

# Interpretation

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# Interpreta

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# The Book of Job

## Translation and Commentary

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### CHAPTER ELEVEN

**1** Then Zophar the Naamathite answered and said, **2** “Will this multitude of words never be answered? Must the man with the quick lip<sup>1</sup> always be in the right? **3** Do you think that this claptrap of yours should bring all men to silence? Do you really believe you can mock without being rebuked? **4** You say ‘My tenets are spotless. I am pure in Thy sight.’ **5** Oh, if only God Himself would open His lips and speak to you, **6** tell you the secrets of wisdom: for discernment is many sided,<sup>2</sup> and you must know that God will bear some of your perversions<sup>3</sup> for you.

**7** The deepest things of God, can you find them out? Would you discover the utmost things of The Almighty? **8** It is higher than heaven—what can you do? deeper than the Pit—what can you know? **9** Longer than the earth is its measure and broader than the sea.<sup>4</sup> **10** If He should pass by and separate<sup>5</sup> or close up, who can turn him back? **11** He knows the worthless man. Can he see wickedness and not ponder it? **12** Hollow man will become thoughtful when the wild ass gives birth to a man (*‘adam*).

**13** But, if you direct your heart firmly and spread out your hands to Him **14** and if, when there is wickedness in your hand, you remove it, and let no injustice dwell in your tent, **15** then shall you bear your countenance high above all blemish. You will be firm and have no FEAR. **16** You will forget all toil and think of it only as water that has flown by. **17** Life will arise out of the noonday sun and soar as the morning. **18** You will be secure because there will be hope. You will burrow in and lie at ease. **19** You will be in repose and none shall make you afraid.<sup>6</sup>

Many will seek your favor. **20** But the eyes of the guilty will fail. For them, all escape is lost, and their one hope is to exhale the spirit.”

The first ten chapters of the translation and commentary appeared in Volume 24, Number 2 of *Interpretation*. The balance will appear in future issues.

Comments

1. Literally, “a man of lips,” and clearly intended to be derogatory.

2. The force, and hence the deceptive force, of human speech is its ability to speak of a part, even a random part, as if it were an intelligible whole. Job’s arguments presuppose that there is a surface and that it is sufficiently open to human comprehension to serve as an adequate foundation for human existence. But there may be many such surfaces, not one of which fails to obscure some vital part of the whole. The things within our ken, while they seem to hold together in a beguiling sort of way, may be required to be so modified by what is beyond it, as to render all human judgment inadequate to the point of meaninglessness. The spotless, when seen within a larger context may no longer seem to be so.

3. This word, which has traditionally been translated “iniquity,” tends to be used in a rather specific way in the Torah, and it is not impossible that Zophar has in mind a distinction which the Torah makes between ‘*awon* or “perversion,” and *het* or “sin.” *Het* means “to miss the mark,” while ‘*awon* comes from a root meaning “to twist,” “to distort” or “pervert.” It is something that can be done to a “path,” or to “the right,” or to a mind, and hence implies an effect on all future growth. One refers to an act, the other to a way of being.

Consider:

Deu. 5:9 . . . visiting the perversion, of the fathers upon the children and the children’s children, to the third and fourth generation.

Contrast this verse with

Deu. 24:16 Fathers shall not be put to death for their children nor shall children not be put to death for their fathers, but each man shall die for his own sin.

From Deuteronomy 24:16 it is clear that no one can be held responsible for the “sins” of his or her own particular parent, but with “perversion” it is a different matter.

In the Torah there is a general tendency to use the word ‘*awon* to refer to those acts of the fathers which have a lasting and devastating effect on the whole of the nation: for example, black slavery in early America. Or, to put it in other words, even an immigrant who has newly become a citizen of this country, although he, like all others, is innocent of any crime his father may have committed, has, by virtue of becoming part of us, inherited a debt to the Native American peoples, a debt which we shall never be able to pay in full.

There is also another aspect to the question. The more one thinks about the problem of perversion, the more complicated and almost insoluble it becomes.

The sons have committed a great crime; but in their tradition, it was no crime. They have been twisted by their tradition, and the suffering falls on the whole of the community, guilty and innocent alike. How then to apportion blame? How to end the cycle? I sometimes think that the Bible is being terribly optimistic when it implies that an answer can be found in only three or four generations.

One might want to rethink what the ancients may have meant when they spoke of “a curse on a house” by considering what the moderns mean by the term “family syndromes” with regard to alcoholism or child abuse.

It should be noted that when seen in a fuller context, the quotation from Deuteronomy clearly contends that good traditions, if well founded, tend to last longer than bad ones; but it also implies that if the world were not sticky enough to hold on to the bad ones for a little while, the good ones would never have a chance either.

This second aspect of the problem, however, is not part of the story to be told in this note. Here we shall be speaking of the debt which, from the point of view of the Torah, we all owe, guilty or innocent of any sin or crime.

Although we must still leave open the question of whether there is sufficient evidence to claim that the author of the Book of Job was aware of that tradition, the tenor of Zophar’s argument is so close to the thoughts contained in the tradition that I thought it not amiss to include this note. The feeling that Zophar is portrayed as being aware of the tradition is enhanced by the fact that he is the only one in the dialogue to use the enigmatic phrase “to bear a perversion,” which, as we shall see, is so critical for the Torah.

The reader cannot but notice the ambiguity in the word “bear.” A man can “bear a perversion” on his shoulders, or another can “bear/lift that perversion” off those shoulders, that is, he may forgive him; but then he may have to “bear the perversion” on his own shoulders.

Let us begin by looking for ourselves at a complete list of the passages in the Torah in which the word occurs:

- |            |  |
|------------|--|
| Gen. 4:13  | My perversion is too great for me to bear.   |
| Gen. 15:16 | The perversion of the Amorites is not yet complete.  |
| Gen. 19:15 | . . . lest you [Lot] be consumed on account of the perversion of the city [Sodom].   |
| Gen. 44:16 | God has found out the perversion of your servant. Therefore we will be slaves to my lord, both we and the one in whose hand the chalice was found.   |
| Exo. 20:5  | I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the perversion of the fathers upon the sons and the son’s son, to the third and the fourth [generation] of those that hate me and showing loving kindness to a thousand [generations] of those that love me and keep my commandments. |
| Exo. 28:38 | and he [Aaron] shall bear the perversion of the holy things  |
| Exo. 28:43 | . . . lest they bear the perversion and die.   |

- Exo. 34:6           The Lord passed before him, and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord, is a merciful and gracious God, slow to anger, and abounding in loving kindness and truth, keeping steadfast love for thousands, bearing perversion and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear [the guilty], visiting the perversion of the fathers upon the son and the son's son, to the third and the fourth [generation]."
- Exo. 34:9           If I have found favor . . . pardon our perversion and our sins [Moses].
- Lev. 5:1            If anyone sins in that he hears a call to come testify, and he was a witness because he had either seen the affair or knew about it but does not speak up, he shall bear his perversion.
- Lev. 5:17           If anyone sins in that he does any one of all the things which the Lord commanded him not to do and is unaware, he is guilty and he shall bear his perversion. But he may bring a ram to the priest . . .
- Lev. 7:18           If any of the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offering is eaten on the third day, he who offers it shall not be accepted, neither shall it be credited to him; it shall be an abomination, and he who eats of it shall bear his perversion.
- Lev. 10:17          Why did you not eat the sin [offering] in the holy place because it is the holiest of the holy and it was given to you to bear the perversion of the congregation to make atonement for them before the Lord?
- Lev. 16:21          And Aaron shall place his two hands on the head of the live goat and confess over him all the perversions of the children of Israel and their sins . . .
- Lev. 17:16          If he [one who eats what dies of itself or is torn by beasts] does not wash them [his clothes] and bathe his flesh, he shall bear his perversion.
- Lev. 18:25          The land became defiled and so I punished its perversions.
- Lev. 19:8            Anyone who eats it [a sacrifice left till the third day] he shall bear his perversion because he has profaned the holy things of the Lord, and that soul shall be cut off from his people.
- Lev. 20:17          A man who takes his sister . . . has uncovered his sister's nakedness; he shall bear his perversion.
- Lev. 20:19          You shall not uncover the nakedness of your mother's sister or of your father's sister, for that is to make naked one's near kin; they shall bear their perversion.
- Lev. 22:14          And if a man eat of the holy thing unwittingly, then he shall put the fifth part thereof unto it, and shall give it unto the priest with the holy thing.
- Lev. 25:15          . . . and they shall not profane the holy things of the children of Israel, which they offer unto the LORD;
- Lev. 22:16          Or suffer then to bear the iniquity of trespass, when they eat their holy things: for I the LORD do sanctify them.
- Lev. 26:38-42       You will be lost among the nations and the land of your enemies shall devour [eat] you. Whoever among you is left will rot away on account of their perversion in the land of their enemies. Yea, on

account of the perversion of their fathers they shall rot away along with them. But if they confess their perversion . . . I will remember . . . .

- Num. 5:10ff. And the Lord said to Moses. Say to the people of Israel, if any man's wife goes astray, . . . then shall the man bring his wife to the priest and bring the offering required of her, a tenth of an ephah of barley meal: he shall pour no oil upon it, for it is a cereal offering of jealousy a cereal offering of remembrance, bringing perversion to remembrance.
- Num. 5:29 This is the law in case of jealousy, when a wife, though under her husband's authority, goes astray and defiles herself, or when the spirit of jealousy comes upon a man and he is jealous of his wife; then he shall set the woman before the Lord and the priest shall execute upon her all this law. The man shall be free from perversion but the woman shall bear her perversion.
- Num. 14:18 And now I pray thee let the power of the Lord be great as thou hast promised, saying; "The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, bearing perversion and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the perversion of the fathers upon the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation."
- Num. 14:19 Pardon the perversion of this people . . . I have pardoned . . .
- Num. 14:34 According to the number of days in which you spied out the land, forty days, for every day a year, you shall bear your perversion.
- Num. 15:31 If a soul raises his hand [and murders] . . . his perversion is upon him.
- Num. 18:1 And the Lord said to Aaron, you, and your sons, and the house of your father with you, bear the perversion of the holy place, and you, and your sons with you, bear the perversion of your priesthood.
- Num. 18:21ff. To the Levites I have given every tithe in Israel for an inheritance, . . . But the Levites shall do the service in the tent of meeting, and they shall bear their perversion and it shall be a perpetual statute throughout your generations; and among the people of Israel they shall have no inheritance.
- Deu. 5:9 For I the Lord your God am a jealous God visiting the perversion of the father upon the children and the children's children . . . .
- Deu. 19:15 A single witness shall not raise up against any man for any perversion or any sin . . . .

The first time the word is used in the Bible, or one might even say the original perversion, was Cain's act of fratricide.

- Gen. 4:13 My perversion is too great for me to bear.

The fact that the first perversion was committed by the founder of the first city is indicative of the notion that perversion, as distinguished from sin, is a communal matter.

Now it must be remembered that our fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were all shepherds, living in tents, and even Lot when he flees the hills for the city thinks it is right to excuse himself by saying, "Yonder city is near enough to flee to, and it is only a little one." Even he knows that God has not yet prepared the way for the city, and that it is no place for a good man, but he is overcome by fear.

For the Bible, the two, fratricide and the founding of the city, fall together in this wise. Cain, first a farmer, then a founder, put up a fence and then a city wall to distinguish "the mine" from "the thine." This act of radical self-establishment required that he cut himself off and obliterate all of his ties to the rest of God's creation. The shepherd's life, on the other hand, freely roams throughout the whole without laying claim to any particular part of the whole. It is at home, but it has no home. Cain's act of building a fence, as all farmers must, is an essentially political act. By setting up a part and making it into a whole, it denies the availability of the given whole, either for oneself, or another. Cain wishes to establish his own world in the fullest sense possible.

As a further consequence of the problem of development, the Bible presents the arts, too, as having their origin in Cain's perversion, since they are seen as a product of the city.

Gen. 4:20–22      Adah bore Jabal; he was the father of those who dwell in tents and have cattle. His brother's name was Jubal; he was the father of all those who play the lyre and pipe. Zillah bore Tubal-cain; he was the forger of all instruments of bronze and iron. The sister of Tubal-cain was Naamah.

Of course, one day there will be the holy city of Jerusalem, but it will take many years and many books to work out the legitimization of the city. Although the recounting of that story would lead us too far out of our path, we shall in time be forced to reconsider the arts and how the perverse becomes transformed into the holy. (For a more extended account of this subject, see my commentary on Genesis.)

Cain's act, because it is at the center of the illegitimate origins of communal society, then becomes the nexus of what the Bible means by perversion. Since the only way of populating such a self-made world is via incest with one that is most like oneself, lying with a sister is also called, not a sin, but a perversion.

Lev. 20:17      A man who takes his sister . . . has uncovered his sister's nakedness; he shall bear his perversion.

The connection between perversion and sisters is underlined by the fact that of the ten other illicit unions mentioned in the passage in Leviticus:

Neighbor's wife	20:10
Father's wife	20:11
Daughter-in-law	20:12
A male	20:13
Wife and her mother	20:14
A beast	20:15
A woman having her sickness	20:18
Mother's sister	20:19
Uncle's wife	20:20
Brother's wife	20:21

the only other to be specifically called a perversion also concerns a sister.

Lev. 20:19      You shall not uncover the nakedness of your mother's sister or of your father's sister, for that is to make naked one's near kin; they shall bear their perversion.

Except for Genesis 15:16, which we will have occasion to reflect upon later in this note, the next time the word shows up is in connection with Joseph and his brothers.

When Joseph feigned the discovery of the stolen chalice in Benjamin's bag and was about to take him prisoner, Judah said:

Gen. 44:16      God has found out the perversion of your servant. Therefore we will be slaves to my lord, both we and the one in whose hand the chalice was found.

Clearly enough, when Judah spoke of the perversion, he was not thinking of the stolen chalice, but of the fratricide which had almost taken place so many years before.

Gen. 37:17      And the man said, "They have gone away, for I heard them say, 'Let us go to Dothan.'" So Joseph went after his brothers, and found them at Dothan. They saw him afar off, and before he came near to them they conspired against him to kill him. They said to one another, "Here comes this dreamer. Come now, let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits; then we shall say that a wild beast has devoured him, and we shall see what will become of his dreams."

Again, the text in 44:16 indicates a relation between fratricide and perversion. Yet, in Judah's words, we can also begin to see some way out.

The brothers, not taking well to Joseph's rather imperious character, decided to kill him. But Reuben was of a more affable character, and, being the eldest, thought it his duty to save Joseph's life. But Reuben was something of a bum-

bler. His plan was to have the brothers put Joseph in a pit, thinking to come back later and return the boy to his father. Judah, however, was more thoughtful. He realized that the problem would only arise again, and that the only solution was to get the boy out of the country. The only way that was possible was to persuade the brothers to sell Joseph to a passing Ishmaelite caravan.

In order to explain to Jacob what had happened, the brothers took Joseph's splendid coat, dipped it in the blood of a wild animal, brought it home to Jacob, and said, "Please to recognize" this coat. Jacob looked at the coat and said, "Indeed, a wild animal has eaten Joseph." We are only left to wonder how much Jacob understood, and what kind of a wild animal he was thinking of.

Judah thought the boy was probably safe, but after what had happened, he could no longer share a life with the others and went off with a friend, Hirah the Adullamite.

Now, Judah had a daughter-in-law named Tamar, whose two husbands, both sons of Judah, had died. Tamar felt it her duty to raise a seed in memory of those sons, but Judah had denied her. She then threw off her widow's weeds and, dressing as a whore and standing at the city gate, she waited until Judah and Hirah came along. Judah slept with her and promised to send her a kid as payment. In pledge, she demanded his signet, his cord, and his staff. But when Judah returned with the kid, no whore was to be found at the city gate.

Some time later, Judah heard that his daughter-in-law was about to have a child by harlotry and demanded that she be publicly burnt. But when Tamar appeared, she produced the signet and the cord and the staff, and said, "Please to recognize" these objects.

Those words, "Please to recognize"—he had heard them once before. Time suddenly became jumbled for Judah. Was it now, or was it then? Who was speaking? Was Tamar speaking to him, or was it himself speaking to his father Jacob? What was it that he was to "recognize"? Was it the coat, or the staff, or was it something else? He had learned from her something about responsibility and was ready to return to his brothers. For Judah, that return meant that perversion, unlike sin or guilt, was a thing to be shared among brothers, guilty and innocent alike.

This sense of shared responsibility, and its relation to the concept of perversion, only emerges slowly from the text. Perhaps one of the more tangible aspects of the problem can be seen in the following verse:

Lev. 5:1      If anyone sins in that he hears a call to come testify, and he was a witness because he had either seen the affair or knew about it but does not speak up, he shall bear his perversion.

This is, perhaps, not the deepest sense of togetherness that Judah was feeling, yet even here we can see how an otherwise innocent man might find himself responsible because of where and when and with whom he happened to be, regardless of how he had acted at the time.

There is one other aspect of perversion that comes out of the same chapter in Leviticus.

Lev. 5:17      If anyone sins in that he does any one of all the things which the Lord commanded him not to do and is unaware, he is guilty and he shall bear his perversion. But he may bring a ram to the priest . . . .

and another like it.

Lev. 22:14–16      And if a man eat of a holy thing unknowingly . . . and so cause them to bear the perversion and guilt by eating their holy things.

Here, perversion seems to be intimately connected with lack of awareness. In order to make sense of the passage, I believe that the reader is meant to assume that the text is dealing with a case in which the actor was in no position to be aware of his crime, and that his lack of awareness was not due to any insensitivity on his part.

Since he was unaware of the sin at the time of the act and only knows about it by hearsay and, as it were, from the outside, he cannot feel any guilt or repentance in the normal sense of the word. He can, of course, feel a deep sense of sorrow because of the result, and a need to undo any wrong, but that is not the same. He nevertheless still feels a strange kind of guilt, however, because he now knows that he has benefitted from an unjust act. At the same time, since there is no need for repentance in the normal sense of the word, there is no single act he can perform to rid himself of a sense of guilt. This seems to be one of the roots of what the Bible perceives as the human need for ritual sacrifice: “But he may bring a ram to the priest . . . .”

At the very least, this law must remind one of the fact that the son may not be aware of the perversion of the father, which he nonetheless must bear insofar as it has helped to determine the shape of his life and been the source of much of what has sustained him since the day of his birth.

To face more fully the question of the relationship between ritual sacrifice and perversion, let us reconsider the passages that lead to this discussion.

In the proem to the laws of actions between man and man, God says:

Exo. 20:5      . . . You shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God visiting the perversion of the fathers upon the sons and the son’s son, to the third and the fourth [generation] of those that hate me and doing loving kindness to a thousand [generations] of those that love me and keep my commandments.

But, after the affair of the golden calf, when Moses felt that he needed a greater understanding of this God in order to continue as leader, God gave him a somewhat revised version:

Exo. 34:6      The Lord passed before him, and proclaimed, “The Lord, the Lord, is a merciful and gracious God, slow to anger, and abounding in loving kindness and truth, keeping steadfast love for thousands, bearing perversion and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear [the guilty], visiting the perversion of the fathers upon the son and the son’s son, to the third and the fourth [generation].” And Moses made haste to bow his head toward the earth, and worshiped. And he said, “If now I have found favor in thy sight, O Lord, let the Lord, I pray thee, go in the midst of us, although it is a stiff-necked people; and bear our perversion and our sin, and take us for thy inheritance.” And he said, “Behold, I make a covenant. Before all your people I will do marvels . . . ”

What we have is ambiguous. We have learned that God is “a merciful and gracious God, slow to anger, and abounding in loving kindness and truth, keeping steadfast love for thousands, bearing perversion and transgression and sin.” But on the other hand, when Moses actually asked God to “bear our perversion,” God spoke of a “covenant,” and of “marvels,” but said not a word about “bearing our perversion.”

Some time later, a very similar affair occurred. After the men that Moses had sent to spy out the land returned and told their tales, fear struck the people and they revolted.

It should be noted in passing that this particular act of rebellion was also called a perversion:

Num. 14:34      According to the number of days in which you spied out the land, forty days, for every day a year, you shall bear your perversion.

The story of how this early act of perversion led to the necessity of conquering lands not originally intended to be part of the new nation, and the role these extraterritorial lands played hundreds of years later in the total destruction of the country at the hands of the Assyrians and the Babylonians has already been told in my Genesis commentary. I mention the affair only because it is such a striking example of one sense of what it means to bear a perversion. This one was borne for twelve hundred years till one day it was visited upon the children of the children. But we must return to our subject and consider the second discussion between God and Moses.

It took place at the time God was about to abandon His people and start over again with Moses as the father of “a nation greater and mightier than they.” After having argued the impracticality of such a plan, Moses repeated God’s promise back to Him in a conversation much like the first, but with very different results:

Num. 14:17      And now, I pray thee, let the power of the Lord be great as thou hast promised, saying, “The Lord is slow to anger, and abounding in

loving kindness, bearing perversion and transgression, but who will by no means clear [the guilty], visiting the perversion of the fathers upon the son and the son's son, to the third and the fourth [generation]. Bear the perversion of this people, I pray thee, according to the greatness of thy loving kindness, and according as thou hast born this people, from Egypt even until now." Then the Lord said, "I have borne, according to your word' . . . "

"I have borne, according to your word." Things have changed, and what could not have happened then, now can happen. As we shall see, that change centers on the life, and ultimately the death, of Moses' brother, Aaron.

Before we consider those things, however, there is in the Bible one other account which brings together the same elements as the story of Aaron: jealousy, perversion, the undetected, a priest, and an offering which must be consumed at the risk of pain or death, and, last of all, forgiveness and the possibility of returning to the fullness of normal life.

Since the story lives on a more human level, it might be best to begin there:

Num. 5:11-31      And the lord said to Moses. Say to the people of Israel, if any man's wife goes astray, and acts unfaithfully against him, if a man lie with her carnally, and it is hidden from the eyes of her husband, and she is undetected though she has defiled herself and there is no witness against her, since she was not taken in the act; and if the spirit of jealousy comes upon him, and he is jealous of his wife who has defiled herself; or if the spirit of jealousy comes upon him, and he is jealous of his wife though she had not defiled herself; then shall the man bring his wife to the priest and bring the offering required of her, a tenth of an ephah of barley meal: he shall pour no oil upon it, for it is a cereal offering of jealousy, a cereal offering of remembrance, bringing perversion to remembrance.

The priest shall bring her near and set her before the Lord, and the priest shall take the holy water in an earthenware vessel, and take some of the dust that is on the floor of the tabernacle and put it in the water. And the priest shall set the woman before the Lord and unbind the hair of the woman's head and place in her hands the cereal offering of remembrance which is a cereal offering of jealousy. And in his hand, the priest shall have the water of bitterness that brings the curse. Then the priest shall make her take an oath saying "If no man has lain with you, and if you have not turned aside to uncleanness, while you were under your husband's authority, be free from this water of bitterness that brings the curse. But if you have gone astray though you were under your husband's authority, and if you have defiled yourself and some man other than your husband, has lain with you, [then the priest shall make the woman take the oath of the curse and say

to the woman] “the Lord make you an execration and an oath among your people when the Lord makes your thigh fall away and your body swell; may the water that brings the curse pass into your bowels and make your thigh fall away.” And the woman shall say “Amen, Amen.”

Then the priest shall write these curses in a book and wash them off into the waters of bitterness; and he shall make the woman drink the water that brings the curse and the water that brings the curse shall enter into her and cause her bitter pain. And the priest shall take the cereal offering of jealousy out of the woman’s hand and shall wave the cereal offering before the Lord and bring it to the altar; and the priest shall take a handful of the cereal offering, as its memorial portion, and burn it upon the altar, and afterward shall make the woman drink the water. And when he has made her drink the water, then, if she has defiled herself and acted unfaithfully against her husband, the water that brings the curse shall enter her and cause bitter pain, and her body shall swell and her thigh shall fall away, and the woman shall become an execration among the people. But if the woman has not defiled herself and is clean, then she shall be free and shall conceive children.

This is the law in case of jealousy, when a wife, though under her husband’s authority, goes astray and defiles herself, or when the spirit of jealousy comes upon a man and he is jealous of his wife; then he shall set the woman before the Lord and the priest shall execute upon her all this law. The man shall be free from perversion but the woman shall bear her perversion.

Here we have the case of a man who suspects his wife and is jealous on little or perhaps no grounds at all. But, as we know from Othello, the green-eyed monster is hard to shake. In a case of law at court, there can be a presumption of innocence, and guilt must be proven. Within a family, however, for the sake of domestic peace, innocence must be proven. The Bible does not wish to defend that fact, but merely to deal with it. Guilt is often a very difficult thing to establish, but it is usually impossible to establish innocence. If the husband is in error, or of a bad disposition, it would be easy to say, “That’s his problem.” Unfortunately, however, it has become the wife’s problem too. The measured and austere trappings of ceremony allow the wife to pass through her trials without grave danger. The ritual is intended to be a way through which the husband can come to terms with his jealousy, so that peace can return to family life.

I believe that this law is intended to give the reader some understanding of the biblical contention that a formal ritualistic act must play a critical part in our attempt to deal with perversion.

Now is the time to retell the story of the life and the death of Aaron the Priest, and only an odd handful of quotations from our list will remain.

At one point in the middle of their first conversation, Moses had said to God

Exo. 4:10      “*Oh, my Lord, I am not a man of speech, either heretofore or since thou hast spoken to thy servant; but I am slow of speech and of tongue.*”

We cannot understand that at first. On the contrary, the more we get to know him, the more eloquent he seems. But God does seem to have understood something, and whatever it was, it made Him very angry.

Exo. 4:11      Then the Lord said to him, “*Who has made man’s mouth? Who makes him dumb, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the Lord? Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak.*”

But Moses again protests,

Exo. 4:13      “*Oh, my Lord, send, I pray, some other person.*” Then the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses and he said, “*Is there not Aaron, your brother, the Levite? I know that he can speak well; and behold, he is coming out to meet you, and when he sees you he will be glad in his heart.*”

This is the first time we hear of Aaron, and we might be a bit surprised to hear him introduced in anger as “*Aaron, your brother, the Levite.*” This anger might lead us back to remember the first pair of brothers, and might even momentarily cause us to remember how their own father, Levi, once treated his newly adopted brothers, the men of Shechem; but these ominous feelings soon pass, and when the two first meet, the occasion is quite joyous.

The pair did well. The slaves were freed, and slavery is a terrible thing. What they did was right, even marvelous, but after it was over there were many pieces still to be picked up. Even before they escaped Egypt, they were reminded of the harm suffered by the innocent among the guilty on the other side. Such is the norm in all countries, but Israel had been commanded not to let it fall from memory.

Exo. 13:15      For when Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the Lord slew all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both the first-born of man and the first-born of cattle. Therefore I sacrifice to the Lord all the males that first open the womb; but all the first-born of my sons I redeem.

After the escape, they came to a water hole at Marah, but the water was bitter and the people complained. God didn’t make much of a fuss though. He just showed Moses a tree, and Moses seemed to know instinctively what to do. He threw it in and the water turned sweet. God was hoping the people would see how foolish they had been when they came to twelve springs just around the bend at Elim. There had been no need for the miracle.

Then there was the affair of the manna and after that more complaints about water. On that day, the people showed that they were incapable of trusting to the given course of things, but would need miracles, and so the Lord said to Moses,

Exo. 17:5f.      Pass on before the people, taking with you some of the elders of Israel; and take in your hand the rod with which you struck the Nile, and go. Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, that the people may drink.

“Strike”: second person, imperative, singular; “Strike.” We must remember that.

After a war with Amaleq, Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law, appeared. By an argument quite similar to the one found in Aristotle’s *Politics*, he convinced Moses that the rule of law is best. On the one hand, no law can be so fashioned as to be able to deal adequately with each of the infinite number of convoluted cases which can arise in the course of human affairs as well as the wise man can, so long as he may face them one by one. But wise men are not always available, and when they are, the work soon becomes too great for any one person. Laws, then, are needed to guide others. So Moses made preparations, ascended Mount Sinai, and received the Law. This was the law that Jethro had spoken of. Although it has a proem, what we sometimes call the Ten Commandments, the bulk of the law proper, Exodus 21–23, is essentially a law governing the actions of men in their relations with other men.

When Moses returned he told the words that he had heard to the people, and only after they had agreed to follow them, did he write them all down in the Book of the Covenant.

Exo. 24:7      Then he took the Book of the Covenant, and read it in the hearing of the people; and they said, “All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient.”

Thus it seems to have been important to Moses that these laws be accepted before they could be committed to writing and then read again aloud in a great ceremony once they had been written down.

Exo. 24:3ff.      Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord and all the ordinances; and all the people answered with one voice, and said, “All the words which the Lord has spoken we will do.” And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord. And he rose early in the morning, and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. And he sent young lads from among the people of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the Lord. And Moses took half of the blood and put it in the basin, and half of the blood he threw against

the altar. Then he took the book of the covenant, and read it in the hearing of the people; and they said, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient." And Moses took the blood and threw it upon the people, and said, "Behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words."

But Moses' sacrifice led to a strange event concerning two of Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu.

Exo. 24:9ff.      Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up, and they saw the God of Israel; and there was under his feet as it were a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness. And he did not lay his hand on the chief men of the people of Israel; they beheld God, and ate and drank.

Moses' ceremony, which had nowhere been commanded, had somehow gone awry. Some readers may sense it in verse 10, others not until the end of verse 11, but most of us feel nothing until it hits us in the middle of the Book of Numbers. God, however, saw the problem at once, and immediately called Moses back up to the mountain to give him a second set of laws called the Tablets of Stone.

What God saw most clearly in the actions of Nadab and Abihu, and which Moses failed to see, was a certain wildness in the human soul which no law governing the action between man and man could abolish. From the biblical point of view, this wildness is a strange melange of the highest and the lowest there is in the human soul. It is the human need to sacrifice.

First, we remember that neither Cain, nor Abel, nor Noah was asked to give a sacrifice. The idea was of human origin. It is a wild nest of interwoven contradictions. We wish to become the whole by destroying the other; we wish to submerge ourselves into the whole by symbolically destroying ourselves in the form of the other. We give ourselves unto God, and we bribe Him.

When God saw that wildness in Nadab and Abihu, He quickly turned to Moses:

Exo. 24:12      The Lord said to Moses, "Come up to me on the mountain, and wait there; and I will give you the TABLETS OF STONE, with the law and the commandment, which I have written for their instruction."

The next seven chapters give an account of the plan for the building of the tabernacle and the installation of its priests. It meets the needs of Nadab and Abihu, but it is full of number and order. The passage is much too long for us to give a complete description of the gold and the silver, the scarlet and the acacia wood, or even the lampstand and the turban and the ephod, but the

reader's head should be full of all these splendors when he thinks about the things that we must now discuss.

Chapter Twenty-Eight is a wonderful presentation of all the pomp and grandeur proper to the office of the High Priest.

Exo. 28:11ff.      “As a jeweler engraves signets, so shall you engrave the two stones with the names of the sons of Israel; you shall enclose them in settings of gold filigree . . . . And you shall set in it four rows of stones. A row of sardius, topaz, and carbuncle shall be the first row; and the second row an emerald, a sapphire, and a diamond . . . . And you shall make the robe of the ephod all of blue. It shall have in it an opening for the head, with a woven binding around the opening, like the opening in a garment, that it may not be torn. On its skirts you shall make pomegranates of blue and purple and scarlet stuff, around its skirts, with bells of gold between them, a golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate, round about on the skirts of the robe . . . . And you shall weave the coat in checker work of fine linen, and you shall make a turban of fine linen, and you shall make a girdle embroidered with needlework . . . .”

In the middle of all this pageantry, however, we are told of Aaron's more serious purpose.

Exo. 28:35ff.      “And it shall be upon Aaron when he ministers, and its sound shall be heard when he goes into the holy place before the Lord, and when he comes out, lest he die. And you shall make a plate of pure gold, and engrave on it, like the engraving of a signet, ‘Holy to the Lord.’ And you shall fasten it on the turban by a lace of blue; it shall be on the front of the turban. It shall be upon Aaron's forehead, and Aaron shall BEAR THE PERVERSION OF THE HOLY THINGS which the people of Israel hallow as their holy gifts; it shall always be upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before the Lord.”

We read it, but we do not yet understand.

The rest of the chapter seems to go well, but again the end gives us pause

Exo. 28:41      “And you shall put them upon Aaron your brother, and upon his sons with him, and shall anoint them and ordain them and consecrate them, that they may serve me as priests. And you shall make for them linen breeches to cover their naked flesh; from the loins to the thighs they shall reach; and they shall be upon Aaron, and upon his sons, when they go into the tent of meeting, or when they come near the altar to minister in the holy place; lest they BEAR PERVERSION AND DIE. This shall be a perpetual statute for him and for his descendants after him.”

Chapter Twenty-Nine deals with the installation of Aaron, and the next chapter describes the perfume that makes all things smell sweet. Then comes the appointment of Bezalel, but it will make things clearer if we put that discussion off for a bit.

When Moses came down from the mountain, God gave him a written form of this law, which is again specifically referred to as the Tablets of Stone.

Exo. 31:18      Tablets of Stone, written with the finger of God.

Meanwhile, the people, despairing of Moses' return, asked Aaron to make them a god. Aaron collected all their rings of gold, fashioned them into a calf, and said

Exo. 32:4ff.      "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!" When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation and said, "Tomorrow shall be a feast to the Lord."

God, showing Himself angry to Moses, threatened to consume them all, and to start anew. He said to Moses, as He had once said to Abram, "I will make you a great nation." Moses' answer was a slow, reasonable defense. God had made a promise to the fathers, and if He were to break that promise, no nation in the world could ever trust Him again.

Exo. 32:9      And the LORD said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people; now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them; but of you I will make a great nation." But Moses besought the LORD his God, and said, "O LORD, why does thy wrath burn hot against thy people, whom thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou didst swear by thine own self, and didst say to them, 'I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it for ever.'" And the LORD repented of the evil which he thought to do to his people.

But perhaps it was all just a test, and if it was a test, what was God testing Moses about? God had, in fact, offered Moses the chance to supplant his father Abraham, as Oedipus had once done to his father. If the point of the test was to let Moses see for himself that he was capable of rejecting the chance of supplanting his father in order to save his people, he had done well.

But if it was a test of his sobriety and understanding, he had passed in speech, only to fail in action. When he faced the actual situation of the moment, everything had changed:

Exo. 32:19      And as soon as he came near the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, Moses' anger burned hot, and he threw the tablets out of his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain.

Let us look more closely at what Moses actually did in verse 32:19. He broke the tablet—not the book, but the tablet. This is, presumably, the Tablet of Stone which God had promised to give Moses in Exodus 24:12 and which He had actually given him in Exodus 31:18 and which were still in his hand in Exodus 32:15.

This means that according to the Book of Exodus the tablet Moses broke the day he came down from the mountain did not contain what we today, and for many days gone past, have called the Ten Commandments, Exodus 20:2–17. Rather, it was the laws of the tabernacle, Exodus 25:1–31:18.

Moses had seen through God's trick. The tabernacle was nothing more than a glorified and placating substitution for the golden calf, and he would have none of it. Even the altar still had horns on it. But Aaron was a different sort of a man. In his own bumbling way, he had seen that room had to be made for the irrational side of the human soul, perhaps a side he had already seen come out in his own sons Nadab and Abihu; "This is the God, O Israel, that brought us out of the Land of Egypt." What he did not see is that wildness could only be tamed by the precision of number and the intricacy of art.

Moses' irrational reaction to the irrational meant that while he was the best of lawgivers, only Aaron could take onto himself the more dangerous position of High Priest.

In the discussion of Cain, we saw that the rise of the arts was the final outgrowth of his act of perversion. Later, poor, simple Noah accidentally acquired a taste for the arts, and he, too, ended up as a farmer, a drunken farmer. This led to that night on which Ham saw his antediluvian origins, and the sight so fascinated him that he could never come to trust the new covenant. That was why one of his sons built a tower, and what explains the line

Gen. 15:16      The perversion of the Amorites is not yet complete.

But all that was different now. The perverse had to become transformed into the holy so that wildness could be contained by order and by number. In order to meet the problem, Bezalel was appointed, and God gave the arts.

Exo. 31:3–4      "And I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze. . . ."

Now we can begin to understand why the danger of death always lurks within the walls of the Holy Tabernacle.

Moses saw that the new was so close to the old that it would not have a chance unless the old was firmly put out of the way.

Exo. 32:25ff. And when Moses saw that the people had broken loose (for Aaron had let them break loose, to their shame among their enemies), then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, "Who is on the Lord's side? Come to me." And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together to him. And he said to them, "Thus says the Lord God of Israel, 'Put every man his sword on his side, and go to and fro from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbor.'"

In this way, the sons of Levi became the Levites, and we remember Hamor, zeal purified.

Moses knew that he did not fully understand these changes and said,

Exo. 33:16 "For how shall it be known that I have found favor in thy sight, I and thy people? Is it not in thy going with us, so that we are distinct, I and thy people, from all the other people that are upon the face of the earth?" And the Lord said to Moses, "This very thing that you have spoken I will do; for you have found favor in my sight, and I know you by name." Moses said, "I pray thee, show me thy glory."

Moses had a good bit to learn that day. He learned that God was merciful, slow to anger, and many other things, but the first thing he had to learn was to accept the Tablets of Stone.

Exo. 34:1-7 Lord said to Moses, "Cut two tablets of stone like the first; and I will write upon the tablets the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke. Be ready in the morning, and come up in the morning to Mount Sinai, and present yourself there to me on the top of the mountain. No man shall come up with you, and let no man be seen throughout all the mountain; let no flocks or herds feed before that mountain." So Moses cut two tablets of stone like the first; and he rose early in the morning and went up on Mount Sinai, as the Lord had commanded him, and took in his hand two tablets of stone. And the Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. The Lord passed before him, and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord, is a merciful and gracious God, slow to anger, and abounding in loving kindness and truth, keeping steadfast love for thousands, bearing perversion and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear [the guilty], visiting the perversion of the fathers upon the son and the son's son, to the third and the fourth [generation]."

In the remainder of the book, Moses demonstrates in act that he has accepted the Tablets of Stone by instituting them word for word, and Aaron, maker of the Golden Calf, emerges as High Priest.

We cannot spend as much time on the Book of Leviticus, but Chapter Ten lies directly in our path.

Lev. 10:1–4      Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer, and put fire in it, and laid incense on it, and offered unholy fire before the Lord, such as he had not commanded them. And fire came forth from the presence of the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord. Then Moses said to Aaron, “This is what the Lord has said, ‘I will show myself holy among those who are near me, and before all the people I will be honored.’” And Aaron held his peace.

Now we can all see what God had seen all too clearly back when Moses made the uncommanded sacrifice. The vision of the “pavement of sapphire” was too wild, and it was not the right time to “behold God, and eat and drink.” It was that act which caused God to call Moses back up to the mountain to give him the Tablets of Stone. Moses had performed a sacrifice with “the young lads from among the children of Israel” at a time when there were no proper priests, and now Aaron’s sons are dead; but a promise is a promise, “And Aaron held his peace.”

The rest of the chapter reads as follows:

Lev. 10:4–20      And Moses called Mishael and Elzaphan, the sons of Uzziel the uncle of Aaron, and said to them, “Draw near, carry your brethren from before the sanctuary out of the camp.” So they drew near, and carried them in their coats out of the camp, as Moses had said. And Moses said to Aaron and to Eleazar and Ithamar, his sons, “Do not let the hair of your heads hang loose, and do not rend your clothes, lest you die, and lest wrath come upon all the congregation; but your brethren, the whole house of Israel, may bewail the burning which the Lord has kindled. And do not go out from the door of the tent of meeting, lest you die; for the anointing oil of the Lord is upon you.” And they did according to the word of Moses.

And the Lord spoke to Aaron, saying, “Drink no wine nor strong drink, you nor your sons with you, when you go into the tent of meeting, lest you die; it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations. You are to distinguish between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean; and you are to teach the people of Israel all the statutes which the Lord has spoken to them by Moses.

And Moses said to Aaron and to Eleazar and Ithamar, his sons who were left, “Take the cereal offering that remains of the offerings by fire to the Lord, and eat it unleavened beside the altar, for it is most holy; eat it in a holy place, because it is your due and your sons’ due, from the offerings by fire to the Lord; for so I am commanded. But the breast that is waved and the thigh that is

offered you shall eat in any clean place, you and your sons and your daughters with you; for they are given as your due and your sons' due, from the sacrifices of the peace offerings of the people of Israel. The thigh that is offered and the breast that is waved they shall bring with the offerings by fire of the fat, to wave for a wave offering before the Lord, and it shall be yours, and your sons' with you, as a due for ever; as the Lord has commanded."

Now Moses diligently inquired about the goat of the sin offering, and behold, it was burned! And he was angry with Eleazar and Ithamar, the sons of Aaron who were left, saying, "Why have you not eaten the sin offering in the place of the sanctuary, since it is a thing most holy and has been given to you that you may bear the perversion of the congregation, to make atonement for them before the Lord? Behold, its blood was not brought into the inner part of the sanctuary. You certainly ought to have eaten it in the sanctuary, as I commanded." And Aaron said to Moses, "Behold, today they have offered their sin offering and their burnt offering before the Lord; and yet such things as these have befallen me! If I had eaten the sin offering today, would it have been acceptable in the sight of the Lord?" And when Moses heard that, he was content.

Moses disassociated Aaron and his living sons from the dead and from the mourning world around them and inquired of their well-being. Only then did he diligently inquire about the goat of the sin offering. He was angry and spoke to Eleazar and Ithamar, but Aaron knew that the question was addressed to him. Moses was worried that fear might have taken hold of Aaron, and that he might be unwilling to "eat the sin offering" and so to "bear the perversion" of the people. Aaron calmly said that because of what had happened it was not a good day to eat the sin offering, and this time it was Moses who "was content."

Thus, to treat any sacrifice as if it were profane is a perversion.

Lev. 7:18      If any of the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offering is eaten on the third day, he who offers it shall not be accepted, neither shall it be credited to him; it shall be an abomination, and he who eats of it shall bear his perversion.

There is one more tale from the Book of Leviticus to be told. Chapter Sixteen, six full chapters after the one we have been discussing begins:

Lev. 16:1      The Lord spoke to Moses, after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they drew near before the Lord and died.

This is one of the ways the author has of indicating a relationship between two apparently unrelated accounts.

This account begins by again warning Aaron of the dangers of the priesthood, of his need of the linen breeches and the girdle, and of the turban. Aaron is to sacrifice a bull for himself.

Lev. 16:7      “Then he shall take the two goats, and set them before the Lord at the door of the tent of meeting; and Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats, one lot for the Lord and the other lot for Azazel. And Aaron shall present the goat on which the lot fell for the Lord, and offer it as a sin offering; but the goat on which the lot fell for Azazel shall be presented alive before the Lord to make atonement over it, that it may be sent away into the wilderness to Azazel.”

After much preparation, we read

Lev. 16:20ff.      “And when he has made an end of atoning for the holy place and the tent of meeting and the altar, he shall present the live goat; and Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the perversions of the people of Israel, and all their transgressions, all their sins; and he shall put them upon the head of the goat, and send him away into the wilderness by the hand of a man who is in readiness. The goat shall bear all their perversions upon him to a cut-off land; and he shall let the goat go in the wilderness.”

Which goat goes out alone into the cut-off world is just a matter of chance.

The central teaching of the Torah concerning the Levites and hence concerning the problem of perversion is presented near the beginning of Book of Numbers:

3:12–13      Behold, I have taken the Levites from among the people of Israel. The Levites shall be mine, for all the first-born are mine; on the day that I slew all the first-born of the land of Egypt, I consecrated for my own all the first-born in Israel, both of men and of beasts, they shall be mine. I am the Lord.

We have already seen a similar passage in Exodus:

Exo. 13:11f.      And when in time to come your son asks you, “What does this mean?” you shall say to him, “By strength of hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt, from the house of bondage. For when Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the Lord slew all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both the first-born of man and the first-born of cattle. Therefore I sacrifice to the Lord all the males that first open the womb; but all the first-born of my sons I redeem.”

But now the Levites have been substituted for Israel, and soon it will be only Aaron.

Let us try to understand the passage from Numbers by going through it quite slowly. First of all, the word I have translated “first-born” literally means “the chosen,” but in common parlance the word does imply the first-born. “The chosen of the field” simply means the first fruits, not necessarily the best fruits. But among men, there is always a struggle between the two meanings.

In what sense can Levi be understood to be the first-born? In fact, Reuben was the first-born, the chosen one.

Gen. 29:32      And Leah conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Reuben.

Reuben had just been called “the chosen one”: “the people of Reuben, Israel’s first-born.” And even well after the present passage, Reuben will continue to be called “the chosen one”:

Num. 26:5      Reuben, the first-born of Israel; the sons of Reuben: of Hanoch, the family of the Hanochites; of Pallu, the family of the Palluites;

Reuben himself was, one might say, a jolly bumbler. He was the boy that found the mandrake—I suppose while playing in the fields—and gave it to his mother (Genesis 30:4). But when Rachel died, and his father was out of town, he slept with Rachel’s handmaid Bilhah. I suppose he thought that his father’s connection to Bilhah had been severed and Bilhah was his inheritance. He was, as I say, incompetent and did not understand such things.

Of the sons, he was the first to try to rescue Joseph. He planned to have the brothers throw him in a pit, intending to return later and take the boy home.

Gen. 37:19–22      And they said one to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh. Come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him: and we shall see what will become of his dreams. And Reuben heard it, and he delivered him out of their hands; and said, Let us not kill him. And Reuben said unto them, Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness, and lay no hand upon him; that he might rid him out of their hands, to deliver him to his father again.

However, as his much wiser brother Judah saw, the plan would not have worked. The boys were too angry, and they would have found another occasion. Judah’s plan of getting the boy out of the country was much wiser. When Reuben later returned to the pit and saw that it was empty, he thought the boy was dead and rent his clothes. Apparently, he never knew of Judah’s alternative plan.

When the brothers were standing before Joseph in fear, he was the first to remember what had happened to Joseph and to feel the guilt.

Gen. 42:22      And Reuben answered them, "Did I not tell you not to sin against the lad? But you would not listen. So now there comes a reckoning for his blood."

When he returned to Canaan, and the sons were trying to persuade Jacob to let them take the young boy Benjamin with them back to Egypt, it was Reuben who said,

Gen. 42:37      Slay my two sons if I do not bring him back to you.

Of course, that would be the very last thing that Jacob would have wanted. But, as we said before, Reuben was a decent fellow, but quite a bumbler, and Isaac, so far as I know, was the only man chosen because he was a bumbler.

That leaves Simon. Now Simon and Levi were always treated as a pair. They were the two who attacked the men of Shechem after the affair with Dinah. It's a rather troubling account. After a manner of speaking, the men of Shechem had become their brothers.

When Hamor first described the union of the two houses to his own people the situation seemed ideal.

Gen. 34:20ff.      So Hamor and his son Shechem came to the gate of their city and spoke to the men of their city, saying, "These men are friendly with us; let them dwell in the land and trade in it, for behold, the land is large enough for them; let us take their daughters in marriage, and let us give them our daughters. Only on this condition will the men agree to dwell with us, to become one people: that every male among us be circumcised as they are circumcised."

Yet, when he added the words

Gen. 34:23      "Will not their cattle, their property and all their beasts be ours? Only let us agree with them, and they will dwell with us."

Hamor made it clear that any such union would have effectively prevented the establishment of the just and holy nation which God had planned. Were the brothers then defending a sister and a great promise, or were they just a pair of fratricides? It's hard to say.

Jacob's prognostication is somewhat strange.

Gen. 49:5ff.      Simon and Levi are brothers; weapons of violence are their swords. O my soul, come not into their council; O my spirit, be not joined to their company; for in their anger they slay men, and in their wantonness they hamstring oxen. Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce; and their wrath, for it is cruel! I will divide them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel.

When Jacob calls them “brothers,” he clearly has in mind their rashness and the grave injustices which that led to after the marriage of Dinah in Chapter Thirty-five. And indeed, his prediction was realized, but in two very different ways.

The Sons of Levi became the priests. But since they were distributed throughout the land, they received no territories of their own.

Num. 18:20      And the Lord said to Aaron, “You shall have no inheritance in their land, neither shall you have any portion among them; I am your portion and your inheritance among the people of Israel.”

Simon’s fate, on the other hand, was total obscurity. No men of importance came from the tribe of Simon, and most of the men of that tribe settled within the borders of Judah. Of the sixteen cities which were granted to Simon in the Book of Joshua, all but five of were also listed among the cities granted to the tribe of Judah (compare Joshua 19:1–9 with Joshua 15:20–62).

Before the settlement of the land, Simon numbered 59,300, more than any tribe with exceptions of Judah and Dan. At the end of the book, that number had fallen to 22,200, less than any other tribe. By the end of the Book of Deuteronomy the tribe appears to have no independent existence whatsoever, and hence it is the only tribe which does not even receive a blessing from Moses just before his death (Deuteronomy 33).

Although it had been nearly the most numerous tribe when the people left Egypt, by the time they reached the promised land, the tribe of Simon had been completely absorbed by Judah and ceased to exist as an independent tribe.

Thus, each in its own way was “divided in Jacob and scattered in Israel.”

Simon and Levi remind one so much of the two goats. A lot was drawn; one went to God, and the other to Azazel, as if it didn’t matter much which was which. The glory and the heinous character of their act left no other division possible.

It should also be noted that when Joseph chose a hostage at random, the lot again fell upon Simon.

Now let us look more closely at the terms of this debt.

Num. 3:12–13      Behold, I have taken the Levites from among the people of Israel. The Levites shall be mine, for all the first-born are mine; on the day that I slew all the first-born of the land of Egypt, I consecrated for my own all the first-born in Israel, both of men and of beasts, they shall be mine. I am the Lord.

First, it must be noted that Israel itself neither incurred the debt, nor was it incurred at their direct request. Rather, it was incurred by the Lord on their behalf. “. . . I slew. . . .” But the debt was there, in front of them, nonetheless.

Now let us look at the conditions under which the debt was incurred:

Insofar as the people had a request, it was:

Exo. 2:23–25      In the course of those many days the king of Egypt died. And the people of Israel groaned under their bondage, and cried out for help, and their cry under bondage came up to God. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God saw the people of Israel, and God knew their condition.

It would be hard to think of a more just or more reasonable request. The Lord began His reply by saying:

Exo. 3:7–9      I have seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters; I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. And now, behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to me, and I have seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them.

But His final words are:

Exo. 4:21–23      When you go back to Egypt, see that you do before Pharaoh all the miracles which I have put in your power; but I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go. And you shall say to Pharaoh, Thus says the Lord, Israel is my first-born son, and I say to you, "Let my son go that he may serve me"; if you refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay your first-born son.

The conclusion seem to be that for the Bible, man is responsible for the ill effects of the conditions of his own existence, even though he may have in no way participated in their coming to be.

There were many other stories of Aaron which we do not have time to tell. His acts with the fire pans the reader might want to put together for himself. The two tales that one must remember are the time the heads of the families each brought a rod to plant and Aaron's became a tree. That, too, is part of Aaron's story: the way he could make art appear to be nature. Then, too, there was the time of the plague, when Aaron, though not Moses, could run into their midst and quell it.

Now we must go to the desert of Zin.

It was exactly like the beginning all over again: almost as if they hadn't moved. Then it was the desert of Sin, and this time it was the desert of Zin. But the story was the same. The people revolted for lack of water. Not much had changed in all these years. Last time God had said:

Exo. 17:6      Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, that the people may drink.

“Strike!” second person, imperative, singular, “Strike!”

God again told Moses to take up the rod, but this time, he said:

Num. 20:8ff.      Take the rod, and assemble the congregation, you and Aaron your brother, and *speak* to the rock before their eyes to yield its water; so you shall bring water out of the rock for them; so you shall give drink to the congregation and their cattle. And Moses took the rod from before the Lord, as he commanded him. And Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock, and he said to them, Hear now, you rebels; shall we bring forth water for you out of this rock? And Moses lifted up his hand and *struck* the rock with his rod twice; and water came forth abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their cattle.

“Speak”: second person, imperative, plural; “Struck”: third person, indicative, singular.

The people had their water that day, but the Lord said to Moses and Aaron:

Num. 20:12      Because you did not believe in me, to sanctify me in the eyes of the people of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them.

“You shall not bring”: second person, future, plural. Aaron will die for what Moses had done.

We can finally understand the full meaning of the end of Moses’ first conversation with God. Moses had said, “I am not a man of speech,” and this is what he meant. Like Billy Budd, Moses in anger lost the power of speech. It was that same old anger of his that had once caused him to smash the Tablets of Stone, and now it had caused him to strike the rock. That was why God angrily threw Aaron at him. “Is there not Aaron, your brother, the Levite?”

They, too, were brothers, like the first pair, and again one will die because of the action of the other. But now things have changed. Moses, Aaron, and Eleazar went up to the top of Mount Horeb

Num. 20:28      And Moses stripped Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son; and Aaron died there on the top of the mountain. Then Moses and Eleazar came down from the mountain.

And thus Aaron bore the perversion of the children of Israel. I’ve never been sure how Aaron died. I only know that his son Eleazar became High Priest, but whenever difficulties and bloodshed arose, he was silently replaced by his son Phineas.

If there is a perversion lying behind civilization it does not mean that one may escape by returning to the prepolitical:

Lev. 17:16      If he [one who eats what dies of itself or is torn by beasts] does not wash them [his clothes] and bathe his flesh, he shall bear his perversion.

It is also for Israel to know that if perversion is not “faced” and dealt with, it can kill a nation. It has done so once:

Lev. 18:25      The land became defiled and so I punished its perversions.

and that it can do so again:

Lev. 26:38f.      You will be lost among the nations and the land of your enemies shall devour [eat] you. Whoever among you is left will rot away on account of their perversion in the land of their enemies. Yea, on account of the perversion of their fathers they shall rot away along with them. But if they confess their perversion . . . I will remember . . .

Only two quotations from our list remain, and the reader may read them as seems best.

Num. 15:31      If a soul raises his hand [and murders] . . . his perversion is upon him.

Deu. 19:15      A single witness shall not raise up against any man for any perversion or any sin . . . .

The question must still remain open as to whether the author of Job was aware of this tradition. However one reads it, Job says in 10:4–6, “Have You eyes of flesh? Can You see as men see?” “Can time mean to You what time means to mortal man? Do Your years pass by as our years, that You probe back into my perversions and track down my sin?”

4. For Zophar, the incommensurability which has been perplexing Job finds its origins in the fact that the workings out of human justice take place in a realm far beyond its own ken. No view except God’s view is large enough to make sense of itself.

5. The problem, according to Zophar, is not merely one of having a large enough horizon. It is the myriad of little separate worlds, each of which might suddenly come into contact with any other, or claim a being apart from any other. No world can perceive its effect on any other world until God brings them together, and then it is too late.

6. This incommensurability is only apparent and is due to the limited character of man’s superficial view of his own world. But if man were to clean his

own heart of all injustice, and trust in God, all would be well, and man would emerge as the center of all that is visible.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

**1** Then Job answered and said: **2** “You are, indeed of the people and with you learning will die, **3** but like you, I too have some understanding which does not fall short of yours.<sup>1</sup> Who is not capable of such things? **4** But now I have become a joke<sup>2</sup> to my friends, one who would ‘Call on God and have him answer’—a joke, a simple, innocent joke! **5** For those who can think at their ease there is always scorn for calamity. But it’s out there waiting for anyone whose foot happens to slip.<sup>3</sup> **6** Oh, there is peace enough in the tents of robbers and security for those who enrage God,<sup>4</sup> which God Himself has placed in their hand.

**7** Just ask the beasts and they will show you; or the birds in the sky, they can tell you, **8** or have a chat with the earth and it will teach you. Even the fish in the sea can relate the tale for you. **9** Who among all these does not know that it was the hand of God that has done all this?<sup>5</sup>

**10** In his hand is the soul<sup>6</sup> of every living thing and the breath of each bodily man. **11** Does not the ear try words as the palate tastes food?<sup>7</sup> **12** Is wisdom with the old or does length of days make for understanding?

**13** With Him are wisdom and valor. His are counsel and understanding, **14** and what He tears down can never be rebuilt. He closes in on a man and nothing is ever reopened. **15** He restrains the waters and all is parched. He sends them out again and the land is overturned. **16** With Him are strength and soundness. Both the one who errs<sup>8</sup> and the one who causes the error are His. **17** He makes counselors to go about ravaged; and judges He drives into madness. **18** He undoes the belt of kings and binds a strip about their loins.<sup>9</sup>

**19** He makes priests to go about ravaged; and subverts the mighty. **20** He obliterates the speech of the trustworthy and takes taste from the elders. **21** He pours out disgrace upon noble men and looses the girdle of the well armed. **22** He unveils deep things from out of the darkness; He leads the Shadow of Death out into the light.<sup>10</sup> **23** He makes nations great and then He destroys<sup>11</sup> them. He expands nations and there He leaves them. **24** He obliterates the heart from the heads of the peoples of the earth. He makes them wander through chaos with no path. **25** They grope in the darkness without a light. He makes them wander like a drunken man.<sup>12</sup>

### *Comments*

1. They live in a world which they share with a whole people, while Job is alone in his. Perhaps they understand that world as well as any that live in it, yet each world is only one and all must be heard.

2. "a laugh"

3. While Job has a certain kind of respect for Zophar's wisdom of the ages, that which comes only with time, reflection, and belief, he cannot totally ignore the surface of things, the immediate look of things as it reveals itself to anyone who is immediately involved. But the surface is all too easily forgotten, and its uncomfortable remnants can be escaped by turning them into a joke. At this point in his thought, this notion of immediate involvement is of prime importance for Job. Without it things are merely the way they are said to be.

4. The meaning of the text is obscure.

5. For Job, this is the unintended irony lying behind the great Psalms like Nineteen, "The heavens are telling the glory of God."

6. The word can mean "breath," "wind," or "spirit."

7. Although the Book of Job is wrapped around the contention between "hearing" and "seeing" for the true image of "knowledge," the imagery of "taste" and of the "palate" is of some help in our attempt to understand what Job means by knowing. The subject first came up in:

Job 6:6        Can what is tasteless be eaten without salt or does the slime of an egg white have any taste? My soul refuses to touch them. They are like a contagion in my daily bread.

Taste is what makes knowledge worth while. The taste of a world is what makes that world livable. Unlike seeing, taste includes the most important aspects of an object, its beauties and its uglinesses. Knowledge is not a passive act. It presents itself to us in such a way that we cannot but react. At this stage, to know is not to comprehend the whole as an object outside of the knower, but to ingest a part of the object, either to make it part of oneself, or to spit it out.

Job constantly plays with the fact that the palate is an organ of both understanding and speech, as if the knowing coming in and the speech going out were the same thing.

Job 12:20      He obliterates the speech of the trustworthy and takes taste from the elders.

Job 6:30        There is no injustice on my tongue, and yet does not my palate know the taste of ruination.

At a certain point in the text, Job says:

Job 29:10.      The voice of the nobles was hushed, and their tongue cleaved to their palate, for an ear had heard and it blessed me; an eye had seen and it approved, because I had saved a poor man when he cried out, and an orphan when there was no one else to help him.

But later, Elihu says:

Job 33:2      Behold, I open my lips, and the tongue in my palate begins to speak.

From these two statements, it's hard to know exactly what is meant by the word "palate." The least one can say is that it is an organ of taste and of speech: that it is not the tongue itself, but something which, in some way or another, can contain the tongue.

When Job says:

Job 31–30      Could I have rejoiced when hardship struck at those that hate me or come to life because evil had found them, without giving my palate over to sin by asking for his life with a curse.

he means that his speech is not merely on the tip of his tongue, as we sometimes say, but comes from within and hence implies room inside, out of which the speech came, a world if you like. He means that speech is necessarily accompanied by pleasure or pain, anger or delight. He would have tasted the sinfulness in his curse as he spoke it. This adds to the notion that for the moment at least, there is, for Job, an immediate interrelationship bordering on unity of an object, awareness of it, human speech concerning it, and human reaction to it.

He means that speech can only be feeling because it is speech about a world.

8. The word used implies a wrong done inadvertently.

9. The kaleidoscopic melange of order and disarray which Job sees in the world about him is wonderfully captured by language of the text. The word for "belt" is the same as the word which we have been translating as "discipline." Further, the word for "bind" also comes from that same root, as if to say: "He undoes the discipline of kings and disciplines them by a discipline about their loins." In other words, civil discipline has been forcibly replaced by a loincloth. The effect is enhanced in Hebrew by the fact that the word for "strip" also sounds as if it came from the same root: "He undoes the discipline of kings and disciplines them by a discipline about their loins."

10.

Job 10:21f.      Well, I will be going soon, going to a land of darkness and shadowy death and I will not return; to a land whose light is darkness, shadowy death and without order—A land whose light is darkness."

At this point, for Job, the taunting chaos we see is only a reminder of a true underlying chaos which we do not see.

11. causes them to perish

12. The surface world, to which Job has committed himself to taking seriously, is a crazy contradictory world, full of wisdom, valor, and madness; full of roads to glory that lead nowhere. But for Job, it's all God's world and it is through that world that we know Him. The world is too orderly, too revelatory, to be a chaos, and yet that is where it always finds itself.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

1 “All this my eye has seen; my ear has heard and understood. 2 Whatever you know, I know, nor do I fall short of you. 3 I would speak with the Almighty! I wish to argue with God. 4 But you are a bunch of worthless doctors who plaster with lies. 5 Who can move you to silence? It would be wisdom on your part. 6 Hear my argument; listen to my quarrel.

7 Would you speak unjustly for God’s sake? For His sake would you speak words of treachery? 8 Would you show Him favor or argue His case for him. 9 Will that be your ace in the hole when He comes to examine you? Do you think you can deceive Him as you can deceive a mortal? 10 Certainly He Himself would argue against you if you were to show Him even a hidden favor, 11 will His preference not be to terrify and to let His fear fall upon you? 12 Your aphorisms are proverbs of ash, your bulwarks, bulwarks of clay.<sup>1</sup>

13 Be silent now for my sake. I will speak, let come upon me what may. 14 For what reason do I take my flesh between my teeth and my life in my hands? 15 It may be that He will slay me. I have no higher expectations.<sup>2</sup> None the less I will defend my ways before Him. 16 That too has become for me salvation, for the impious do not approach Him.<sup>3</sup>

17 Listen, listen to my words. With your ears attend to my declaration. 18 I have laid out my case and I know I shall be vindicated. 19 Who is he that would contend with me? Now, as things are I can only remain silent and perish. 20 But do two things for me and I shall no longer be hid from your face. 21 Remove Your hand from me, and let not Your terror frighten me. 22 Then summon me up and I will reply, or let me speak and You shall give answer.

23 How many are my perversions and my sins? Let me know my transgression and my vices.<sup>4</sup> 24 Why do You hide your face from me and think of me as Your enemy? 25 Would You terrorize me like a driven leaf? or put me to flight like a piece of dry straw, 26 that You write bitter things against me and bring up the perversions of my youth?<sup>5</sup> 27 You put my feet in the stocks. You scrutinize my every wandering. You circumscribe the foundation under my feet, 28 and all becomes worn out like a rotten thing—like a piece of clothing that the moths have eaten.<sup>6</sup>

*Comments*

1. Job begins this part of his argument with the assertion that he has heard and fully understood the tradition. The implication here is that the tradition as such is not capable of defending itself. This leads to a new turn of things when he says; “I would speak with the Almighty! I wish to argue with God.”

To uphold the tradition by denying the surface, or as Job thinks of it, by plastering over its wounds with lies, that is, by calling things just when they

seem not to be just, is ultimately destructive of the tradition itself. The true foundation of the tradition must ultimately lie at ease with the surface, and any foundation which must smooth over the surface and, by implication, cannot meet it on its own terms, is a “bulwark of clay.”

2. This is the *ketir* (what is actually written). The *geri* (how the tradition says it is actually to be read) would give “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.”

3. Again, Job is playing with the psalmic litterateur. There is what must have been a well-known phrase:

My strength and the music of the Lord, and He has become for me salvation.

which occurs in Exodus 15:2, Isaiah 12:2, and Psalms 118:14. In Psalms 118:21 it is also mindful of the phrase

Thank thee that thou hast answered and thou hast become for me salvation.

Job, by the way, was not the only biblical character to play with the line. Joab once said to his brother Abishai:

If the Syrians are too strong for me, then thou shalt become for me salvation.

Job has been caught between the two worlds. The surface and human care for the surface have demanded what wisdom has forbidden. As in the case of Socrates, Job’s courage has no existence in its own right, but is an integral part of his grasp of the importance of the question in front of him. Job must act in accordance with those human concerns, while feeling the full weight of wisdom’s prohibition.

When quoting the phrase “[it/he] has become for me salvation,” he has added the critical words “That too,” as if to suggest that he may have glimpsed some new kind of salvation, though searching it out may be full of danger and require great courage. In light of the first verses of the chapter, we can see that Job, like Socrates, implicitly suggests a need to reconsider our notion of true piety. It may consist of our attempt to understand the words of the God, in Socrates’ case, the Delphic Oracle, by taking them seriously, while facing the claims of the surface.

We must also remember that in verse 9, Job had implied that it was a lack of courage in Zophar that led him to his false piety.

4. At this point Job pauses half in expectation, but receiving no reply, he turns and goes on.

5. In this passage, Job, too, associates perversion with the long-distant past, but for him it is a long-distant dead past. This was not the first time. Back in Chapter Ten he had said:

Job 10:4      Have You eyes of flesh? Can You see as mortals see? Can time mean to You what time means to man? Do Your years pass by as our years, that You probe back into my perversions and track down my sin? Somewhere in Your mind I am not guilty, and yet there is none to save me from Your hand.

Not perversion but the charge of perversion is the true source of human suffering. Told in writings that he is heir to a long-forgotten perversion, man is denied a past on which to build a firm foundation. He becomes the piece of dry straw blowing in every wind.

Twice before Job had connected the question of perversion with the problem of being watched:

Job 7:18      Yes, and inspect him every morning and test him every minute. When will you let me be? You'll not even let me alone to swallow my own spit. Supposing I have sinned, what have I done to you, Oh Thou Great Watcher Of Man? Why have you set me on course against you so that I become a burden even to myself? Why can you not pardon my transgressions or forgive my perversions? For now I shall lie down in the dust. You will seek for me, but I am not.

And again in Chapter Ten.

Job 10:12ff.      Your dealings with me were full of life and loving care. Your guardianship watched over my spirit. But You treasured all these things in Your heart. I know what You have in mind; if I sin You'll be watching and You'll not clear me from my perversion. Well if I have been guilty the grief is mine, but even when I am innocent I have been so sated with reproach that no feeling of honor is left in me and I see only my feebleness.

and will soon do so again:

Job 14:16      Then no longer would You keep track of my every step, or be on the watch for my sin. My transgression would be sealed up in a pouch and You would plaster over my perversions.

It is this sense of being watched, not because of anything he has done, but because of what he is, because of his inherited perversion, that has reduced Job to nonbeing.

People do indeed suffer for the actions of past generations, but to regard that as some form of poetic or even divine justice rather than a horrible necessity is to undermine that sense of honor required to right the effects of those ancient actions.

6. Here we get a closer look at Job's first view of the clash. He can lay out his case and it can be made solid. He can demand to know the exact nature of

the charges laid up against him and their precise number. Such is the nature of all the evidence, but it is not clear that there is any way of presenting such evidence in the other court. Like Socrates, Job can only speak or reply by means of human speech, but unless room can be left for it, nothing that Job has, or sees, or knows will be worth the piece of clothing that the moths have eaten. Cf. note to 7:21.

#### CHAPTER FOURTEEN

**1** Man (*'adam*) is born of woman, short-lived and full of rage. **2** He sprouts up as a fresh bud and withers. He flits by as a shadow and cannot endure. **3** Can You open Your eyes even to one such as that, and still come along with him<sup>1</sup> to proceedings raised against You?<sup>2</sup> **4** Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean thing? Not one!<sup>3</sup> **5** His time is fixed. You keep the number of his months. You have set him limits which he cannot overstep. **6** Then turn Your gaze from him and let him be, so long as his days as a hireling are acceptable.<sup>4</sup>

**7** For a tree there is hope. If it is cut down, it renews itself and its sprouting never wanes. **8** When its roots become old in the land and its stump is left in the dust to die, **9** then at the scent of water it bursts into bloom and sends out branches like a young sapling. **10** But when a man (*gebher*) dies, he perishes and is no more. A man (*'adam*) expires, and where is he? **11** The waters are gone from the sea. The river becomes a wasteland and is dried up. **12** A man lies down and rises not. Till the heavens are no more they shall not wake nor be roused from their slumber.<sup>5</sup>

**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. **14** If a man (*gebher*) dies, will he come back to life again? All the days of my service I have waited in expectation for my release to come. **15** You would call. I would answer and You would have love for the work of Your hands.<sup>6</sup> **16** Then no longer would You keep track of my every step, or be on the watch for my sin. **17** My transgression would be sealed up in a pouch and You would plaster over my perversions.<sup>7</sup>

**18** A mountain has fallen and crumbled away, a rock dislodged from its place.<sup>8</sup> **19** The waters have worn the stones away and its torrents have washed away the dust of the land. So, You have trashed<sup>9</sup> all mortal hope. **20** You have overpowered man, and he has resigned. You mangled his face and sent him off. **21** His sons were honored but he never knew of it. They were in disgrace, but he was unaware.<sup>10</sup> **22** His body surrounds him with pain, and his spirit is eaten away.

#### Comments

1. Note the change to the third person. Job will defend not himself simply, but mankind in his own person.

2. Man is not the best of all conceivable creatures. He is, in fact, “born of woman, short-lived and full of rage,” yet that is the man whom Job has chosen to defend. Is God willing to judge mankind in terms of the highest goals of which they are capable, or will He insist upon the highest simply? It is one thing to strive toward impossible goals from within, but to feel constantly judged by them from without, and so to ever be made to feel wanting is, for Job, to render all those strivings meaningless.

3. Justice must expect from each thing the highest possible; to demand more of a man, or of a tree, would be unjust. One wonders if these thoughts that Job is thinking at this juncture might not be part of what led men to the concept of nature in its classical sense.

4. If man’s nature is limited, a way must be found for him to be.

5. The compelling mood of this passage lies in the capacity of a man with thoughts so laden with death to give such full articulation to a world bursting with life.

6. Thoughts of the slumber of death have tired Job, and now he is slowly drifting off into a wonderful daydream in which the two worlds begin to blur over and merge into a single world. All the contradictions are gone. There is calling and answering. The hands that made Job no longer devour him, but love him. It is a wide world full of room for man and for God.

7. Job’s daydream culminates with an end to the watching and the cessation of all charges of perversion.

8. Job suddenly wakes, and the din of the clashing worlds has been magnified a thousandfold, and the surface world has been washed away. There is nothing left but the pain of the lost dream.

9. caused to perish

10. This verse seems rather critical, though I have not been able to understand it as I should wish. The best I can do is to point out that when Job suddenly wakes from his dream and finds himself back in the clashing worlds, feeling gruffly awakened by his fall from the dream, his first thoughts concern not the problem of perversion, but its inverse. The problem has shifted from an overburdensome awareness of the acts of the father on the part of the son, to an agonizing lack of awareness of the acts of the son on the part of the father, but I have not been able to see the implications of the shift.