

# Interpretation

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# Interpretation

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# The Book of Job

## Translation and Commentary on Chapters 30 and 31

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### CHAPTER THIRTY

**1** But now they have turned me into the joke<sup>1</sup>, those younger than I whose fathers I would have felt contempt to put with my sheep dogs. **2** What is the strength of their hands to me, those men from whom all vigor has been lost, **3** a wasteland in want and starvation. They gnaw at a parched land and destroy as they are destroyed. **4** They gather mallow and leaves from the bushes. Broom root has become their food. **5** Driven from the heart of things, they are cried upon like thieves. **6** They find their quarter in river beds, in holes in the dust and the rock. **7** Braying in the bushes, they huddle together under a weed. **8** Sons of Fools and Sons of Nobodies! They have been whipped from the land.<sup>2</sup>

**9** And now they have made a ditty of me and I have become a byword to them. **10** Oh, how they abhor me and keep their distance; they do not even refrain from spitting in my face. **11** They unfasten my tent rope and down I come. They have thrown off all restraint. **12** On my right, flowering youths rise up and put me to flight. They pave roads of destruction against me. **13** They tear up my path and foster my demise but it does them no good.

**14** They come in a great burst, wave after wave of destruction.<sup>3</sup>

**15** Terror turns upon me; it pursues my gentility<sup>4</sup> like the wind,<sup>5</sup> and my salvation passes by like a cloud. **16** Now, my soul has poured itself out, and days of misery have taken hold of me. **17** By night my bones are whittled away, and the gnawing never ceases.<sup>6</sup> **18** My clothing envelops me in great restraint and the collar of my tunic chokes at me. **19** It throws me into the mire and I become like dust and ashes.

**20** I cry out to You, but You give no answer. I stand there, but you only stare at me. **21** You have turned brutal<sup>8</sup> and with the might of Your hand You persecute me. **22** You hoist me up onto the wind<sup>9</sup> and set me astride to be tossed about in the wreckage. **23** I know that You will deliver me to death, the house prepared for all that lives; **24** yet will not those in turmoil reach out their hand and cry out in their calamity.<sup>10</sup>

The first twenty-nine chapters of the translation and commentary appeared in Volume 24, Numbers 2 and 3, and Volume 25, Number 1, of *Interpretation*. The balance will appear in future issues.

25 Did I not weep for those who had seen hard times? My soul grieved for the poor. 26 I hoped for the good but there came evil; I waited in expectation for the light, but there came only a murk. 27 My bowels churned, never at rest. Days of poverty were ever before me. 28 I walked in gloom with no sun above. I stood up in the assembly and cried out; 29 and so I became a brother to the Jackal<sup>11</sup> and friend to the ostrich.<sup>12</sup> 30 My skin turned black and is now peeling off me; my bones are scorched by the heat. 31 My lyre has turned to mourning and my flute to the voice of tears.

### *Comments*

1. Verse 1 is intended as a reference back to verse 24 of the last chapter. Job's friendly laughter, intended to relieve others of the burden of that crippling kind of gratitude which leaves them with only a feeling of debilitating dependence, has been answered by a derisive laughter.

2. In turning laughter into scorn, they have, in Job's eyes, lost all humanity without gaining true animality. Their needs remain human, but the contempt implied by their jest makes it impossible for them to join with others except in the most direct sense of huddling together under a weed, sharing only their inability to share. They are human without the means to be human.

3. Job finds that he is no longer able to maintain the fiction that these men are powerless and can do no harm. The mass effect of those who cannot see the surface has, for Job, overwhelmed the surface.

4. The place of laughter, joking, playing, of scoffing, and scorn, all the same word in the Hebrew text, has become confused for Job and intertwined with the problem of contempt and compassion. When his goodnatured jest which stemmed from his compassion became their gibes, their contempt for him became his contempt for them.

The confusion of his feelings of contempt and compassion then works upon his received notion of being watched to produce a deep sense of guilt which terrifies his inner sense of gentility.

5. or "spirit."

6. Verse 17 is to be taken in a completely literal way. It is not uncommon for people to be told by their dentist that their gums are in poor shape because they clench their teeth at night. It is hard to imagine how much pain we can both cause ourselves and withstand in sleep by twisting and turning, feeling without waking. But why should Job feel this guilt so deeply in his being and punish himself so harshly for a crime which he knows he did not commit? This is perhaps the most fundamental question raised by the book. It is a question that has been peering at us from behind every page, an enigma too vital to be evaded by speaking of "two Jobs" or of multiple authorship.

In facing this problem in a day when the works of Dr. Sigmund Freud have become so much a part of the air we breathe, I feel much like a five-year-old boy dressed in his Little Lord Fauntleroy suit, trudging home from the pond with a tiny sailboat under his arm. How shall he relate the great saga of his day's adventures at the dinner table when the list of guests includes such men as Mr. Darwin and Mr. Melville? Yet even in our little pond the question still looms at us large: Why should a man like Job feel the weight of guilt for a crime which he knows he did not commit, or feel that his soul has been perverted by an original and all-encompassing act of the fathers that for him has no such power over the human spirit?

As Eliphaz, and in fact as the whole of human society known to Job, sees it, Job is too perverted to recognize his own perversion with any clarity, and his view of the world is too narrow to see his own sin. He must learn to forgo the limited view of man and listen to the voice of God as it reveals itself to him in his own night visions. Job's nightly twistings and turnings are caused by his own guilt. Conscience is the means of divine retribution. But doubts have been raised concerning this way of looking at the world both in terms of itself and in terms of the injustice that it may be causing with regard to Job.

Is it then, that by considering himself guilty and by causing himself such pain in order to prove to himself the existence of his guilt, he can come to terms with other pains, ones which have no cause? Our guilt, confirmed to us by our own self-punishment, then becomes the reason for our otherwise reasonless pain.

Or does the feeling of guilt act as our only immediate guarantor of the cosmic significance of our actions?

Or do we, by condemning ourselves of sin, wish to place ourselves on a rank beyond ourselves by becoming the condemner as well as the condemned? If this is the case, what does it imply? Is it some strange kind of Kantian freedom that we feel, in that we, and no other, such as the deposed father, have become Lord and Master over ourselves? Or is it a way we have of silently and subliminally feeling the joys of tyranny, even at the expense of living our daily life under the pain and dread of that tyranny.

Compelling as these reasons are in general, they do not seem to be quite adequate in the case of Job. These arguments presuppose and gain their force from the cognitive power of human thought. They intend to give a thoughtful and reasoned account of the workings of the human psyche which touch the heart of the matter as it is apart from the needs and drives of the investigator himself. This may not, of course, always happen, but the science assumes that at least in theory it is possible. That would suggest that the human psyche can only be understood if it is fundamentally understood as something capable of understanding, and hence of misunderstanding itself.

Life would be so simple if the two, science and the all-too-human psyche, were so easily separable, but they are not. The Newtonian concept of inertia, a

once countertintuitive notion arrived at by much human labor, thought, and reflection, has by now become a mindless feeling that has worked its way down to the bottom of the gut. Galileo was almost killed for believing that the earth moved, and yet in not too long a time most people on the street believed it. It is, however, doubtful that many could articulate any reason for that belief. Surely they had nothing as cogent as those who had once said, "The sun moves, I see it rise every morning." Ghosts of thoughts that once lived in other minds haunt our every step.

One might argue that our Newtonian ghosts have not, and perhaps even cannot, bury themselves down deeply enough into our souls to live in the land where dreams are made. This is surely true, and yet they do seem to be on their way.

Perhaps the one thinker of the past who was most alive to the fact that any serious attempt to give an account of human thought must regard it as an activity which is capable of understanding itself, is Socrates.

Such questions lead one to remember his account of a discussion he once had with a man named Thrasymachus. Plato recounts the story in *The Republic*. Thrasymachus sees a world in which justice was the advantage of the stronger. Socrates begins by asking him whether if eating a great quantity of beef is to the advantage of Polydamas the pancratiast, does that mean that it is to the advantage of all of us to do so.

1. Justice is the advantage of the stronger
2. The stronger is Polydamas
  - A. Justice is the advantage of Polydamas
3. The advantage of Polydamas is eating a great quantity of beef
  - B. Justice is eating a great quantity of beef.

QED

The whole argument is very silly, not what Thrasymachus meant at all. Not one word is used in the right way, but it makes Thrasymachus a bit nervous all the same to see his words leading to a world larger than the one he focused on. What he meant, of course, is that justice is the advantage of the ruler and that all must follow his command. As it turns out, somewhere on the periphery of Thrasymachus's world is the notion that the stronger knows what is truly to his own advantage and what is not. Somehow he must have always known that, or his world would never have made any sense to him, but he cannot focus in on that notion without having to make a radical reinterpretation of his understanding of the world.

Once Thrasymachus is forced to consider the environment of his own thought, however, he embraces it with vigor, although Socrates gives him the opportunity of rejecting it.

“It doesn’t make any difference, Polemarchus,” I said, “if Thrasymachus says it that way now, let’s accept it from him. Now tell me, Thrasymachus, was this what you wanted to say the just is, what *seems* to the stronger to be the advantage of the stronger, whether it is advantageous or not? Shall we assert that this is the way you mean it?”

“Not in the least,” he said. “Do you suppose that I call a man who makes mistakes ‘stronger’ at the moment when he is making mistakes?”

“I did suppose you to mean this,” I said, “when you agreed that the rulers are not infallible but also make mistakes in some things.” (340 c)

This step is fatal to Thrasymachus’s argument, although it is hardly fatal to the man. It means that Thrasymachus was forced to step outside his hero to see his wisdom rather than remain inside to feel his power. He does this partly because he has to make sure of his power in the future, but partly because he wants to be admired, and to be admired means to be admired from the outside. This means that he wants to be recognized as possessing an art. But when Socrates threatens to make Thrasymachus step beyond his art as those who care for horses are judged by those who can tell whether a horse has been well cared for or not, Thrasymachus turns on him:

“Tell me, Socrates, do you have a wet nurse?” “Why this?” I said. “Shouldn’t you answer instead of asking such things?” “Because,” he said, “you know she neglects your sniveling nose and doesn’t give it the wiping you need, since it’s her fault you do not even recognize sheep or shepherd.” (343 a)

Shepherds, according to Thrasymachus, only rule for the good of the sheep insofar as it makes them fatter and gives the shepherd more meat. Stepping outside in order to see what is best for the sheep themselves can at best only be ancillary. The only real question is, “What is best for the shepherd?” Thus Thrasymachus has escaped Socrates but in so doing, he has failed to escape himself.

Near the end of their discussion, Thrasymachus readily agrees to the statement:

“Let us say it, then, as follows,” I said, “the just man does not try to better what is like but what is unlike, while the unjust man tries to better both like and unlike?” (349d)

For example, the musical man is able to best the unmusical man precisely by tuning his lyre in the same way that other musical men do. But for that same reason the musical man does not try to best another musical man, and the same is true of the wise and of the just. But unlike the artisans, the unjust man, who wishes to better, that is to better anybody or anything, can have no common goals outside himself in terms of which he could be praised. Thrasymachus, who so wants to be seen and to be heard, has finally been pried out of himself

in order to see if he can be seen. He blushes and remains as silent as one who has been seen by a bear.

Socrates's goal, then, is not to defeat Thrasymachus or to prove that he was wrong. Perhaps that can't even be done. What he may have been able to do is to help him find those bits and byways on the periphery of his vision which might lead him beyond his own horizon.

The case of Meno, on the other hand, is a different matter. Meno has a teaching, or dogma, or one might even say, an ideology. It is only the dead remains of a thought which first grew up in an other mind, the mind of Gorgias. Since he merely inherited these thoughts, Meno is not in touch those vague and all but forgotten peripheral thoughts which dwell in the outer limits of Gorgias's horizon, and which underlie all that is at the focus of his attention. Only Gorgias himself can work his way back to those dim and smudged ideas which surround his thought and through which he must pass if he is to go beyond them. If he does not they will always be with him in their unarticulated character. Since our horizons are vague and shaggy, drifting off into a world beyond itself, only it can offer a means of escape. Meno, then cannot escape until he is willing to face his own horizon.

Modern science, however, in its search for rigor and exactitude demands a well-defined object.

Freud, of course, sees that there is no sharp distinction between the ego and the id, but in his attempt to emulate what is generally thought to be the way of modern science, he did not give sufficient heed to Plato's partly explicit, partly implicit claim that all meaningful human thought, including his own and hence Freud's as well, can only take place along that edge and in the gray where reason tries to make clearer to itself what it has already seen.

Man is both a social and a rational animal. The two are not identical. Job, so far as he knew, was the first man to feel the full implication of that distinction, and being the first, he met it unprepared while it was yet naked and unmediated by prior human thought.

We are born as social animals, weak, feeble, and in need of others. The everyday life of action requires well-defined horizons established either by the Fathers or divine revelation, or by those ghosts we call our common heritage. Without them there would be insufficient grounds for communal action or communal life. But reason does not believe in ghosts. It can only grasp them by bringing them back to life as a rethought thought. Sociality, on the other hand, knows only that it can only live by learning to live with the ghosts. Our lives depend upon it.

Well we remember Bildad's words:

8:8-10      Only ask of the first generation. Seat yourself firmly upon what their fathers had searched out; for we are only of a yesterday and know nothing, our days are but a shadow passing over the land. Will they not

teach you and speak to you as the words come tumbling out of their heart?

But is that “asking” the asking of piety and belief, or the asking of wonder and of doubt? For Bildad the answer is clear, and to do otherwise is not only to try to answer the riddle of the Sphinx, it is to threaten Laius as well.

Reason and dedication to the surface, then, demand the one thing forbidden by divine law, tradition, and sociality, that is, autonomous understanding.

Job is both a rational animal and a social animal, and he is both in the deepest sense. He therefore lives under two shaggy horizons. For each the other is and is not there. As we have seen, sociality can only articulate itself to itself as the forbidding and hence, as the rewarder, or savior, and this is the form in which Job is aware of it. This act of self-forbidding of what the self wants most is that which is felt as guilt.

7. Greenberg translates: “With great effort I change my clothing: The neck of my tunic fits my waist.” The Revised Standard translates: “With violence it seizes my garment; it binds me about like the collar of my tunic,” but it gives as an alternative translation “My garment is disfigured.” Here the first problem is the meaning of the word *ithappas*. Its root means “to search.” In the reflexive, it means “to distort” or “to disguise oneself” by a change of clothing (Cf. I Sam. 28:8, I Kings 20:38, 22:30). That would account for Greenberg’s translation. In every case the emphasis is on the act of disguising, however, not on the change of clothing. It must also be pointed out that the verb is in the third not the first person. On the other hand, while the word *azar* does mean “to gird,” the emphasis seems to be on the strength rather than on the waist. I then take him to be saying the he feels his clothing pulling at him and distorting him. This means taking the word for “clothing” as the subject rather the object of the verb. Think only of Phaedra.

8. See notes to 30:29, 39:1, and 41:2.

9. or “spirit”

10. This is felt as the silent stare of self at self in which the division of self from self has itself become divided. Job the weak has become Job the forbidding, dissociated from itself and from its sociality, while Job the autonomous has found that he could no longer be autonomous when cut off from his divided self.

11. The Hebrew (*tan*) has several meanings and each, as we shall see, constantly rings of the others. It can mean “sea monster” or the “Serpent” (some say “snake,” others say the “dragon”), or, as in our case, it can mean the “jackal.” To catch the ring of the way in which each always bears an echo of the other, think of the word “seahorse,” which, partly because it is a somewhat strange word, we cannot hear without vaguely thinking of the land horse, although in the case of the word *tan* the connection was probably as good but stronger.

Even when used with a singular verb, like the name of God, it normally appears with a plural ending, either the regular Hebrew ending (*tanim*), or the somewhat more foreign, and hence somewhat more mystical-sounding (*tanin*).

In the Biblical text, it is often connected with the Leviathan, and may have even been considered to be etymologically connected with it—*levi*, “to twist,” and *tan*.

We first meet the Tan in the book of Genesis as the great sea monster.

Gen. 1:21      So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds,

The next time we meet the *tan* it seems to be something more like a serpent:

Exod. 7:9ff.      “When Pharaoh says to you, ‘Prove yourselves by working a miracle,’ then you shall say to Aaron, ‘Take your rod and cast it down before Pharaoh, that it may become a serpent (*tan*).’ So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and did as the LORD commanded; Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh and his servants, and it became a serpent (*tan*). Then Pharaoh summoned the wise men and the sorcerers; and they also, the magicians of Egypt, did the same by their secret arts. For every man cast down his rod, and they became serpents. But Aaron’s rod swallowed up their rods.”

It is not, however, the normal word for serpent (*nachash*) which had been used in an earlier passage:

Exod. 4:2      The LORD said to him, “What is that in your hand?” He said, “A rod.” And he said, “Cast it on the ground.” So he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent and Moses fled from it. But the LORD said to Moses, “Put out your hand, and take it by the tail”—so he put out his hand and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand.

In fact, the word *tan* seems to be used to mean “serpent” in only one other verse in the Bible:

Ps. 91:13      You will tread on the lion and the adder, the young lion and the serpent (*tan*) you will trample under foot. Because he cleaves to me in love, I will deliver him; I will protect him, because he knows my name.

In its role as the sea monster, it is closely related to the Leviathan,

Isa. 27:1      In that day the LORD with his hard and great and strong sword will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent (*nachash*), Leviathan the twisting serpent (*nachash*), and he will slay the monster (*tan*) that is in the sea.

and as we can see, the Biblical authors are again divided in their understanding of the ultimate standing of the *tan* of the sea, although the division is not as harsh as it was in the case of the Leviathan. See note to 3:8.

According to some accounts, the monster will one day be destroyed,

Ps. 74:13      Thou didst divide the sea by thy might; thou didst break the heads of the monster on the waters.

Isa. 51:9      Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the LORD; awake, as in days of old, the generations of long ago. Was it not thou that didst cut Rahab in pieces, that didst pierce the monster? Was it not thou that didst dry up the sea, the waters of the great deep; that didst make the depths of the sea a way for the redeemed to pass over?

whereas for others he will be tamed;

Ps. 148:6      And he established them for ever and ever; he fixed their bounds which cannot be passed. Praise the LORD from the earth, you sea monsters and all deeps,

This time, however, there is no hint of playfulness or admiration.

Ezekiel gives two fuller descriptions of the beast which might be of some help to the reader:

Ezek. 29:2      Son of man, set your face against Pharaoh king of Egypt, and prophesy against him and against all Egypt; speak, and say, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I am against you, Pharaoh king of Egypt, the great monster that lies in the midst of his streams, that says, 'My Nile is my own; I made it.' I will put hooks in your jaws, and make the fish of your streams stick to your scales; and I will draw you up out of the midst of your streams, with all the fish of your streams which stick to your scales.

Ezek. 32:2      Son of man, raise a lamentation over Pharaoh king of Egypt, and say to him: You consider yourself a lion among the nations, but you are like a monster in the seas; you burst forth in your rivers, trouble the waters with your feet, and foul their rivers. Thus says the Lord GOD: I will throw my net over you with a host of many peoples; and I will haul you up in my dragnet. And I will cast you on the ground, on the open field I will fling you, and will cause all the birds of the air to settle on you, and I will gorge the beasts of the whole earth with you.

Here the *tan* appears as the great blue Egyptian hippopotamus-god, reported maker of the Nile which Pharaoh pretended to be, but in Ezekiel, he is revealed to be not the maker but the destroyer. This would explain why the serpent (*nachash*) that was destroyed in Exodus appeared to Pharaoh as a *tan*. It was himself.

Job's great complaint that man is ever watched rather than trusted, began in Chapter 7, verse 12 with the words: "Am I the sea or some monster (*tan*) that You set watch over me?" But now his awareness of being watched and the failure of his brothers to recognize his brotherhood have left him feeling strangely pulled by a sense of brotherhood with that same *tan*, but this time it has come in the form of the Jackal.

The jackal, the wild cousin of the domestic dog and constant companion to the ostrich, is pictured throughout the Bible as roaming through the land of desolation just beyond the world of man.

Neh. 2:1        I went out by night by the Valley Gate to the Jackal's Well and to the Dung Gate, and I inspected the walls of Jerusalem which were broken down and its gates which had been destroyed by fire.

Like Job, the *tan* live on the edge of the desolate city, in a wasteland devoid of human habitation:

Jer. 49:33     Hazor shall become a haunt of jackals, an everlasting waste; no man shall dwell there, no man shall sojourn in her.

Isa. 13:19     And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the splendor and pride of the Chaldeans, will be like Sodom and Gomorrah when God overthrew them. It will never be inhabited or dwelt in for all generations; no Arab will pitch his tent there, no shepherds will make their flocks lie down there. But wild beasts will lie down there, and its houses will be full of howling creatures; there ostriches will dwell, and there satyrs will dance. Hyenas will cry in its towers, and jackals in the pleasant palaces; its time is close at hand and its days will not be prolonged.

Job has acted as a man, and yet no man sees him as a man. Perhaps he has no choice now other than to abandon both society and his own sociality and meld into the world that knows no human eye or human tongue. For him it is a frightening thought, but the reader knows that it is into just such a world that the voice in the Tempest will soon beckon him.

12. "daughters of greed," is usually taken to refer to the ostrich, and there seems to be no reason to doubt that. It is not, however, the same as the word used in 39:13 for the ostrich from whom he will learn so much. There the author will use the word which comes from a root meaning "to shout for joy." This change may reflect a more fundamental transformation in Job's thoughts about the bird and about wild nature in general.

## CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

1 I have made a covenant with my eyes, for how could I gaze upon a maiden?<sup>1</sup> 2 What part have I in God above, or heritage from the Almighty on

high? **3** Is not calamity for the unjust and disaster only for those who work wickedness? **4** Does He not see my ways or take count of my every step?

**5** Have I walked along with falsehood, or has my foot hurried to deceit? **6** Let Him weigh me on the scales of justice, and then God will know of my simplicity. **7** If my step has wandered from the way, my heart gone after my eyes, or a taint stuck to my hand, **8** then let me sow, but another eat, or let my crop be uprooted.<sup>2</sup>

**9** If my heart was seduced by a woman and I set ambush at my neighbor's entrance way, **10** may my wife grind with another, and let others bow down over her, **11** because that would have been licentiousness and a juristic perversion.<sup>3</sup> **12** It would be a fire consuming down to Abaddon,<sup>4</sup> uprooting all that I have ever accomplished.

**13** If ever I felt contempt for the cause of one of my servants, man or maid when they brought case against me, **14** what would I do when God rose up? How would I answer Him if He should call me into account? **15** Did not He who made me in my mother's belly make him as well? Did He not form us in the same womb?<sup>5</sup>

**16** How could I withhold pleasures from the poor or drain a widow's eye, **17** or even eat a crust of bread alone, not sharing it with the fatherless, when they had grown up with me for a father? **18** From my mother's belly I was their mother's<sup>6</sup> guide. **19** -Whenever I saw a man who was lost, without clothing, nothing to cover his pitiful state, **20** damn if his loins didn't bless me because he (knew that he could always) warm himself with the shearing of my sheep.

**21** If ever I brandished a hand against the fatherless because I saw help standing at the gate, **22** let my shoulder fall from its socket or my arm break at the joint, **23** because divine torment would fill me with fear and I could not bear its weight.

**24** If ever I placed my confidence in gold, or called fine gold my security, **25** or rejoiced in the greatness of my wealth or the bounty found in my hand; **26** if ever I saw the radiance of the light, or the moon walking in splendor, **27** and with my heart secretly attracted, placed my fingers to my lips to kiss them, **28** that too would have been a juristic perversion for I would have forsaken God the most high.<sup>7</sup>

**29** Could<sup>8</sup> I have rejoiced when hardship struck at those that hate me or come to life because evil had found them, **30** without giving my palate over to sin by asking for his life with a curse. **31** Even the men of my own tent would have said; "Who will let us at his flesh? We will not be satisfied."<sup>9</sup>

**32** I left no stranger sleeping out of doors but opened my doors to the traveler. **33** Would I have covered over my sins like (some) man ('*adam*) or concealed perversion in my bosom **34** through terror of the great multitude? or was I so shattered by family disgrace that I would stand petrified, not daring to go out the opening<sup>10</sup> way?<sup>11</sup>

**35** Who will find someone to listen? Well, here is my writ: Let the Almighty answer, or let the man who has a quarrel against me write it down in a book.<sup>12</sup> **36** I'll hoist<sup>13</sup> it up on my shoulders, or wear it round me like a crown. **37** But I will also give him an account of my every step and I will present it to him as a prince!<sup>14</sup>

**38** But if my own land cries out against me, its furrows weeping together, and **39** claims that I have eaten its produce without payment and snuffed out the life of its owners, **40** then may thorns grow in that place for wheat and fowl weeds for barley.<sup>15</sup>

#### THE WORDS OF JOB ARE TAM!<sup>16</sup>

#### *Comments*

1. *B<sup>e</sup>rit<sup>h</sup> karat<sup>h</sup>i*, literally, "I have cut a covenant." It is a much more formal and legalistic turn of phrase than Eliphaz uses in 5:22–23:

Have no FEAR of the beasts of the earth, for you have a covenant with the rocks in the field, and the beasts of the fields will bring you peace,

and can even be used to refer to the legal forms of a marriage. The verse holds within it the full tension and contradictory interweaving felt at the end of the last chapter between sociality and the need for autonomous understanding. As the tension in this verse implies, sexuality is claimed by both nature and by convention. What seems natural and direct for the one requires law and ceremony for the other. This inner conflict is felt as guilt.

Job, by the pre-eminently socio-political act of entering into a covenant, is cutting himself off from the most primal form of sociality. Human sexuality, in its ambiguities, is central, then, to all this disarray. In giving us a kind of immortality, it is another key to our autonomy, but in so doing, it reminds us of our lack of immortality, our weakness and need for others. It is, then, also key to our sociality. Again the two are linked, and in their opposition give rise to shame and guilt.

But how deep are such thoughts? How buried in our soul? What does the child know of death and mortality?

When his bottle drops to the floor, the child knows that what was is no more. If he cries, it sometimes returns, but sometimes it is broken and ugly, and sometimes it does not return at all. But how can he know that he too is a thing among things? Is he a thing that can be unthined like the bottle? How many of such thoughts are seeds that have become buried on the fringe of his horizon? When the bottle drops he is alone. Is this early feeling of loneliness what allows the notion of mortality, when it comes full blown, to dig itself deeper into our soul than the notion of Newtonian inertia ever sounded, deep as that was?

A child must be confounded when he hears of a time when his father was a little boy, when his father was he, and he was not. What role does it play in his imagination that his father was once too small to protect? Does it carry a scent of the notion that one day he himself will protect another?

2. In spite of all the rift between Job and his friends, or between Job and God, or between Job and Job, one thing seems to be held in common; on all hands round, not wealth or what is sometimes called “manliness,” but Justice is seen to be the highest human virtue. There is also, at least on Job’s part, the feeling that there is some common understanding concerning what things are just and what things are unjust, regardless of however rough and readymade that understanding might be for Job.

The disagreement, however, seems to center itself on a question concerning the guarantor of that justice. Job believes in that guarantor, but with his own eyes he can see nothing guaranteed.

3. There is something of the oxymoronic about this phrase. It hovers between the legal and the prelegal.

4. “eating”

5. This translation requires reading *berhem* for *barehem* (see Gordis, *The Book of Job*, Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 5738, p. 348).

In the note to 3:11, there was a brief discussion of the importance of the words “womb” and “belly.” In that note I discussed the importance these two words have for each of the three speakers. But now we must take a second look at Job.

This chapter either is or leads up to Job’s last words. They are, so far as one can tell, an honest attempt to recount his way of life. They are intended to assure his three friends that his actions have always been in accordance with justice, as that term is understood by the tradition, the fathers, and the law. For the tradition, it is the guarantor who stands behind this understanding.

Job’s position, however, seems more nearly expressed by the words

Job 31:15      Did not He who made me in my mother’s belly make him as well?  
Did He not form us in the same womb?

Even at the very beginning of the book, Job had said:

Job 1:21      Naked I came out of my mother’s belly and naked I shall return  
there.

In verse 15, Job implies that what supports his understanding of justice differs from the foundation as understood by the tradition. For each, the foundations are closely connected to what we have called sociality, the forces which bring men together. As hitherto understood, sociality stood in opposition to autonomy.

For Job, the world of sociality had become a painful world. It concealed the human need for autonomy in very brutal ways. In his former understanding, the womb, which was often related to death, was a place of quietness where each could rest wholly undisturbed and wholly unrelated to any other.

Job 3:19      Small and great, all are there, and the slave is free of his lord.

We are beginning to see a different Job, one who is beginning to spell out to himself the implications of what the comic Job had said in Chapter 1. Verse 15 indicates that sociality may have a more cosmic origin and have its roots in an original unity rather than in a later coming together.

Such thoughts are not wholly foreign to the Bible, but they must be understood within their proper context. The first ten chapters of the book of Genesis do indeed give an account of the coming-to-be of all men from one original man, and tell the story of the development of that world up until the time of the Flood. It must be noted that after Noah's drunken spree, however, not one of these incidences or characters is ever mentioned again either in the Torah or in the earlier prophets. The names Adam, Eve, the Garden of Eden, Cain, Abel, Noah and his ark, are totally dropped from the text. Once the covenant has been made between God and the animate world, only it is to be relied upon, and nothing is to be established on a more primitive foundation. All is forgotten in Noah's drunken spree, and only Ham, the cursed one, perhaps by accident, became aware of his antediluvian origins. (For a further discussion, see Robert D. Sacks, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis* [Lewiston, NY: Mellon Press, 1990].)

If Job, as seems to be the case, sees sociality as having its justification not in a guarantor who guarantees that each will receive his just rewards, but in some form of original unity, the distinction between autonomy and sociality begins to evaporate. Perhaps these things are not very clear to Job, but they do indicate his need to raise those difficulties which would eventually send him into the tempest. Making clear to himself the implications of this way of understanding what lies beneath the surface would imply that he must face the world which he so much feared when he spoke of becoming "a brother to the Jackal."

For the present, however, Job wishes to make clear to his friends that they are all in fundamental agreement concerning the place of justice in human action no matter how much they may disagree about the nature of its foundations.

6. Literally, "her."

7. This Job and his friends share: that neither wealth nor beauty but justice, is of ultimate importance, although the verse shows that this is not due to any lack of sensitivity to beauty on Job's part.

8. Greenberg starts off with "Did I" and the Revised Standard translates it as an "if" clause, but neither one works as well in light of the verse as a whole.

9. Job is pleased and confident that his followers honor justice more than they honor their leader. It is indeed a sign of his virtue as a leader.

10. The theme of “doors,” *delet<sup>h</sup>* and of “openings,” *petaḥ*, is an important part of our story. The subject first strikes one as one is comparing the two visits that the messengers made, one to Abraham:

Gen. 18:1      The LORD appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the opening of his tent in the heat of the day. (3)

the other to Lot:

Gen. 19:6      Lot went out of the door to the men, shut the door after him, (4)

In each case the number in parentheses indicates the number of times the word in question is used in the passage as a whole.

Lot lived in a house. Houses have doors, doors that open and shut. Abraham lived in a tent. Tents have only openings.

Gen. 19:2      He said, “Please, my lords, turn aside to your servant’s house and spend the night, and wash your feet; then you can rise early and go on your way.” They said, “No; we will spend the night in the square.”

That, so far as one can tell, is the first time the word “house” was unambiguously used to refer to an actual physical structure.

The story of doors, which begins with Lot, like the story of the city (see note to 11:6), originates in violence:

Gen. 19:5ff      and they called to Lot, “Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, so that we may know them.” Lot went out of the door to the men, shut the door after him. . . . Look, I have two daughters who have not known a man; let me bring them out to you, and do to them as you please; only do nothing to these men, for they have come under the shelter of my roof.”—But they replied, “Stand back!” And they said, “This fellow came here as an alien, and he would play the judge! Now we will deal worse with you than with them.” Then they pressed hard against the man Lot, and came near the door to break it down. But the men inside reached out their hands and brought Lot into the house with them, and shut the door. And they struck with blindness the men who were at the door of the house, both small and great, so that they were unable to find the door. (6)

In order to see the deep significance of the fact that Job’s “door,” is “open,” we must look at the full range of all the verses in which doors are spoken of as being either open or not open. This list is complete.

Often open doors lead to horror:

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Judg. 3:25      So they waited until they were embarrassed. When he still did not open the doors of the roof chamber, they took the key and opened them. There was their lord lying dead on the floor.

The story continues

Judg. 19:22      While they were enjoying themselves, the men of the city, a perverse lot, surrounded the house, and started pounding on the door. They said to the old man, the master of the house, "Bring out the man who came into your house, so that we may have intercourse with him."

Judg. 19:27      In the morning her master got up, opened the doors of the house, and when he went out to go on his way, there was his concubine lying at the door of the house, with her hands on the threshold.

The story continues and includes in the rape of Tamar:

2Sam. 13:17      He called the young man who served him and said, "Put this woman out of my presence, and bolt the door after her" (3)

They can seem joyful, but they are ominous, as Jephthah learns:

Judg. 11:31      "then whoever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return victorious from the Ammonites, shall be the LORD's, to be offered up by me as a burnt offering."

Judg. 11:34      Then Jephthah came to his home at Mizpah; and behold, his daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances; she was his only child; beside her he had neither son nor daughter. And when he saw her, he rent his clothes, and said, "Alas, my daughter! you have brought me very low, and you have become the cause of great trouble to me; for I have opened my mouth to the LORD, and I cannot take back my vow."

They are torn down by Samson:

Judg. 16:3      But Samson lay only until midnight. Then at midnight he rose up, took hold of the doors of the city gate and the two posts, pulled them up, bar and all, put them on his shoulders, and carried them to the top of the hill that is in front of Hebron.

They can lead to fear:

1Sam. 3:15      Samuel lay there until morning; then he opened the doors of the house of the LORD. Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli.

They can be connected with madness:

1Sam. 21:13      So he changed his behavior before them; he pretended to be mad when in their presence. He scratched marks on the doors of the gate, and let his spittle run down his beard.

and slavery:

Exod. 21:6      then his master shall bring him before God. He shall be brought to the door or the doorpost; and his master shall pierce his ear with an awl; and he shall serve him for life.

Deut. 15:17      then you shall take an awl and thrust it through his earlobe into the door, and he shall be your slave forever. You shall do the same with regard to your female slave.

or lamentation:

Zech. 11:1      Open your doors, O Lebanon, so that fire may devour your cedars!

or are only open for the sake of taking flight:

2Kings 9:3      Then take the flask of oil, pour it on his head, and say, 'Thus says the LORD: I anoint you king over Israel.' Then open the door and flee; do not linger."

2Kings 9:10      The dogs shall eat Jezebel in the territory of Jezreel, and no one shall bury her." Then he opened the door and fled.

or the doors are shut:

Neh. 7:3      And I said to them, "The gates of Jerusalem are not to be opened until the sun is hot; while the gatekeepers are still standing guard, let them shut and bar the doors. Appoint guards from among the inhabitants of Jerusalem, some at their watch posts, and others before their own houses."

Neh. 13:19      When it began to be dark at the gates of Jerusalem before the sabbath, I commanded that the doors should be shut and gave orders that they should not be opened until after the sabbath. And I set some of my servants over the gates, to prevent any burden from being brought in on the sabbath day.

or an open door is only a thing to be hoped for:

Prov. 18:16      A gift opens doors; it gives access to the great.

God has opened them, but only the ones in heaven:

Ps. 78:23      Yet he commanded the skies above, and opened the doors of heaven;

Perhaps that is why God never taught Noah how to make a door.

Gen. 6:16      Make a roof for the ark, and finish it to a cubit above; and put the opening of the ark in its side; make it with lower, second, and third decks.

Gen. 7:16      And those that entered, male and female of all flesh, went in as God had commanded him; and the LORD shut him in.

Abraham had an opening and Lot had a door. Openings are the place of innocent people, people like Tamar and Uriah who in their innocence trusted too much.

Gen. 38:14      she put off her widow's garments, put on a veil, wrapped herself up, and sat down at the opening of Enaim, which is on the road to Timnah. She saw that Shelah was grown up, yet she had not been given to him in marriage.

2Sam. 11:9      But Uriah slept at the opening of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and did not go down to his house.

When Judah and his brothers returned to Egypt expecting to be accused of theft, they were met by a friendly man in an opening:

Gen. 43:19      So they went up to the steward of Joseph's house and spoke with him at the opening to the house.

Some people also die at openings, but they are all bad people like Korach:

Num. 16:27      So they got away from the dwellings of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram; and Dathan and Abiram came out and stood at the opening of their tents, together with their wives, their children, and their little ones.

and Sisrah;

Judg. 4:20      He said to her, "Stand at the opening of the tent, and if anybody comes and asks you, 'Is anyone here?' say, 'No.'"

and the bad Abimelech:

Judg. 9:52      Abimelech came to the tower, and fought against it, and came near to the opening of the tower to burn it with fire.

also in this group is:

Deut. 22:21      then they shall bring the young woman out to the opening of her father's house and the men of her town shall stone her to death, because she committed a disgraceful act in Israel by prostituting herself in her father's house. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.

We can also include Jezebel, but as we shall see, she doesn't really count.

2Kings 11:16      So they laid hands on her; she went through the horses' opening to the king's house, and there she was put to death.

The Tent of Meeting, The Tabernacle, and the Court all had openings, but we will not go through them all.

Exod. 33:9      When Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the opening of the tent, and the LORD would speak with Moses.

But then the opening fell into hard times: The dream of openness had come to an end.

1Sam. 2:22      Now Eli was very old. He heard all that his sons were doing to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who served at the entrance to the tent of meeting.

Although the Tent of Meeting will be mentioned once more in the text, that was the last time it was ever used so far as we are told. Perhaps we should have known from the beginning that this experiment in openness was not to last:

Gen. 4:7      If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is lurking at the opening; its desire is for you, but you must master it."

First Kings Chapter 6, verse 31, reads

For the opening to the inner sanctuary he made doors of olivewood; the lintel and the doorposts were five-sided.

This is the first time the two words have come together. It is the building of the temple. Art, born of the sons of Cain, has been sanctified and has sanctified many other things. The last time the Tent of Meeting was mentioned, it was to speak of the day when the holy vessels were taken from the tent to be put into the temple, and so to be placed behind a door.

1Kings 8:4f.      So they brought up the ark of the LORD, the tent of meeting, and all the holy vessels that were in the tent; the priests and the Levites brought them up. King Solomon and all the congregation of Israel, who had assembled before him, were with him before the ark, sacrificing so many sheep and oxen that they could not be counted or numbered. Then the priests brought the ark of the covenant of the LORD to its place, in the inner sanctuary of the house, in the most holy place, underneath the wings of the cherubim.

Only twice will it actually happen that a door is opened in joy and without fear, once in the glorious and almost mythical reign of King Hezekiah. It is presented as a vision of things as they ought to be. First we must try to get a sense of the times.

2Chron. 29:2      He did what was right in the sight of the LORD, just as his ancestor David had done.

2Chron. 29:17     They began to sanctify on the first day of the first month, and on the eighth day of the month they came to the vestibule of the LORD; then for eight days they sanctified the house of the LORD, and on the sixteenth day of the first month they finished.

2Chron. 30:5      So they decreed to make a proclamation throughout all Israel, from Beer-sheba to Dan, that the people should come and keep the passover to the LORD the God of Israel, at Jerusalem; for they had not kept it in great numbers as prescribed.

2Chron. 30:26     There was great joy in Jerusalem, for since the time of Solomon son of King David of Israel there had been nothing like this in Jerusalem.

2Chron. 31:1      Now when all this was finished, all Israel who were present went out to the cities of Judah and broke down the pillars, hewed down the sacred poles, and pulled down the high places and the altars throughout all Judah and Benjamin, and in Ephraim and Manasseh, until they had destroyed them all. Then all the people of Israel returned to their cities, all to their individual properties.

2Chron. 31:10     The chief priest Azariah, who was of the house of Zadok, answered him, "Since they began to bring the contributions into the house of the LORD, we have had enough to eat and have plenty to spare; for the LORD has blessed his people, so that we have this great supply left over."

2Chron. 32:5      Hezekiah set to work resolutely and built up the entire wall that was broken down, and raised towers on it, and outside it he built another wall; he also strengthened the Millo in the city of David, and made weapons and shields in abundance.

All of this begins when, for the first time in the text, we hear with joy and not fear, the words:

2Chron. 29:3      In the first year of his reign, in the first month, he opened the doors of the house of the LORD and repaired them.

The next time we hear those words is at the beginning of the new life after the return from Babylon:

Isa. 45:1      Thus says the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have grasped to subdue nations before him and strip kings of their robes, to open doors before him—and the gates shall not be closed!

Our verse in Job is the only other time in the whole of the Bible that a door has felt like an entrance.

“I left no stranger sleeping out of doors but opened my doors to the traveler . . . was I so shattered by family disgrace that I would stand petrified, not daring to go out the opening?”

Here we see Job with the courage to stand at the opening, while providing a door for the stranger.

11. We are now quite close to the culmination of Job’s speech. The beginning of his final argument is based on his way of being. His willingness to stand at the opening of his world and to risk going beyond it indicates a man not “shattered by family disgrace.” This “family disgrace” is here equated with the concept of “perversion,” as we have discussed it in the note to 11:6. If I understand the grammar correctly, Job is arguing that the feelings of guilt and perversion, which stem from the responsibility we have had to bear for the acts of the fathers, if not concealed, led to a terror of all that is around us. Like Lot the fear we have of the beginnings of the city leads us deeper and deeper into the city, and to doors. We therefore stand petrified and cannot allow ourselves to peer beyond the city. But Job now stands at the opening.

12. And now we have such a book in our hands. It contains the speeches of Eliphaz, Bildad, and the rest of those who have a quarrel against Job. In Chapter 19, Job had said:

Who will find a place that my words may be written down? Who will see to it that they are inscribed in the Book. With stylus of iron and with lead incised in the Rock forever?

The two books Job longed for have become one book. It is a dialogue in which each has tried to articulate the ground upon which he stands, and, if only by implication, the horizon under which he stands.

13. “raise”

14. Here Job seems to be clear that a complete articulation of his own position is not possible except in the context of a complete articulation of the thought and hence the accusations of those who appose him.

These accusations, however, must be weighed not in the light of Job's speeches, over which there is still a living controversy, but in the light of his actions, or, as he puts it, "my every step."

15. As we have seen, there is a disagreement between Job and his friends concerning the true foundations of justice. From the point of view of his friends, Job's understanding of justice has no foundation, and he is, therefore, an unjust man. Job understands their position. He has no proof with regard to the ultimate value of the purely human perspective concerning the just and the unjust. Such things must still be open. Verses 38 through 40, Job's last words, are a counterpart to Bildad's last speech at the end of Chapter 25. They state the parameters within which mutual existence is possible.

For them, Job is an unjust man. It is understandable that they should proclaim that injustice, and indeed perhaps it would be wrong of them not to do so. But if that understanding of the world and man's place in it should lead them so to misinterpret any definite act of Job's as to accuse him unjustly of some specific act of injustice, then regardless of how that complaint may have been voiced, there can no longer be any grounds for mutual respect.

16. The word *tam*, which, for the sake of unity, I have rather slavishly and doggedly rendered as "simple" throughout the whole of the translation, must now be faced in all its complexity.

The first thing to be pointed out is its critical importance for nearly all the voices to be heard in the Book of Job. In that sense, at least, it binds the proem (Chapters 1 and 2) to the rest of the book. For each it is a virtue, if not the highest virtue. This remains true no matter how much they may disagree about other matters. Even his wife knows that the central issue is his TAM. Only the Satan, Zophar, and the Voice in the Tempest never mention it.

#### God

- 1:1 He was a *tam* and straightforward man, a GOD-FEARING man who turned away from evil.  
 1:8 He is a *tam* and straightforward man, a GOD-FEARING man and one who turns away from evil.  
 2:3 He is a *tam* and straightforward man, a GOD-fearing man and one who turned away from evil.

#### Job's Wife

- 2:9 And his wife said to him, "You are still holding tight to your *tam*."

#### Eliphaz

- 4:6f. But may not that FEAR itself be your surety, and your hope, the *tam* of your ways? Think back now, who being innocent was ever lost?

#### Bildad

- 8:20 But surely God will neither have contempt for a *tam* man nor strengthen the hand of the evildoer.

#### Job

- 27:5 Even till death I shall not turn my *tam* from me.

Elihu

36:4 One who has *tam* knowledge is among you.

Although each praises the *tam* in his own way, it is not clear that they would totally agree on which things are *tam* and which are not.

Even the beginnings of the word are somewhat unclear. Its most rudimentary meaning seems to be “finished”:

1Kings 7:22 On the tops of the pillars was lily-work. Thus the work of the pillars was *tam*.

The word “finished” has a certain duality to it, however. A new car just off the assembly line is all “finished”; but after its first bad wreck, it is also “finished.” This antithesis is felt more strongly in Hebrew than in English because the English word “finish” is felt to be the end of a process in either case, no matter whether that process leads to excellence or to destruction. The word *tam*, on the other hand, does not quite contain the notion of process to hold it together.

Gen. 47:18 When that year was *tam*, they came to him the following year, and said to him, “We cannot hide from my lord that our money is *tam*; and the herds of cattle are my lord’s. There is nothing left in the sight of my lord but our bodies and our lands.

From here it acquires that special meaning of the word which implies a kind of excellence. Think of the word “finish” as it is applied to fine furniture

1Kings 6:22 Next he overlaid the whole house with gold, in order that the whole house might be *tam*; even the whole altar that belonged to the inner sanctuary he overlaid with gold.

In that sense, it came be used of human plans:

2Sam. 20:18 Then she said, “They used to say in the old days, ‘Let them inquire at Abel’; and so it was *tam*.”

or of a lamb worthy of being used in a sacrifice:

Exod. 12:5 Your lamb shall be *tam* a year-old male; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats.

In his final song, David sings:

2Sam. 22:33 The God who has girded me with strength has set free my path to be *tam*.

as if men were in fetters which prevent them from being *tam*, as if the *tam* were somehow man's natural state.

This man, the man who is *tam*, as we saw in the long note at the end of Chapter 11, is neither the man of the city, nor the man of the field, but the man living in tents.

Gen. 25:27      When the boys grew up, Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field, while Jacob was a *tam* man, living in a tent.

It can also mean "innocent," either in the sense of having committed a crime while being unaware of certain critical facts:

1Kings 22:34      But a certain man drew his bow and in his *tam* struck the king of Israel . . .

or because one is not capable of suspicion.

Gen. 20:5f.      "Did he not himself say to me, 'She is my sister'? And she herself said, 'He is my brother.' I did this in the *tam* of my heart and the innocence of my hands." Then God said to him in the dream, "Yes, I know that you did this in the *tam* of your heart; furthermore it was I who kept you from sinning against me. Therefore I did not let you touch her.

It is also used to describe the individual virtue of an individual man apart from whatever virtue might give excellence as a founder or leader:

Gen. 6:9      These are the descendants of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, *tam* in his generation; Noah walked with God.

Gen. 17:1      When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be *tam*."

In answer to Bildad's statement:

Job 8:20      But surely God will neither have contempt for a *tam* man nor strengthen the hand of the evildoer.

Job says:

Job 9:20ff.      I am *tam* but He will show me perverse. I am *tam* but I no longer care and have only contempt for my life. . . . Therefore I say that *tam* or guilty He destroys all.

For Job, "the twisted" '*aqash* emerges as the prime opposite of the *tam*. This is the only time the word occurs in the text, and seems to be a more forceful

substitute for the term, ‘*aven*, bent, the word we have been translating as “perverse.”

Prov. 10:9       Whoever walks in *tam* walks securely, but whoever follows twisted (*‘aqash*) ways will be found out.

Prov. 28:18      One who walks in *tam* will be saved, but whoever follows twisted (*‘aqash*) ways will fall into the Pit.

What appears to be *tam* from Job’s human perspective seems to him to appear as “the twisted” from the divine perspective. And yet Job sees his *tam* as his only way to justice.

31:6–8       Let Him weigh me on the scales of justice, and then God will know of my *tam*. If my step has wandered from the way, my heart gone after my eyes, or a taint stuck to my hand, then let me sow, but another eat, or let my crop be uprooted.

27:05       Even till death I shall not turn my *tam* from me.

The ambiguity inherent in the *tam* may be seen by comparing Eliphaz’s statement:

4:6f.       But may not that FEAR itself be your surety, and your hope, the *tam* of your ways? Think back now, whoever being innocent was ever lost?

with Job’s

12:4       But now I have become a joke to my friends, one who would ‘Call on God and have him answer’—a joke, a *tam*, innocent joke!

Is the *tam* related to Eliphaz’s simple acceptance or to Job’s simple question? The one looks to the other as a joke. And now Job’s whole speech has been called *tam*.