

Interpretation

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Inquiries: (Ms.) Joan Walsh, Assistant to the Editor
INTERPRETATION, Queens College, Flushing, N.Y.
11367-1597, U.S.A. (718)997-5542 Fax (718) 997-5565

E Mail: interpretation_journal@qc.edu

The Book of Job

Translation and Commentary on Chapters 32 through 38

ROBERT D. SACKS

St. John's College, Santa Fe

CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

1 Now, the three men ceased to reply to Job because he was right in his own eyes. **2** But Elihu¹ the son of Barachel,² of the House of Ram³ was angry at Job; fuming, because he⁴ considered himself more just than God. **3** And his anger burned against his three friends because they could find no answer but merely condemned Job. **4** Now Elihu held back his words and waited for Job, because they were all older than he was. **5** But, when Elihu saw that no answer came from the mouths of these three men, anger burned within him.⁵

6 Then Elihu son of Barachel the Buzite⁶ answered and said: "I am but young in years, and you are most venerable, and so I shrunk back and FEARED to declare my thoughts in front of you. **7** I said to myself 'Let the generations speak, and fullness of years proclaim wisdom.' **8** But surely there is a spirit in mortals, a breath of the Almighty that gives him understanding. **9** It is not the great who are wise, nor is it the elders who understand judgment."⁷

10 Thus, I say unto you, 'Hear me. I myself shall declare my thoughts.' **11** I have waited in expectation for your words and listened for your understanding while you searched for something to say. **12** I observed you carefully and there was none to confute Job nor was there an answer to his assertions from any of you."⁸

13 Beware of saying We have found wisdom; God will defeat him not man.⁹ **14** Now, he has set out no words against me and I shall not reply using your reasonings, **15** for they have been shattered, and can no longer reply. All meaning¹⁰ has left them."¹¹

16 I waited in expectation till they had finished speaking, till they stood and could no longer reply. **17** But now I shall give my side of the matter. I myself shall declare my thoughts. **18** I am full of words, and the wind¹² in my belly presses upon me; **19** my belly is like wine that has no vent, like jugs of new wine ready to burst; **20** I shall speak, and it will expand me; I shall open my lips and reply. **21** I will show no favor or flatter any man ('*adam*'); for I know no flattery. **22** Or may my maker soon carry me off."

The first thirty-one chapters of the translation and commentary appeared in Volume 24, Numbers 2 and 3, and Volume 25, Numbers 1 and 2 of *Interpretation*. The balance will appear in a future issue.

Comments

1. There is something mysterious about the sudden appearance of this man, and the mystery will only increase as we read on. As we shall see, there are too many internal problems of the same sort to account for them by assuming the passage was added as a whole without much regard for the greater context.

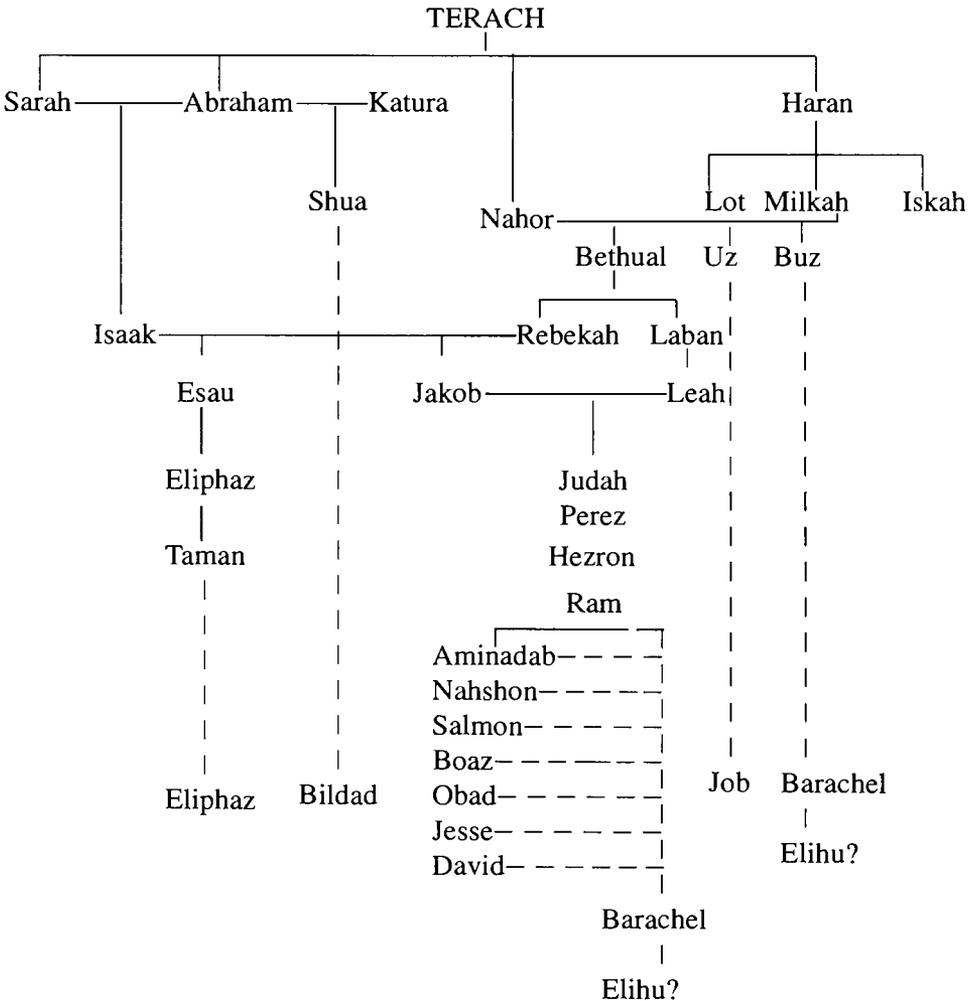
2. Otherwise unknown.

3. Given the other cases, the reader is naturally led to assume that Elihu is a descendent of Ram the son of Hezron. This would place him as either part of or at least close to the royal line of the House of David.

4. It is not perfectly clear who the antecedent is.

5. Literally, "and his nose was fuming." This is the same expression used in verse 3 and is commonly, though not exclusively, used of God.

6. Let us look once more at the tree of generations



As we can see, there was something misleading about the genealogy of Elihu as given in verse 2. When we were first introduced to him, we were told that he was of the House of Ram. We then naturally inferred that he was a descendant of Judah, and hence part of, or at least close to, the royal line, the House of David. According to verse 6, however, this turns out to be deceptive. He is, in fact, the progeny of some otherwise unknown Ram, a descendant of Buz, the younger brother of Uz.

7. One cannot help being moved initially by this young man. He seems respectful and mild, but he also seems to speak with an air of understanding and authority. Several times he speaks of the deference he is wont to pay to his elders, and the FEAR he feels in rising to speak among them. Nonetheless, he feels strongly that he must speak out.

8. Again he presents himself as a patient young man who was willing to listen to others. He implies that Job's arguments deserved to be heard before he can be answered.

9. This sentence is somewhat critical to our attempt to understand Elihu, but the grammar is ambiguous. Greenberg translates: "I fear that you will say 'We have found the wise course; God will defeat him not man.'" A more literal translation may help:

"[Lest] [you say] [we have found] [wisdom] [God] [will defeat him] [not] [man]."

Since Hebrew does not use quotation marks, we are left with two possible readings:

"Lest you say, 'We have found wisdom: God will defeat him not man.'"

"Lest you say, 'We have found wisdom,' God will defeat him not man."

It's hard, if not impossible, to know for certain either way.

The first reading would mean that the others wrongfully claim to have found a certain wisdom, and that their wisdom consists of the knowledge that "God will defeat him, not man." In other words Elihu is accusing the other three of believing that there is no answer to Job or to his questions which is available within the realm of human understanding. The remainder of his speech, then, will be a purely human attempt to answer Job.

According to the second interpretation, he is accusing them of believing that they have found a certain wisdom with which they can defeat Job, whereas in fact only "God will defeat him not man." If this is how the verse is to be understood, we can only take him to be asserting that the remainder of his speech is spoken with more than human authority.

10. "words"

11. As we began to see in verse 9, Elihu, in spite of his piety, like Job, does not share the horizons of the fathers: "It is not the great who are wise, nor is it the elders who understand judgment." The words "no longer" seem to imply that for him, too, an older world has been shattered, but as yet we do not know the cause.

12. or "spirit"

CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

1 “Attend my words, Job. Listen well to each utterance that I make. **2** Behold, I open my lips, and the tongue in my palate begins to speak. **3** My speech is an upright heart. The thoughts of my lips speak with clarity. **4** The spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life.

5 Answer me, if you can. Lay your case out before me and take your stand. **6** Here I am, just as you wished, standing in for God,¹ though I too was nipped² from clay, **7** and terror of me will not overwhelm you, nor does the pressure I put upon you weigh too heavily.³

8 Oh, you have spoken it into my ear, and I still hear the sound of each word.⁴ **9** ‘I am pure,’⁵ ‘free of transgression,’⁶ ‘I am clean,’⁷ ‘There is no perversion about me,’⁸ **10** ‘He finds ways to oppose me,’⁹ and ‘He thinks of me as his enemy.’¹⁰ **11** ‘He puts my feet in the stocks.’¹¹ ‘He scrutinizes my every wandering.’¹²

12 But in this you have not acted justly. I will answer you, for God is greater than any mortal. **13** Why do you vie with Him? He is not obliged to answer on every count. **14** Yet God may speak once, even twice, but none take note.¹³ **15** It may be in a dream, or in a vision of the night, when heavy sleep falls upon mortals as they slumber in their beds.¹⁴

16 He unveils the ears of mortals and places His seal upon their discipline,¹⁵ **17** to turn man (*‘adam*) away from action and conceal¹⁶ pride from the man (*geb_her*).¹⁸ He will keep his soul back from the pit, and his life from perishing by the sword.¹⁷

19 He is tried by pain in his bed and his bones ceaselessly twist in strife.¹⁸ **20** His life renders his bread loathsome, and his soul takes no delight in fine food.¹⁹ **21** His flesh is devoured, no longer to be seen, and his bones are ground away and disappear.²⁰ **22** His soul draws near to the Muck and his life is [attracted] to [all that] brings death.²¹

23 If there only were a messenger,²² an interpreter²³—one in a thousand, to tell man (*‘adam*) what is right for him,²⁴ **24** he would have mercy on him and say: ‘Redeem²⁵ him from descending into the Muck, for I have found his ransom.’²⁶ **25** ‘Let his flesh become brighter than youth, and let him return to his springtime days.’

26 Let him but supplicate unto God and he shall be accepted and see His face²⁷ with shouts of joy, for He shall return to mortal man his sense of righteousness. **27** Let him only stand squarely in front of mortals and say, ‘I have sinned; I have dealt perversely with what was right, and my accounts have not been settled.’ **28** Thus He shall redeem his soul from passing into the Muck; and his life shall see in the light.²⁸

29 Yes, God will do all these things two or three times for a man (*geb_her*), **30** to bring his soul back from the Muck to be made bright by the light of life.

31 Pay heed, Job, and hear me; be silent and I will speak. **32** If you have the

words, respond to me. Well, speak! for I wish to justify you. **33** But, if you have nothing, then listen to me. Be silent and I will teach you wisdom.”²⁹

Comments

1. *hen* “*ni k^ep^hik^ha l^e‘el* Greenberg translates: “You and I are the same before God” The Revised Standard translates: “Behold, I am towards God as you are.” The King James translates: “Behold, I am, according to thy wish in God’s stead.”

It is clear that this is a critical passage in our attempt to understand who Elihu is, or at least who he claims to be and perhaps even believes himself to be. It is also a very difficult passage to understand, as you can tell by the vast discrepancies in the translations. The problem lies in the meaning of the word (*k^ep^hik^ha*). It come from the root *ph* meaning “mouth.” The initial (*k^e*) primarily means “like” or “as,” but its affect can vary greatly in individual cases. For instance, *‘asher* means “which” or “that”; but “*wh^en*” means “when.” The final (*k^ha*) ending is a second personal ending. When attached to verbs or prepositions it is objective; when attached to nouns it is possessive. The problem is what they mean when strung out together. The word *k^ep^hi* usually means something like “according to,” but looking at several examples may help:

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| Exod. 16:21 | Each morning let each man gather “according to” his eating. |
| Exod. 28:32 | woven work “like/after the fashion of” a coat of mail. |
| Lev. 25:53 | “In accordance with” his years let him repay. |
| Num. 7:5 | Each man “according to” his work. |
| Num. 35:8 | Each man “according to” his share. |
| Zech. 2:4 | These are the horns which scattered Judah, “so that” no man could lift his head. |
| Mal. 2:9 | Therefore I also have made you contemptible and base before all the people “since/according to that” you have not kept my ways. |
| 1Chron. 12:23 | And these are the number of the bands of the armed troops who came to David in Hebron to turn the kingdom of Saul over to him “according to the word of” the Lord. |
| 2Chron. 31:2 | Each man “according to” his work. |

As we can see, the expression never means “the same as.” The closest it ever comes to having that meaning is in Exodus 28:32, but even there one thing only provides a pattern for a totally different kind of thing. In all other cases it means “proportion to” or “according to.” Unfortunately, there is only one other instance in which the object is a thinking, speaking being, 1Chronicles 12:23, and there the expression clearly means “according to His words.”

The next part to look at is the first *l* in *l^e‘el*. In general, it is equivalent to the English word “to.” Strictly speaking, Hebrew has no independent word for “be-

come.” Thus *ha'iti melech* means “I was king”; but *ha'iti l^emelech* means “I was to king,” or more simply “I became king.”

The first words of the verse, *hen 'ani*, usually collapsed into one word *hinneni*, mean “here am I.” When put together with the *l^e*, one finds expressions such as *hinnenu l^e'abhdechah*, “we have become slaves to you” (Genesis 50:18).

2. “Nipped” is a good word which I confess to have “nipped” from Greenberg.

3. For Elihu, Job is right. The anguished perplexities that arise within the sphere of human cognition can find for themselves no solution from within its own border. For him, too, there is a great world out there beyond the human realm. He has already rejected Bildad's Wisdom of the Fathers,

Job 32:9 It is not the great who are wise, nor is it the elders who understand judgment.

And he has seen the inadequacy of the human horizon.

32:14 Now, he has set out no words against me and I shall not reply using your reasonings, for they have been shattered, and can no longer reply. All meaning has left them.

And so he believes he understands why Job has felt himself drawn to the world of the Jackal. As early as Chapter 9, Job had said

Job 9:34f. But let Him turn his rod away from me and not frighten me with His terror, then I would speak out without FEAR of Him; for in myself I am none of these things.

and again

Job 13:19f. Now, as things are I can only remain silent and perish. But do two things for me and I shall no longer be hid from your face. Remove Your hand from me, and let not Your terror frighten me.

At the heart of Elihu's understanding of man is the notion that Job's request cannot be fulfilled. Man has not the stamina to face what lies beyond his own horizons. He offers himself as one who, knowing of the terrors that lie beyond the human sphere, can listen to Job's case from within the human sphere. Job cannot go beyond, nor is there need any longer.

4. There is something eerie about this line. Elihu insists that Job had spoken directly to him, and yet there is little indication that Job was even aware of his existence. We are not told when he arrived and do not know whether he had been there from the beginning or not. He even seems to know what Job has been saying in a rough way, and yet most of his quotations are just a bit off.

5. Not found as such, but cf. 8:6, 11:4, 16:17.
6. Not found as such.
7. Not found as such.
8. Not found as such, but cf. 13:26.
9. Not found as such.
10. 13:24
11. 13:27
12. 13:27

13. With a view to what will be said in the following note, it might be wise to remind ourselves of how the author has used the word that we have translated “to take note of” up to this point. In general, “to take note of” a person or a thing is to allow it to become a part of our world, and, hence, not “to take note of” a person or a thing is not to allow it to become a part of our world.

- Job 7:8 The eye that sees me takes no note of me; your eye is upon me, and I am not.
- Job 17:13–15 If I must take the Pit to be my home, and spread out my couch in darkness; call out to the muck ‘Thou art my Father’ and call out ‘Mother’ and ‘Sister’ to the maggots, Oh my hopes, who will ever take note of them?
- Job 20:9 The eyes that observed him have given o’er; they no longer take note of him in his place.
- Job 24:15 An adulterous eye watches at twilight, saying; “No eye will take note of me” and he conceals his face.
- Job 33:14 Yet God may speak once, even twice, but none take note.

14. There is, for Elihu, one contact that man has with the realm beyond man. That contact is sleep; sleep in which we can see, and yet not “take note.” There we can allow ourselves to perceive all those things we would keep distant from our daily lives.

Zophar had already spelled it out:

- Job 20:7–9 like his own dung he will be lost in eternity. Even those who see him will ask “Where is he?” He flies off as a dream and no one can find him. He recedes like a vision of the night. The eyes that observed him have given o’er; they no longer take note of him in his place.

As we shall see, Elihu is not only thinking of what is said in the Torah:

- Exod. 33:20f. “But,” he said, “you cannot see my face, for no one shall see me and live.” And the LORD continued, “See, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock; and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by; then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back; but my face shall not be seen.”

and

Num. 12:6f. And he said, “Hear my words: When there are prophets among you, I the LORD make myself known to them in visions; I speak to them in dreams. Not so with my servant Moses; he is entrusted with all my house. With him I speak face to face—clearly, not in riddles; and he beholds the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?”

Primarily he has in mind Job’s own statement:

Job 7:13–15 When I said that my bed will show me compassion and my couch bear my complaint, You frightened me with dreams and terrified me with visions and I preferred strangulation and death to my own substance.

Job has already been where he wishes to go in the only way in which he can, and he has seen for himself that it is no place for waking man.

Job is unjust because he judges in terms of his own world things that can only be fairly judged in terms of a world into which he can never enter.

15. An act intended to teach, but usually implying force:

Lev. 26:22f. I will let loose wild animals against you, and they shall bereave you of your children and destroy your livestock; they shall make you few in number, and your roads shall be deserted. If in spite of this discipline, you have not turned back to me, but continue hostile to me, then I too will continue hostile to you: I myself will strike you sevenfold for your sins.

16. “covered over”

17. Man, for Elihu, has only vague intimations of the frightful Pit that lies beyond the realm of human ken—the Muck. Irrational fear is God’s signpost, not meant to punish but to warn. It is our only way of knowing that our conceit has brought us to the edge of the pit we do not see.

18. Job knows this only too well, as we have seen in the quotation from Job 7:13–15 cited in note 14.

19. And this:

Job 6:7 They are like a contagion in my daily bread.

20. And this as well:

Job 30:17 By night my bones are whittled away, and the gnawing never ceases.

And yet Job continues. He knows this all too well. But for Job, the world is more complicated, and feelings of guilt do not of themselves imply guilt:

Job 9:20 Though I am just my own mouth would condemn me.

21. This seems to be at the heart of Elihu's conviction that man must be kept from peering beyond his own horizon. The human fear of what is beyond the human is a divine gift. The fear of death is a divine rectification of the fascination that the human soul feels for death. So much he says, but he does not elaborate at this point.

22. Or "angel" or some kind of more divine being. See 1:14, 4:18, and 33:2.

23. The word has two meanings. It can mean "an interpreter," in the simple sense of one who stands between two people who speak two different languages, and to that extent who live under different horizons, and makes the thoughts of one intelligible to the other.

Gen. 42:23 They did not know that Joseph understood them, since he spoke with them through an interpreter.

2Chron. 32:31 So also in the matter of the interpreter (or envoys) of the officials of Babylon, who had been sent to him to inquire about the sign that had been done in the land, God left him to himself, in order to test him and to know all that was in his heart.

Its more regular meaning by far, however, is "to scoff":

Isa. 28:22 Now therefore do not scoff, or your bonds will be made stronger; for I have heard a decree of destruction from the Lord GOD of hosts upon the whole land.

Various attempts have been made to understand how the two are related. The best I can do is to quote Isaiah:

Isa. 43:27 Your first ancestor sinned, and your interpreters transgressed against me.

Job 16:20, on the other hand, seems to require something like

Oh my advocates, my friends, my eyes weep before God. Will no one argue for a MAN (*geb_ner*) before God as a man (*'adam*) should do for a friend?

perhaps in the sense of those that can make his case intelligible to others.

For Elihu, Job is right, the human voice cannot make itself heard in the highest court. Job's "advocate," his "friend," cannot be just a man like himself. He must be "an interpreter," one who can stand between God and man.

24. Greenberg's translation: "To declare the man's uprightness," seems less likely because it takes *l'adam* to mean "for the man" rather than "to a man," which is a bit strange after the word "to tell"; but still it is not impossible.

25.

Exod. 13:15 When Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the LORD killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from human firstborn to the firstborn of animals. Therefore I sacrifice to the LORD every male that first opens the womb, but every firstborn of my sons I redeem.

Like Israel, the whole of mankind lies in debt for the conditions of their own being, a debt that they have not the means to pay. Man does not own the surface world. It is not his to inquire into and to enlarge its borders. If not paid for by one richer than man, it will all soon turn itself into Muck.

26. Cf.

Isa. 43:3 For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I give Egypt as your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in exchange for you.

27. This "interpreter" would conquer all the frightful things that live in the world beyond the world of man. The terrible face of God would now become the home of joyous man.

See note to 3:8.

Isa. 27:1 And on that day . . . the Lord shall punish the Leviathan.

Ps. 74:14 You crushed the head of the Leviathan and gave it as food to the people of the island.

Job would stand where he could not stand before and laugh where there was only horror because the horror would have been banished.

28. Job, for his part, has only to confess to a sin that by its nature he does not and cannot know that he has committed. Primarily, as Elihu points out, this means accepting the notion of "perversion" as it was discussed in that long note to 11:6. Job's old hopes, that the human perspective has a legitimate place in any ultimate account of things, will still "be all heaped together in the Muck," but his soul will be redeemed and pass beyond it.

29. Job has no answer and remains silent.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

1 Then Elihu answered and said: 2 "Hear my words ye wise men; give ear to me, all you who know, 3 for the ear tests words as the palate tastes food. 4 Let us choose¹ for ourselves what is lawful² so that we may know among ourselves

what is good. **5** Now Job has said; ‘I am right’³ and ‘. . . that God who has thrown aside all my claims for justice,’⁴ **6** ‘I declare false the judgment made against me’⁵ and ‘The arrow was mortal, though I was without transgression.’⁶ **7** What man (*geb_her*) is there like Job who drinks up mockery as if it were water,⁷ **8** joins company with those who deal in wickedness and walks with mortal men of evil? **9** For he has said, ‘It is of no use to a man (*geb_her*) that he be in GOD’s favor.’⁸

10 And so, you men⁹ of heart, hear me; far be God from injustice and the Almighty from evil. **11** As a man (*‘adam*) labors so shall he be recompensed, and wherever a man wanders, that is where he will find himself. **12** Now surely, God does not cause wickedness, nor does the Almighty turn judgment aside.

13 Who laid charge upon Him to care for the earth? Or who placed upon Him the whole of this fruitful orb? **14** If He cared to, he could gather His spirit and His breath back into Himself, **15** all flesh would perish and man (*‘adam*) would return to dust.¹⁰

16 If there is such a thing as understanding, listen to this. Attend to the sound of my words. **17** Shall even he that hates judgment bind up?¹¹ Would you condemn¹² the Magnificent Just One, **18** He who can say to a king ‘You are worthless,’ or to the nobles, ‘You are guilty men,’ **19** who shows no favor to any liege, or recognizes the prince above the pauper, since they are the works of His hand, every one?¹³

20 They can die in a moment; the people tremble at midnight, and pass on. The mighty are turned aside, but by no [human] hand, **21** for His eyes are upon the ways of man, and He watches his every steps. **22** There is no darkness and there is no Shadow of Death for the worker of wickedness to hide in, **23** nor has He ever yet accorded it to man that he go with God into judgment.¹⁴

24 He shatters the magnificent, no knowing how many, and sets others up in their place. **25** Surely, He can recognize their deeds; Everything turns to night, and they are crushed. **26** He slaps them down along with the guilty in full view of all **27** because they turned away from Him and do not comprehend His **28** ways of bringing the cries of the poor unto Himself; for He hears the cry of the needy.¹⁵ **29** But, when He is silent, who can condemn? If He should hide His face, who will even take note¹⁶ of Him, be it a nation or be it a single man (*‘adam*)?¹⁷

30 Mankind¹⁸ has been polluted by kingship, those who ensnare the people. **31** For he has said unto God ‘I will bear it all and offend no more. **32** What I have not seen, teach me. If I have done injustice, I shall persist in it no longer.’¹⁹ **33** Should not payment for it be required²⁰ of you because you had such contempt? It is you must answer, not I. Whatever you know then, speak!

34 Men²¹ of heart, and every wise man (*geb_her*) who listen to me will say **35** ‘Job has spoken without knowledge, and his words lack insight.’ **36** May Job’s trials know no limit, because his answers are no different from those of the men²² of wickedness. **37** He adds sin upon transgression, slaps us in the face, and continually speaks against God.”

Comments

1. It is interesting to note that Elihu speaks in terms of choice rather than inquiry.

2. *mis^hpat^h*

3. "I am right." Not found as such. But see 9:15 and 10:15:

Job 9:15 But even though I am in the right still I cannot do it. Yet I must plead for what seems to me just.

Job 10:15 Well, if I have been guilty the grief is mine, but even when I am right I have been so sated with reproach that no feeling of honor is left in me.

4.

Job 27:2 By the life of that God who has thrown aside all [my claims for] justice, the Almighty has embittered my soul!

5. Not found as such.

6. Not found as such. But see:

Job 6:3f. And thus I speak without care, for the arrows of the Almighty are upon me and my spirit drinks in their venom.

7. The significance of "drinking" as it shows up from the time Job's friends appear till the end of Elihu's speech is markedly different from the connotations of the word "tasting" as we discussed them in the note to 12:11.

The complete list of quotations is:

Job 6:2-4 "Would that my indignation could truly be weighed, my calamities all laid out together on a scale! then would it raise up even the sands of the seas. And thus I speak without care, for the arrows of the Almighty are in me and my spirit drinks in their venom."

Job 15:16 And what of that abhorred and corrupted one, man, who drinks up injustice like water!

Job 21:20 Let his eyes see his own ruin and let him drink of the Almighty's cruet of fury.

Job 34:7 What man (*geb_her*) is there like Job who drinks up mockery as if it were water?

In this section of the book, "drinking" implies a taking into oneself, even greedily, the uglinesses of the outside world. For Job it is the first step in coming to terms with them. But for Eliphaz and for Elihu it is only a final way of succumbing to them.

8. Not found as such. Nonetheless, Elihu's charge that Job "joins company with those who deal in wickedness and walks with men of evil," while it may at first sound like guilt by association, is serious indeed. For a long time now Job has known that so far as he could tell, he was the first man to ask in a searching way the questions that thoughtless men have raised in thoughtless ways since time began, and Job knows that he has no proof that the difference counts for very much.

9. "mortal"

10. Job's view of man, Elihu argues, presupposes an independent world obeying its own laws and following its own nature. It assumes a world that has been placed into God's hands for safekeeping and to which He therefore has certain duties and obligations. But there is no such world. The whole structure of the world is an expression of His spirit. For man to demand justice from God would be as if we had been hauled into court by a character in one of our own dreams. With respect to God, man has no being apart from the part that has been given to him by the hand of God.

11. One can best see what Elihu means by considering the other passages in which the word has been used:

Job 5:18 for He causes pain, but He binds up, He wounds, but His hands
 heal.

Job 28:11 He binds up the flowing rivers and the hidden things come to light.

Elihu purposely uses a word that can have either a violent or gentle meaning.

12. Literally, "find guilty"

13. Job does it to establish his understanding of justice by considering it as it reveals itself purely from within the human perspective. This, argues Elihu, is true for two reasons. True justice requires the notion of equality before the law. But that equality only becomes visible when all men are seen as equally derivative from that which is beyond man. Men are equal because they are all equally the work of the hand of God, and God is equally above all. That also implies a mutual recognition of the limitations of the human sphere which apply to all men as such. For Elihu, both the judge and the standard of judgment must come from beyond. Equality before the law is compatible with structured political life only if that equality has a prepolitical foundation, but that world is closed to man.

14. Although there are no direct quotations, it is clear that in these verses Elihu is trying to address himself to what Job sees as the most serious of his charges:

Job 7:12 Am I the sea or some monster that You set watch over me?

Job 14:13 Who can move You to hide me in the Pit and conceal me till your
 anger passes? Set me a fixed limit and remember me.

Job 14:16 Then no longer would You keep track of my every step, or be on the watch for my sin.

Elihu praises God precisely where Job had questioned. If divine justice were to model itself after human justice, as Job implies, it would leave itself open to all the wrangling, loopholes, and ambiguities that mark human justice. Its whole force resides in its unknown, and hence unquestionable character.

15. Human justice is inadequate to deal with human misdoing because it cannot reveal to men the cosmic significance of their actions. It can at best show that one or more other human beings object to the act, which would, of course, ultimately imply nothing more than the rule of the strongest. If an act is to be seen as sinful it must be seen as violating an order beyond the sphere of merely human concern. Only in that way can it become clear that the weak as weak are heard.

16. The word is intended to remind Job of much of what he had said.

Job 7:8 The eye that sees me takes no note of me; your eye is upon me, and I am not.

Job 17:15 Oh my hopes, who will ever take note of them?

Job 20:9 The eyes that observed him have given o'er; they no longer take note of him in his place.

17. I believe that by "If He should hide His face" he means that the acts of God can disguise themselves as acts of chance. He may be implying that at times the unknown source of retribution is part of its force, but it is not clear.

18. man ('*adam*)

19. "If I have done injustice, I shall persist in it no longer." Human justice is fundamentally flawed; a man may have been unjust without knowing it. The perversions of the fathers, those for which, according to Elihu, we are still to be held to account, are not and can never become visible from within the political horizon. Kingship, or indeed any political regime, in order to establish its own legitimacy, must neglect all prior claims. Only the individual can do expiation by acknowledging this debt, as we have seen in the case of the Egyptian children. See note to 11:6.

20. Others translate "as you see fit" or something like it. Literally, the word means "from-with-you." It usually appears in such contexts as "What does the Lord ask of you?" (Deut. 10:12) or "I will require it of him" (Deut. 18:10), but one can also find passages such as "I and my kingdom are guiltless before the Lord" (2Sam 3:28). My own sense of the passage as a whole seems to go along better with the usage in Deuteronomy 18:10, but in the main I have tried to help the reader decide for himself.

21. "mortal"

22. "mortal"

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

1 Then Elihu answered and said: 2 “Is that what you think to be judgment? to say ‘My righteousness is greater than God’s?’¹ 3 or when you say ‘How does all this benefit you? How am I better off than if I had sinned?’ 4 I will answer your words, you and your friends along with you. 5 Just look up into the heavens and see. Take note of the nebula,² how high above you it is. 6 If you have sinned how could you perturb it,³ and even if you multiply your transgressions, how could you affect it? 7 Or if you were righteous, what would you add to it? What could it gain from your hand? 8 Your evils⁴ fall upon men like yourself, and your righteousness is for sons of man (*‘adam*).⁵

9 Under great oppression they cry out; they scream to be saved from mighty arms: 10 but none say ‘Where is God my maker, the one who makes songs in the night; 11 who teaches us more than the beasts of the earth; and makes us wiser than the birds of the sky.’⁶

12 There they cry out, but He gives no answer to the majestic pride of evil men. 13 Oh vanity; God will not listen, nor will the Almighty take note. 14 Particularly since you have said that you yourself take no note. Yet the case is before Him and for Him you must writhe⁷ [in uncertainty].⁸ 15 But since for the present He does not exert His anger, he foolishly misunderstands. 16 And as for Job, futility pours from his mouth. He grows heavy with words and has no comprehension.”

Comments

1. Not found as such.

2. The notion of “the nebula” is somewhat complicated for Elihu. See note to Job 36:28.

3. Others translate “Him” throughout, but there seems to me no reason for doing so.

4. Literally, “guilty [acts]”

5. For Elihu the cosmos is wholly indifferent to the fate of man and to human concerns. The pull that Job felt into a realm larger than the human realm is dangerously misdirected. In flirting with the world of the Jackal, Job is allowing himself to become enmeshed in a world in which the word “justice” is a mute sound which symbolizes nothing.

6. Job had said:

Job 10:3–4 Does it seem good to You that You oppress, that You have contempt for the toil of your own hand, but shine upon the counsel of the guilty Have You eyes of flesh? ’

But he cannot know what oppression is. Those who wonder beyond the human realm cannot marvel at the night songs of nature, or at man's preeminence among the creatures to be found there. To man it is a frightful place. He is crushed and can see nothing.

7. On the irony of this verse, see notes to 39:1.

8. "There, they cry out. . . ." For Elihu, to be attracted, for what reason it matters not, beyond the human sphere of understanding is to act with "arrogance." This is what he had in mind when he said:

Job 34:36–37 May Job's trials know no limit, because his answers are no different from those of the men of wickedness. He adds sin upon transgression, slaps us in the face, and continually speaks against God.

For him, the world beyond the world of human concern is a world devoid of the concept of justice. There is nothing in terms of which man can speak so that God can listen. Man among the jackals is left in fear and total uncertainty.

CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

1 And Elihu continued to speak: **2** "But wait a bit for me and I will show you. There is still another word to be said for God. **3** I will fetch my knowledge from afar to show my Maker righteous. **4** Indeed, my words are not false. One who has simple knowledge is among you.

5 God is mighty and shows no contempt—mighty in strength of heart. **6** He gives no life to the guilty but grants judgment to the poor **7** and turns not His eyes from the righteous.

As for kings about to ascend the throne, He seats them forever, and they are exalted.¹

8 But if they are bound in fetters and trapped in cords of affliction, **9** He reminds them what they have done and that they can prevail over their transgressions. **10** He unveils their ears to admonition. **11** If they can hear and obey, they will complete their days in prosperity and their years in delight. **12** But if they cannot hear, they will perish by the sword, and pass on without knowing why.² **13** The impious of heart put on anger and will not cry out for help when He afflicts them. **14** They died when their soul was yet young, for it lived among whores.³

15 But the poor He tears from their poverty and unveils their ears by force, **16** then they are lured away from the edge of narrowness⁴ into a broad place, free of stress, and their table is laden with sumptuous fare.

17 You have fulfilled the judgment of the guilty and so judgment and justice have laid hold of you. **18** Beware lest fury turn you to derision or a great ransom pull you aside. **19** Will your cries for help, even with determination of

strength, bring order to life in distress?⁵ **20** Do not pant by night eager to raze people from their places. **21** Beware, do not turn to wickedness, for that is what you have chosen rather than poverty.⁶

22 Behold, God is exalted in His power. Who can guide like Him? **23** Who can oversee His ways? or say to Him, ‘Thou hast done injustice?’

24 Remember then to exalt His works of which mortals sing. **25** Every man (*‘adam*) has beheld Him. Mortals have looked upon Him from afar.⁷

26 Behold, God is exalted but we cannot know. The number of His years cannot be unearthed. **27** He draws up droplets of water, and the moisture refines itself into His mist **28** that flows together into nebula⁸ and trickles back down upon mankind.⁹

29 Who can comprehend the expanse of the clouds, the roarings under His canopy? **30** He spreads His light out over it and covers over the roots of the sea, **31** for with them He pronounces judgment upon the nations, and provides food in abundance. **32** He covers over the lightning in His hand and commands it to strike at its mark **33** But the roaring tells of Him, amassing His anger against injustice.”¹⁰

Comments

1. Elihu began the chapter by saying, “There is still another word more to be said for God,” as if what he was about to say were a kind of additional thought consequent to what he had said before. He speaks of “fetching his knowledge from afar” and stresses the truth of what he is about to say. Before going into it, however, he reiterates his commitment to justice and to the cause of the poor.

What he then has to say is, indeed, new, and indeed a bit shocking, but it must be understood properly:

“As for kings about to ascend the throne, He seats them forever, and they are exalted.”

Taken in and by itself, this verse reads much like what we would call “the Divine Right of Kings.” However much this statement may be qualified in the verses that follow, and no matter how critical those qualifications turn out to be, the verse must be faced in itself.

For Elihu, the home of man is the only proper home for man. Nothing in the visible universe beyond the realm of man can support the human, that is to say, the political sphere. In that sense, there can be no such thing as Natural Right, or prepolitical Self-Evident Truths upon which the political regime is to be founded, and therefore in the light of which it can be questioned.

2. Monarchy is limited not by inalienable rights, but by divine providence. Even foreign tyrants who intend no good become tools in the unseen hands of God.

2Kings 24:2 And the LORD sent against him bands of the Chaldees, and bands of the Syrians, and bands of the Moabites, and bands of the children of Ammon, and sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by his servants the prophets.

3. Literally, “holy ones,” but the reference is clearly to pagan temple whores.

4. *sar* just Job’s feelings. See note to 6:23.

5. The meaning of the text is obscure. Greenberg translates: “Though you are obsessed with the case of the wicked, the justice of the case will be upheld. Let anger at his affluence not mislead you; let much bribery not turn you aside. Will your limitless wealth avail you, all your powerful efforts?”

The Revised Standard translates: “But you are full of the judgment of the wicked; judgment and justice seize you. Beware lest wrath entice you into scoffing: and let not the greatness of the ransom turn you aside. Will your cry avail to keep you from distress, or all the force of your strength?”

6. Job, like a guilty man, has strayed beyond the realm of human society. He has, in that sense, become an outlaw among other outlaws. What tempted him to follow them may be of little importance. Once there, he will find himself to be as one of them. He may have entered fully determined to find justice and order, but he will find that there is nothing of them to be found there. His cries will go unheard, nothing there will remind him of justice. For Elihu, no son of Adam can remain just in a world in which there is no foundation for the concept of justice.

7. Therefore, insofar as the human horizons point beyond themselves, they point not to nature and its laws, but to God and His guiding providence. It is not a time for inquiry, but a time for song and exaltation.

8. The root of the word we have translated as “nebula” means “to wear away” or “to pulverize or beat into a powder”:

Exod. 30:34f. The LORD said to Moses: Take sweet spices, stacte, and onychia, and galbanum, sweet spices with pure frankincense (an equal part of each), and make an incense blended as by the perfumer, seasoned with salt, pure and holy; and you shall beat some of it into powder, and put part of it before the covenant in the tent of meeting where I shall meet with you; it shall be for you most holy.

or

2Sam. 22:43 I beat them into a powder like the dust of the earth, I crushed them and stamped them down like the mire of the streets.

In that sense, we have already seen the root used in Job:

Job 14:19 The waters have worn the stones away and its torrents have washed away the dust of the land.

As a noun, it first refers the dustlike particles in their smallness and their manyness. When Isaiah says:

Isa. 40:15 Behold, the nations are like a drop out of a bucket, and are considered like the dust on the [pans of a] balance: behold, he lifts up the islands as if they were a fleck.

the imagery gathers its force from the fact that although the number of particles of dust on the pan is beyond man's capacity to count, together they mean nothing, since no one feels cheated when they are weighed in along with his purchase.

Often it is used of a temporary whole which is broken up daily:

Prov. 3:20 By his knowledge the depths are broken up, and the clouds [nebulae] drop down the dew.

Sometimes it is a more enduring thing, but one can still see that the nebula in itself was once a mass of separate bits, a shapeless, almost liquidlike cluster of individual fragments until God made them stand firmly together as a whole:

Prov. 8:28 . . . when he made firm the skies [nebulae] above, when he established the fountains of the deep,

At other times it looks more lasting:

Ps. 89:37 It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven.

9. man ('adam)

10. According to Elihu, the visible universe beyond man is directed by the hand of God solely towards the good of man and his concerns:

He spreads His light out over it and covers over the roots of the sea, for with them He pronounces judgment upon the nations, and provides food in abundance.

If Job is tempted into that world, however, he will be faced only by the nebula and the constant roaring. To man, God's labyrinthine complex of delicately interwoven ends will seem no more than a roaring mass of anger, an incoherent nebula.

Throughout the passage Elihu speaks of the way in which God covers over or hides from mankind the frightful origins as they manifest themselves in the

“roots of the sea” and “the lightning that strikes.” We have already seen something of Elihu’s notion that Job, by his demand to question, threatens to break through the barrier that God has placed between man and his destruction:

Job 33:17 He unveils the ears of mortals and places His seal upon their discipline, to turn man (*‘adam*) away from action and conceal (cover over) pride them from the man (*geb_{her}*). He will keep his soul back from the Pit, and his life from perishing by the sword.

Job, too, at one time had such thoughts:

23:17 I was not destroyed by the darkness only because He had concealed [covered over] its thick murk from me.

Even now it is a struggle for Job, but for him the question, and the need to see for oneself, and with one’s own human eyes, keeps reasserting itself at each turn.

CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

1 “At this too my heart trembles and leaps from its place. **2** Listen, listen well to the rage¹ in His voice and the groaning that comes up out of His mouth. **3** Straight down it comes under the whole of heaven. His light² goes out to the ends of the earth, **4** and then, a roaring voice.³ He thunders with the voice of His majestic pride,⁴ but none that hear His voice can pursue. **5** God thunders marvels with His voice, working great things, though we can never know them. **6** For to the Snow He says ‘fall to the ground,’ and to the rain ‘pour down,’ and the rain is a downpour of His might.

7 The whole of mankind⁵ He has sealed up so that they may know each mortal as one of His works, **8** like a beast that goes in for shelter and settles down into its lair **9** when the tempest comes out of its chamber, cold from its scattering place.⁶ **10** The breath of God turns all to ice, and the wide waters are cast like bronze. **11** He weighs down the clouds with moisture, and the lightning-cloud spews out its bolt. **12** On a topsyturvy course He steers them to accomplish all that He has commanded them upon the face of this fruitful orb. **13** Whether by love or by the lash, so He founds it upon His land.⁷ **14** Hear this, Job. Stand at attention and contemplate the wonders of God. **15** Do you know how God lays charge upon His cloud when the radiation appears?⁸ **16** Do you know how the clouds are kept in balance, the wonders of simple knowledge? **17** or even how your clothing keeps you warm when the land has respite from the southern wind?⁹ **18** Can you beat the nebula into a great expanse, firm as a mirror cast like molten metal?

19 Tell us then, what shall we say to Him? We cannot lay out our case

because of the darkness. **20** Does anything get through to Him when I speak? Can a man speak when he is about to be swallowed up?¹⁰

21 Now, not a man sees the light though it shine blinding bright in the nebula, not till a passing spirit shall make them pure.¹¹ **22** Out of the north there comes a golden splendor. A frightful majesty rests upon God. **23** The Almighty—none will find Him. He is ever multiplying in might and in right¹², abundant in judgment; giving neither wrack nor reason.¹³ **24** Thus mortals¹⁴ hold in FEAR¹⁵ the one whom even the wise of heart have never seen.”

Comments

1. A passion that Job has seen in God, in earth, and in man:

- Job 3:17 There the guilty cast off their rage and there rest those whose power is spent.
- Job 3:26 I was not at ease, I was not quiet, I had no rest, but rage came.”
- Job 9:6 Who can cause the earth to reel from its place till its pillars quake!
- Job 12:6 Oh, there is peace enough in the tents of robbers and security for those who enrage God, which God Himself has placed in their hand.
- Job 14:1 Man (*‘adam*) is born of woman, short-lived and full of rage.

2. It is very hard to know what to do at this point. Most translate by the word “lightning,” and, clearly enough, that is what Elihu means. However, the word he uses is the simple everyday word for light, and that is indeed the way the word first hits the ear. This way of speech gives one a much better sense of Elihu’s feeling for the dramatic and his sense that the fearful lies close behind the mundane. What can be more peaceful, more of an airy nothing than light, and yet in a moment it can become a roaring lion.

3. With his warning words, “Listen, listen well to the rage,” Elihu is trying to give Job some picture in sound of what he will see if he wanders off into the land of the Jackal and should cross over beyond the world of man with human eyes and human ears. To him, the divine will appear as the bestial.

4. Here again we have a term wholly indifferent to good or bad, human, superhuman, or subhuman:

- Job 8:11 Can papyrus grow [show its majestic pride] where there is no marsh?
- Job 10:16 You must feel the majestic pride of a lion in hunting me?
- Job 35:12 There they cry out, but He gives no answer to the majestic pride of evil men.
- Job 38:11 Here your [majestically] proud waves must come to rest.
- Job 40:10 Come, deck yourself out in majestic pride and dignity.

5. “man” (*‘adam*)

6. Elihu likens the way in which man has been sealed up within the sphere of human understanding to a beast settled down in its den for the long winter when the cold wind blows and nature is inhospitable. The cave is man's only shelter from a world which, no matter what it may be in itself, is only a cold and frightful chaos to man.

7. The ways in which God accomplishes His commands and orders this fruitful orb, if he were to face it, would seem to man a topsyturvy course totally indifferent to its end.

8. For Elihu, the world is full of wondrous events.

9. Elihu means that if even the simplest things, the things we rely on most in our daily lives, and hence the things which are most at hand within the human sphere, are in fact unknown to man, why, then, should he expect to understand what is beyond that sphere?

10. In verse 4 of Chapter 36, Elihu had said, "One who has simple knowledge is among you." This turns out to be far from the truth. There is no court in front of which Job can lay out his case, certain that it will be heard and adjudicated. He feels himself a man about to be swallowed up by a totally indifferent nebular world. He has no way of knowing whether that world is directed from outside of itself by the hands of an all-knowing, all-caring God who listens to the prayers and needs of man or not. "Does anything get through to Him when I speak?" For him, however, there is no alternative to a steadfast belief in an all-loving God other than the senseless roar of the stormy nebula which no man can face or consider.

11. Elihu's final belief is that one day a spirit will pass by to purify the nebula. On that day man will see that from the beginning there had always been a blinding light shining bright in the nebula, though not one a man could see.

12. "judgment"

13. *lo' ya'aneh*. This is a complicated play on words which I was not able to reproduce in English by a single word. On the one hand the verb (*'nh*) means "to answer," and is the same word that has occurred so often in that stock phrase, "And X answered and said." In fact, the very next chapter, which is only one verse away, will begin with the words, "And the Lord answered Job out of the Tempest and said."

On the other hand, it also means "to afflict" or "to torment" or even "to torture." It is a particularly haunting pun. In the case of a pun, there is usually a primary meaning, the one that is intended to hit the reader first. Then there is a kind of double take when he sees, "Yes, but it could also mean. . . ." The first meaning must always come before the second, sometimes by five years, but usually the time can only be measured in milliseconds. An essential part of the humor in the pun is the unspoken agreement between the punner and the punnee as to which is the first meaning and which meaning has the punch; but in this case, there is no millisecond; one cannot tell which is the first. The sudden

recognition that a horizon has been shared where least expected is missing, and the humor falls flat.

The pun, which was not a pun, so splendidly captures the relationship between the two of them, Elihu and Job. For Elihu there can be no greater comfort than to feel that there is a loving God behind the mute raucousness of chaos, but for Job, there can be no greater torment than to have no answer.

14. This is the last time that the word I have translated “mortal” will appear in the text. Etymologically, it is, in fact, rather close to the English word “mortal.” The root means “weak,” or “sick,” or, when used of a wound or a disease, it means “incurable.” We have seen the root used in that sense already:

Job 34:6 . . . The arrow was mortal, though I was without transgression.

The reader may find the complete list helpful. He must be a bit careful, because in the plural it cannot be distinguished from the plural of the word we have translated as “man” (*geb_her*).

- Job 4:12–12 A word stole upon me but my ear caught only a trace, as one gropes in a night vision when deep sleep falls upon mortals.
- Job 4:17 . . . or a man (*geb_her*) more pure than his maker?
- Job 5:17–18 Indeed, happy is the mortal whom God disciplines, that has no contempt for the bonds of the Almighty; for He causes pain, but He binds up, He wounds, but His hands heal.
- Job 7:1 Does not a mortal have a term of duty to serve here on earth and are not his days like the days of a hired servant?
- Job 7:17 What is a mortal that thou shouldst magnify him?
- Job 9:1–2 Then Job answered and said, “Yes, all that I know, but then what can make a mortal’s justice apparent to God?”
- Job 10:4 Can You see as mortals see?
- Job 10:5 Can time mean to You what time means to man? Do your years pass by as our years?
- Job 13:9 Do you think you can deceive Him as you can deceive a mortal?
- Job 14:19 So, You have trashed all mortal hope.
- Job 15:14 What is a mortal that he should be clean or one born of woman that he should consider himself just?
- Job 25:4 How can a mortal think himself just before God or what can cleanse anyone born of woman?
- Job 25:6 And now what of these mortals, the maggots or the son of man (*‘adam*), the worm.
- Job 28:4 Abandoned by every passer by, destitute of all humanity, they wander.
- Job 28:13 No mortal knows its value.
- Job 32:8 But surely there is a spirit in mortals, a breath of the Almighty that gives him understanding.
- Job 33:12 I will answer you, for God is greater than any mortal.

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- Job 33:15 It may be in a dream, or in a vision of the night, when heavy sleep falls upon mortals as they slumber in their beds.
- Job 33:16 He unveils the ears of mortals and places His seal upon their discipline, to turn man (*'adam*) away from action and conceal
- Job 33:26 Let him but supplicate unto God and he shall be accepted and see His face with shouts of joy, for He shall return to mortal man his sense of righteousness.
- Job 33:27 Let him only stand squarely in front of mortals and say, "I have sinned; I have dealt perversely with what was right, and my accounts have not been settled."
- Job 34:4–8 "God who has thrown aside all my claims for justice," "I declare false the judgment made against me" and "The arrow was mortal, though I was without transgression." What man (*geb_her*) is there like Job who drinks up mockery as if it were water, joins company with those who deal in wickedness and walks with mortal men of evil?
- Job 34:10 And so, you men of heart, hear me; far be God from injustice and the Almighty from evil.
- Job 34:34–35 Men of heart, and every wise man (*geb_her*) who listen to me will say "Job has spoken without knowledge, and his words lack insight."
- Job 34:36 May Job's trials know no limit, because his answers are no different from those of the men of wickedness.
- Job 36:24 Remember then to exalt His works of which mortals sing.
- Job 36:25 Mortals have looked upon Him from afar.
- Job 37:7–9 The whole of mankind He has sealed up so that they may know each mortal as one of His works, like a beast that goes in for shelter and settles down into its lair when the tempest comes out of its chamber, cold from its scattering place.
- Job 37:24 Thus mortals hold in FEAR the one whom even the wise of heart have never seen.

15. In a like manner, this is the last time that the word "FEAR" will appear in the text.

CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

1 And the LORD¹ answered Job out of the Tempest and said: 2 "Who is this one that makes counsel dark by words that have no meaning?² 3 Come,³ gird up your loins like a man (*geb_her*).⁴ I will question you, and you must let me know. 4 Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Speak up, if you know! 5 Who fixed its measurements, if you have any understanding? Who stretched a measuring line round it 6 and into what were its pylons fixed? Who set the cornerstone 7 as the morning stars sang together, and the sons of GOD all shouted for joy?⁵ 8 Who closed up the sea behind the double door when first it burst⁶ out of the womb 9 when I clothed it in a cloud and swaddled it in mist,⁷

10 imposing my law upon it, and put up the bars and the double doors: **11** and said, 'To this point you may come, but no farther. Here your proud waves must come to rest.'

12 Have you yet commanded the morning, or taught the dawn to know its place, **13** to grab hold of the corners of the earth and winnow out the wicked?⁸ **14** All is as transformed as clay⁹ stamped by a seal,¹⁰ and fixed¹¹ as dye in a garment. **15** But the light is withheld from the wicked, and the uplifted arm is broken.¹²

16 Have you ever come upon the source of the seas,¹³ or gone for a walk¹⁴ down by the cranny in the deep? **17** Have the gates of death¹⁵ unveiled themselves to you, or have you seen the gates of the Shadow of Death¹⁶? **18** Have you pondered the expanse of the earth? If you know all these things, declare them!

19 Which is the road to the dwelling of light? and which is the place of darkness, **20** that you may take it to its borders and know the way to its home?¹⁷ **21** You know, for even then, you were born, and the number of your days is great.¹⁸

22 Have you come upon the storehouses of snow, or seen the vaults of hail **23** which I have laid aside for a time of narrowness and for the days of battle and of war?¹⁹

24 By what paths is light dispersed? How is the east wind cast about the earth? **25** Who cleaved the canals for the flooding torrent and made a pathway for the voice of the thunder,²⁰ **26** so that it might rain in a land where no man is, or in a wilderness that has no human life²¹ in it, **27** to make a surfeit of the devastation and the devastated, and make a budding field bloom?²²

28 Does the rain have a father? and who begets the drops of dew? **29** From whose belly does ice emerge, and who gave birth to the frost of heaven?²³ **30** Water draws itself up, tight as stone, and the face of the deep clutches to itself.²⁴

31 Did you bind the Pleiades together with a chain, or untie the reins of Orion? **32** Can you lead out the Mazzaroth²⁵ in its time or guide the Bear with her children? **33** Do you know the laws of the heaven,²⁶ and can you impose its authority on the earth?²⁷

34 Can you raise your voice to the clouds and be covered in a torrent of water? **35** If you send out the lightning, will it go? Will it say to you, 'Here am I'?'²⁸

36 Who placed wisdom at the secret core and gave intelligibility to the outward form?²⁹ **37** And who is wise enough to tell the tale of the nebula? Who can tip the bottles of the sky, **38** to liquify the dust and cast it into congealed clods?

39 Can you hunt up prey for the lioness, and bring to fulfillment the life in its cubs **40** as they crouch in their dens or lie in ambush in their lairs? **41** Who prepares a catch for the raven when his young cry out to God for help, and he wanders about without food?³⁰

Comments

1. This is the first time the word has been used since Chapter 2.

2. Verse 2 is clearly intended as a rhetorical question, and yet, unlike most rhetorical questions, the answer is by no means obvious. Is the intended answer “Job,” or is it “Elihu”? Perhaps we are not yet in a position to ask the question.

3. This is my all-too-poor attempt to capture the very moving fact that the Lord uses the word *na*. It is roughly equivalent to the English word “please” and converts a command into a plea or a request, or, as in our case, an invitation. Needless to say it is a word the Lord uses very rarely, and each instance requires our close attention.

4. In contradistinction to the word discussed in the note to Job 37:24, the word which the Tempest uses for man, and which we have translated as man (*geb_her*), comes from a root meaning “to be strong.” I was quite tempted to translate it as “hero,” which would have been closer than simply using the word “man” (*adam*). My only reason for not doing so is that there is another, somewhat modified, form of the word which does in fact mean “hero,” although that form is never used in the Book of Job.

The voice seems to be reminding Job of his own first words, urging him yet to fulfill the promise inherent in his birth:

Job 3:3 Job answered and said “May the day of my birth be lost and with it that night in which it was said ‘A man (*GEB_HER*) has been conceived.’”

and now he is being asked to gird his loins and become that man.

What more can be said? If Elihu were not nearly right, there would be no need for Job to gird his loins; and yet, if Elihu were simply right, perhaps there would be no point in it either.

Again, it may be of some help to the reader to see the complete list:

Job 3:3 Job answered and said “May the day of my birth be lost and with it that night in which it was said ‘A MAN (*GEB_HER*) has been conceived.’”

Job 3:20,23 Why does He give light to those whom toil has consumed, or life to the bitter of soul? . . . or to a man (*geb_her*) whose way has been lost and whom God has hedged about.

Job 10:5 Can time mean to You what time means to man?

Job 14:10 But when a man (*geb_her*) dies, he perishes and is no more.

Job 14:14 If a man (*geb_her*) dies, will he come back to life again?

Job 16:21 Will no one argue for a man (*geb_her*) before God as a man (*adam*) should do for a friend?”

Job 22:2 “Can a man (*geb_her*) be of any use to his God as a prudent man can be of use to a friend?

Job 33:16–18 He unveils the ears of mortals and places His seal upon their

- discipline, to turn man (*'adam*) away from action and conceal pride from the man (*geb_her*) . and his life from perishing by the sword.
- Job 33:29–30 Yes, God will do all these things two or three times for a man (*geb_her*), to bring his soul back from the Muck to be made bright by the light of life.
- Job 34:7–8 What man (*geb_her*) is there like Job who drinks up mockery as if it were water, joins company with those who deal in wickedness and walks with men of evil?
- Job 34:9 For he has said, 'It is of no use to a man (*geb_her*) that he be in GOD's favor.'
- Job 34:34 Men of heart, and every wise man (*geb_her*) who listen to me will say 'Job has spoken without knowledge, and his words lack insight.'
- Job 38:3 Come, gird up your loins like a man (*geb_her*). I will question you, and you must let me know.
- Job 40:7 Come, gird up your loins like a man (*geb_her*). I will question you, and you must let me know.

5. The LORD begins with a whole bevy of questions, one right after the other. They are infinitely beyond Job, and he can only stand in wonder. At the same time, the questions are couched in terms such as “foundations,” “pylons,” “lines,” and “cornerstones” that Job can very well understand. He also learns that measurement, and hence number was used.

6. This word is often used of the raging seas and the monsters in them and of a child as it bursts forth out of its mother's womb.

- Dan. 7:2 Daniel said, “I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up [bursting] the great sea.”
- Ezek. 32:2 Son of man, raise a lamentation over Pharaoh king of Egypt, and say to him: “You consider yourself a lion among the nations, but you are like a monster (TAN) in the seas; you burst forth in your rivers, trouble the waters with your feet, and foul their rivers.”
- Job 40:23 Though the river rage, he is unalarmed, confident that the Jordan will burst to his mouth.
- Ps. 22:9 Yet thou art he who burst me from the womb; thou didst keep me safe upon my mother's breasts.
- Mic. 4:10 Writhe and burst, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in travail; for now you shall go forth from the city and dwell in the open country; you shall go to Babylon. There you shall be rescued, there the LORD will redeem you from the hand of your enemies

Here the beginning of all things is not presented as a “Let it be” or as a “creation” or as a “making.” The passage, in mixing the waters of birth with the primordial waters of chaos, presents God more as a midwife, controlling the birth and letting things come forth in number and order.

7. As compared to verses 4 through 7, these verses, with words like “burst,”

“womb,” “cloth,” and “swaddle,” seem to mark a movement from the arts to those things which are older than the arts. This movement is in fact a movement from the masculine workman and his arts, which cause things to come to be by the application of measurement to a world outside of itself, and by the forceful fixing of pylons into something more solid than themselves.

It is a movement to another and older kind of coming to be, that brings forth measurelessly from within itself. Thus far, the movement seems tentative and ambiguous. The Voice presents itself as imposing its law upon the sea, and yet it also shows itself to possess the more feminine virtues of “clothing” and of “swaddling.” It does not speak of itself as “trampling on the tier of the sea,” but as finding a proper place for its “proud majesty.”

Another way of looking at the problem is to consider the distinction between a creating God and a nurturing God. Fundamental to this question is Aristotle’s statement: “Of the things that are, some are by nature, and some are by other causes,” the foremost of which is art. Aristotle implies that the discovery of nature essentially means that there is no conclusion to be drawn from the things that are made by man and hence rely upon man, concerning the things that are not manmade, but have within themselves their own source of motion and rest.

Here, too, the artisan God has within Himself the “to be” of the object. He shapes and molds according to His plan, while the more feminine, nurturing God we meet in the Book of Job allows for the emergence of the “to be,” which is in the thing itself.

8. Winnowing is a strange and interesting process. There is the wheat, which one wants because it is good, and there is the chaff, which one does not want because it is not good; but there they lie all mixed up together. One’s first inclination would be to pick out the chaff, chaff by chaff. Winnowing, though, is a very different process and calls for another kind of spirit. In winnowing, the whole is tossed lightly in a blanket. The wind carries off the chaff, or most of it, and the wheat, because it is more stable and weighty, tumbles safely back into the blanket. The farmer rejoices with his flour though he knows that in spite of all his care, a bit of chaff may have gotten through, and a grain or two of wheat may have fallen to the ground.

9. If one looks at the way the author uses the word for clay, one can see that it is beginning to be used quite generally as the dead medium out of which and into which we come and go. In that sense, it takes on something of what we call “matter,” or something like what Elihu means by the “nebula.”

- Job 4:19 what of those who dwell in a house of clay, whose foundation is but dust? He will crush them like a moth.
- Job 10:9 Remember that You made me as clay and that You will return me to dust.
- Job 13:12 Your aphorisms are proverbs of ash, your bulwarks, bulwarks of clay.

- Job 27:16 If he should pile up silver like dust, and lay out his clothing as if it were clay,
Job 30:19 It throws me into the mire and I become like dust and ashes.
Job 33:6 Here I am, just as you wished, standing in for God, though I too was nipped from clay.

While the imagery of clay often appears in the other books of the Bible, especially in Isaiah and Jeremiah, in them man is constantly likened to the clay itself, whereas in this speech he is like the object made of clay bearing a seal or signet. The implication is that a man, like the pot, but unlike the clay, has his own shape, his own “to be.”

- Isa. 45:9 Woe to him who strives with his Maker, an earthen vessel with the potter! Does the clay say to him who fashions it, “What are you making”? or “Your work has no handles?”
Isa. 64:8 Yet, O LORD, thou art our Father; we are the clay, and thou art our potter; we are all the work of thy hand.
Jer. 18:4 And the vessel he was making of clay was spoiled in the potter’s hand, and he reworked it into another vessel, as it seemed good to the potter to do.
Jer. 18:6 O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter has done? says the LORD. Behold, like the clay in the potter’s hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel.

10. The single Hebrew word *hotam* which is here translated by the English phrase “stamped by a seal,” has a most interesting history, of which the reader should be aware. Originally, it meant “to stop up.”

- Lev. 15:3 And this is the law of his uncleanness for a discharge: whether his body runs with his discharge, or his body is stopped from discharge, it is uncleanness in him.

From there it acquires a feeling of permanence and safety, either as a thing safe in itself, or as something safely out of the way.

- Job 24:16 In the dark he tunnels his way into houses which are sealed up tight against him by day, since he does not know the light.
Job 14:17 My transgression would be sealed up in a pouch and You would plaster over my perversions.

Then, in its nominal form, it comes to be used as a signet or seal placed by a king upon his letter.

- 1Kings 21:8 So she wrote letters in Ahab’s name and sealed them with his seal, and she sent the letters to the elders and the nobles who dwelt with Naboth in his city.

In that sense, it marks a thing's character, and becomes a kind of guarantee that the object is what it is and will continue to be what it has become.

Esther 8:8 And you may write as you please with regard to the Jews, in the name of the king, and seal it with the king's ring; for an edict written in the name of the king and sealed with the king's ring cannot be revoked.

We have already seen the word going in that direction:

Job 33:16–18 He unveils the ears of mortals and places His seal upon their discipline, to turn man (*'adam*) away from action and conceal pride from the man (*geb_her*). He will keep his soul back from the pit and his life from perishing by the sword.

There are two Hebrew words for the English word “seal” or “signet ring.” One is our word *hotam*; the other is *tabba'at^h*. It comes from the Biblical root *tb'*, which means “to dip.” Hence *teb^ha't^h* becomes the word for a signet ring, or that which is “dipped” into the wax to give the seal its form. This second word eventually became the taking-off place for the postbiblical word *teb^ha'*, used to translate the Greek word *physis*, or “nature.” It is interesting to note that of the two words, the tradition chose the root which emphasizes the fact that the mark is impressed upon the object from the outside. The author of Job, on the other hand, chooses the one which emphasizes the guaranteed character of the object itself.

The suggestion is that for our author, the word *hotam* is beginning to acquire the character of the Greek word *physis* or “nature.”

11. Again the author chooses a very forceful word. In biblical Hebrew the root is used only in the reflexive mood. Even at its weakest, it means “to present one's self” or “to stand firm,” in the sense of being fully present. It can also be used to mean “to take a stand,” in the sense of taking full responsibility for one's actions. A full list of the other occurrences in the Book of Job should be of help:

Job 1:6 One day the Sons of GOD came to present themselves
 Job 2:1 One day the Sons of GOD came to present themselves
 Job 33:5 Lay your case out before me and take your stand.
 Job 41:10 No one is so brutal as to rouse him up. Now, who is that one who would stand before me?

There is also an interesting series of uses in Exodus which may be of some help.

- Exod. 9:13 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Rise up early in the morning and stand before Pharaoh, and say to him, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, "Let my people go, that they may serve me."'"
- Exod. 14:13 And Moses said to the people, "Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will work for you today; for the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again."
- Exod. 19:17 Then Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God; and they took their stand at the foot of the mountain.
- Exod. 34:5 And the LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD.

12. The argument seems to be that if a white garment has been dyed red, and the dye stands firm or has been well fixed, then the garment has truly become a red garment. The red color is as much a part of the object in front of me as anything else. It would be wrong of me to think of the white garment as the truth lying behind the red garment.

In the same way, the clay cannot be considered to be the truth behind the pot. The seal, or mark, or character has transformed the clay into a pot, and a pot it now is.

The chaff of our former example can be separated from the wheat precisely because the character of the chaff is different from the character of the wheat. It is this difference in their own characters that causes the separation in spite of the fact that they are both tossed with the same force and blown by the same wind.

The argument as a whole is intended as a reply to Elihu. The world beyond man, the realm of the Jackal, as it is, considered in itself and by the human eye, may not be reducible to the nebulae. The beings in it may each have their own being and hence their own strivings and ambitions apart from any human concern, yet man may be open to them.

13. Job had once said:

Job 7:12 Am I the sea or some monster that You set watch over me?

He is now being asked to face that sea.

14. I have tried to catch the rather strange concatenation of the foreboding character of the object and the relaxed, inviting character of the verb. It is in the reflexive form and so carries with it a sense of aimless freedom and intended joy. When it is used to describe God "going for a walk" in the Garden, one immediately senses that He has not come for the sake of checking up on Adam and Eve. It can, of course, be used with great irony.

Job 1:7 and 2.1 "Oh," said the Satan to THE LORD "wandering around Earth, just went down there to go for a walk."

- Job 18:7–8 His plans will trip him up, for his own feet will lead him into a net, and he will walk himself right into the trap.
- Job 22:14 ‘Clouds obscure Him and He can see nothing as He strolls round the circuit of heaven.’

It is as if the Voice were trying to seduce Job into that frightful and forbidden world beyond the world of man.

15. Those that have always been shunned by man:

- Ps. 9:13 Be gracious to me, O LORD! Behold what I suffer from those who hate me, O thou who liftest me up from the gates of death,
- Ps. 107:18 they loathed any kind of food, and they drew near to the gates of death.

16. The Shadow of Death; the tradition has connected it with “the Place of the Jackal.”

- Ps. 44:18 Our heart has not turned back, nor have our steps departed from thy way, that thou shouldst have broken us in the place of jackals, and covered us with the Shadow of Death.

It has been in the air now for a long time now. Job first saw it as a kind of horrid haven of things unwanted, the dark and dangerous place to which Job had consigned the day of his birth with his first words.

- Job 3:1–8 Then, Job opened his mouth and spurned his day. Job answered and said “May the day of my birth be lost in oblivion and with it that night in which it was said ‘A MAN (*GEB_HER*) has been conceived.’ May that day be a day of darkness. May God from on high not seek it out nor any brightness radiate upon it; but let darkness and the Shadow of Death redeem it, and may a cloud dwell above it. May that which warms the day terrify it. Let the murk consume that night that it not be counted among the days of the year or enter into the number of its months. Thus shall that night become hard and sterile with no sound of joy in it. Those who despise the sea, and those who are determined to lay open the Leviathan will curse it.

And now Job is invited to drop in for a visit.

When he enters, that day will be there waiting for him, and in it he will learn much about birth and conception, and as we know from the first words that came out of the Tempest, his main goal will be to become that man (*geb_Her*) who had been conceived so long ago.

Death and the fear of death are central to the theme of the book, and, as we shall see, the remainder of Job’s education is nothing more than a stroll down by its gates.

Perhaps nothing of what is can be so transformed or disfigured and contorted as the face of death as it steps through the curtain drawn between the world of man and the world of nature. The commonplace becomes the terrifying, and it is not clear that either is the truth behind the other. Which is the face and which is the mask?

17. Job must learn to peer beyond the borders of the light and into the place of darkness. The monsters of the dark cannot be kept out by hiding in a cave, as Elihu had suggested. They will wander and must be gently escorted home by one who knows the way.

18. Some take this verse to be intended sarcastically, but that need not be the case. The voice may be reminding Job of some deep-seated kinship he has with an antique whole.

19. In their own home, the monsters have a role to play.

20. This passage is much more cleverly crafted than I have been able to capture in the English translation. The three verbs, “dispersed,” “cast about,” and “cleaved,” all mean the same thing, “to divide into parts”; but the first is a very gentle word, and then there is a clear progression to the last, which is quite a violent word. Similarly, there is the motion from light to wind to flooding torrent, and, finally, we are at a loss to know what it takes to “make a pathway for the voice of the thunder.”

God begins Job’s education by showing him the forces that were needed to bring the inanimate world into being. They are only a part of the forces which he has “laid aside for a time of narrowness and for the days of battle and of war.” In this account more seems to be required than a “let there be. . .”

21. man (*‘adam*)

22. This is the thing that Elihu could not understand: a budding field which is for its own sake and not for the sake of man, but for all that it may be the more beautiful to Job.

23. Again, as we caught our first glimpse in verse 8, male and female origins are beginning to play an equal role in the foundation of all things. This stance which comes out of the Tempest is unique to the Book of Job. In rhetoric and imagery, the closest book in the Bible to the Book of Job is the Book of Psalms; and yet, even there, if one considers the complete list of references to bellies and wombs in it, one sees that, in contradistinction to the Book of Job, the female is always somewhat subordinate:

Ps. 17:14 from mortals—by your hand, O LORD—from mortals whose portion in life is in this world. May their bellies be filled with what you have stored up for them; may their children have more than enough; may they leave something over to their little ones.

Ps. 22:9 Yet it was you who took me from the womb; you kept me safe on my mother’s breast.

Ps. 22:10 On you I was cast from my birth, and since my mother bore me you have been my God.

- Ps. 31:9 Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am in distress; my eye wastes away from grief, my soul and body also.
- Ps. 58:3 The wicked go astray from the womb; they err from their birth, speaking lies.
- Ps. 71:6 Upon you I have leaned from my birth; it was you who took me from my mother's womb. My praise is continually of you.
- Ps. 110:3 Your people will offer themselves willingly on the day you lead your forces on the holy mountains. From the womb of the morning, like dew, your youth will come to you.
- Ps. 127:3 Sons are indeed a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward.
- Ps. 139:13 For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb.

24. The double use of the reflexive even gives the water a certain amount of autonomy. Its reaction is something it does to itself.

25. The exact meaning of this word is not known, but it seems to be the name of one of the constellations.

26. This expression only occurs in one other passage in the Bible and does not seem to have the same force that it acquires in this one:

- Jer. 33:24f. Considerest thou not what this people have spoken, saying, The two families which the LORD hath chosen, he hath even cast them off? thus they have despised my people, that they should be no more a nation before them. Thus saith the LORD; If my covenant be not with day and night, and if I have not appointed the LAWS OF HEAVEN and earth; Then will I cast away the seed of Jacob, and David my servant, so that I will not take any of his seed to be rulers over the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: for I will cause their captivity to return, and have mercy on them.

27. Men were always aware of a world beyond their reach that sparkled over their heads each night while all other things slept. Its vastness and un-touchability were awesome. It moved according to its own paths, and no man could stir it or change its course.

Yet God's question to Job would have been banal unless Job were being asked to face those well-known, everyday facts in a way in which no man ever had. If Job is to step beyond the limits of man, and into the realm of his brotherhood with the Jackal, as he will surely do in the chapters which follow, those banal facts, and others, must be faced again.

In the Book of Genesis, the sun, moon, and stars were to be regarded as little more than the servants of man, given to him by an all-loving God "to separate the day from the night"; and "to be for signs and for seasons and for days and years." But Job is being faced with something called "the Laws of the Heaven." The Mazzaroth comes out in its own time, indifferent to good times and to bad

times, to times of war, and to times of peace. To some that would have signified an unbearably cold indifference in the stars to human affairs. Not to see it as twinkling for us, but to allow it to twinkle for itself was Job's first lesson.

28. Job must be prepared not only for a world whose inhabitants have ends and ways of their own unrelated to man. There will also be those that strike of a sudden as if they had intention without purpose and were ready to go, but took no aim.

The full force which inheres in the word translated "Here am I," can only be felt by reminding ourselves of the conditions under which they have been used:

- Gen. 22:1 And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, Here am I.
- Gen. 22:7 And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?
- Gen. 22:11 And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I.
- Gen. 27:1 And it came to pass, that when Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim, so that he could not see, he called Esau his eldest son, and said unto him, My son: and he said unto him, Behold, Here am I.
- Gen. 27:18 And he came unto his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I; who art thou, my son?
- Gen. 31:11 And the angel of God spake unto me in a dream, saying, Jacob: And I said, Here am I.
- Gen. 37:13 And Israel said unto Joseph, Do not thy brethren feed the flock in Shechem? come, and I will send thee unto them. And he said to him, Here am I.
- Gen. 46: 2 And God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night, and said, Jacob, Jacob. And he said, Here am I.
- Exod. 3:4 And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I.
- 1Sam. 3:4 That the LORD called Samuel: and he answered, Here am I. And he ran unto Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou calledst me. And he said, I called not; lie down again. And he went and lay down. And the LORD called yet again, Samuel. And Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me. And he answered, I called not, my son; lie down again.
- 1Sam. 3:8 And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me. And Eli perceived that the LORD had called the child.
- 1Sam 3:16 Then Eli called Samuel, and said, Samuel, my son. And he answered, Here am I.
- 1Sam. 12:3f. Behold, Here am I: witness against me before the LORD, and before his anointed: whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I

taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it you.

1Sam. 22:12 And Saul said, Hear now, thou son of Ahitub. And he answered, Here am I, my lord.

2Sam. 1:7 And when he looked behind him, he saw me, and called unto me. And I answered, Here am I. And he said unto me, Who art thou? And I answered him, am I an Amalekite. And he said unto me again, Stand, I pray thee, upon me, and slay me: for anguish is come upon me, because my life is yet whole in me.

2Sam. 15:26 But if he thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, Here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him.

29. The meaning of the text is obscure. Greenberg translates: "Who put wisdom in the hidden parts? Who gave understanding to the mind?" The Revised Standard translates: "Who put wisdom in the clouds? or given understanding to the mist? King James translates: "Who put wisdom in the inward parts? Who gave understanding to the heart?"

The first problem is with the word *b^etuhot^h*. It is almost a hopax legominon (a word that appears only once in the whole of the known literature) and no one is quite sure what it means. All seem to agree that it comes from the root *tw^h* "to overlay," "overspread," etc., rather from *tb^h*, "to secure," and that the *b^e* means "in." So far as I can dope it out, the problem surrounds the *u*-type vocalic mode of the *tu*. Is it a shred of the *w* which had been part of the root? If so we have a noun related to the act of covering. For reasons which we will come to see later, the Revised Standard takes the "coverer" to be a cloud. But the *u* might be a sign of the passive instead. In that case, we are not dealing with a "covering" thing, but with a "covered" or "hidden" thing. In fact, the word also appears in Psalm 51:8 (RS 51:6), where even the Revised Standard translates: "thou desirest truth in the inward being." To push the argument further, we must look at the other problematic word, *l^eshichwai*.

This time we do have a true hopax legominon; and so we must go fishing. The semitic root *skh* or *skh* in Aramaic means "to watch," in the sense of doing what a watchman does. In Syriac it means "to hope," and in Arabic "to complain."

In connection with this sense of "watching," there is a tradition which I have not been able to track down that relates it to a celestial appearance. Hence the Revised Standard translates: "mist." This, I presume, is what led to the translation of *tahot* as "cloud."

Gersonides has another tradition which relates it more to the act of seeing. This would account for such translations as "mind" or "heart." This is particularly interesting in the case of the King James translators, since they obviously took it as rhetorically parallel to "inward part."

As part of this argument, there is another and more common word from the

same root, *maskit*, which can indeed mean “imagination,” but which more often means a “carved figure” or an “image”; hence my translation.

The relation between inner and outward intelligibility is, of course, central for the Book of Job.

30. If Job can gird his loins and stand before all these things, he will see these fearful forces, all in delicate balance, each a part of that with which it seemed at war.