the great river is like white hair in his wake.

³³He has no equal on earth;
for he is made quite without fear.

³⁴He looks down on all creatures, even the highest;
he is king over all proud beasts.

42¹Then Job answered the LORD:

²I know that thou canst do all things
and that no purpose is beyond thee.

³But I have spoken of great things which I have not understood,
things too wonderful for me to know.

[*prob. rdg, Heb adds* ⁴O listen, and let me speak;
I will ask questions, and you shall answer]

⁵I knew of thee then only by report,
but now I see thee with my own eyes.

⁶Therefore I melted away [*Or despise myself*];
I repent in dust and ashes.

Epilogue

⁷When 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. ⁸So 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.' ⁹Then 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. ¹⁰So the LORD restored Job's fortunes and doubled all his possessions.

¹¹Then 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. ¹²Furthermore, 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. ¹³He had seven [*Or fourteen*] sons and three daughters; ¹⁴and he named his eldest daughter Jemimah, the second Keziah and the third Keren-happuch. ¹⁵There were no women in all the world so beautiful as

Job's daughters; and their father gave them an inheritance with their brothers.

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