

JOB

NAME AND LOCATION IN CANON

The book bears the name of its principal character, Job, a righteous man who is afflicted by God, apparently unjustly, and who demands restitution. In Jewish tradition the book of Job belongs with the poetical books in the division called the Writings (Ketubim). Printed Hebrew Bibles place Job after Psalms and Proverbs, although other positions are found in earlier Hebrew manuscripts and lists. In older Christian Bibles, Job was sometimes placed with the historical books and sometimes with the poetical books; but its consistent place now is as the first of the poetical books, preceding Psalms.

AUTHORSHIP, DATE OF COMPOSITION, AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The book is anonymous, and it offers few clues to its historical context or date of composition. Most scholars would date it between the seventh and fourth centuries BCE, but its story is set in much older times.

LITERARY HISTORY, STRUCTURE, AND CONTENTS

Many scholars have proposed that the prose prologue and epilogue reflect a tale about Job older than the poetic dialogues. In the sixth century BCE the prophet Ezekiel mentions Job, along with Noah, the hero of the Flood story (Gen 6–9), and Dan’el, as heroes who saved others by their righteousness (Ezek 14.14,20).

The frame of the book is the prose prologue and epilogue (chs 1–2; 42.7–17). Within that frame are the poetic dialogues: first, three cycles of speeches by Job and his friends (chs 3–31) plus the Elihu speeches (chs 32–37), and second, two speeches by the LORD, each followed by a response from Job (38.1–42.6). The third cycle of speeches by Job and his friends presents many problems, and it is possible that the original order of the book is no longer correctly preserved. It has also commonly been thought that the speeches of Elihu (chs 32–37) and the poem on wisdom (ch 28) are later additions to the book’s first edition, but a tendency among scholars to regard the book as a unified whole is becoming noticeable.

INTERPRETATION

The book of Job is perhaps the most sustained piece of theological writing in the Hebrew Bible, and it is unique in the Bible for its sympathetic portrayal of differing theological points of view. The theme of the book is often described as the problem of suffering, but it is rather that of the injustice of undeserved suffering. By the standards of his day, Job’s suffering can only be a sign that he is a great sinner; resisting that implication, he demands that God explain why he, a righteous man, is being so badly treated. More than that, he reasons that his case shows that God is not governing the world in justice, and he argues that the prosperity of the wicked and the suffering of the righteous in general are further evidence of God’s neglect of justice. When he replies to Job, God speaks only of his designs in creating the universe and does not mention the issue of justice, no doubt implying that Job is right, that justice is not a primary divine concern.

Among the books of the Bible, Job is highly unusual, and, unsurprisingly, its force has often been misunderstood or evaded. In the older history of interpretation, the book was commonly viewed as a repository of wise sayings, and its overall theme was little appreciated. In our own time, it is recognized as a major work of world literature, capable of diverse interpretations.

GUIDE TO READING

The chapters most essential for understanding the narrative and the argument are: chs 1–2 (the prologue); 3–11 (the first cycle of dialogues between Job and the friends); 29–31 (Job’s final speech); 38.1–42.6 (the divine speeches, with Job’s responses); 42.7–17 (the epilogue).

David J. A. Clines

1 There was once a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job. That man was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil. ²There were born to him seven sons and three daughters. ³He had seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred donkeys, and very many servants; so that this man was the greatest of all the people of the east. ⁴His sons used to go and hold feasts in one another's houses in turn; and they would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them. ⁵And when the feast days had run their course, Job would send and sanctify them, and he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings according to the number of them all; for Job said, "It may be that my children have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts." This is what Job always did.

⁶One day the heavenly beings^a came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan^b also came among them. ⁷The LORD said to Satan,^b "Where have you come from?" Satan^b answered the LORD, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it." ⁸The LORD said to Satan,^b "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man who fears God and turns away from evil." ⁹Then Satan^b answered the LORD, "Does Job fear God for nothing?" ¹⁰Have you not put a fence around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. ¹¹But stretch out your hand

now, and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face." ¹²The LORD said to Satan,^b "Very well, all that he has is in your power; only do not stretch out your hand against him!" So Satan^b went out from the presence of the LORD.

¹³One day when his sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in the eldest brother's house, ¹⁴a messenger came to Job and said, "The oxen were plowing and the donkeys were feeding beside them, ¹⁵and the Sabeans fell on them and carried them off, and killed the servants with the edge of the sword; I alone have escaped to tell you."

¹⁶While he was still speaking, another came and said, "The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants, and consumed them; I alone have escaped to tell you." ¹⁷While he was still speaking, another came and said, "The Chaldeans formed three columns, made a raid on the camels and carried them off, and killed the servants with the edge of the sword; I alone have escaped to tell you." ¹⁸While he was still speaking, another came and said, "Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house, ¹⁹and suddenly a great wind came across the desert, struck the four corners of the house, and it fell on the young people,

^a Heb *sons of God*

^b Or *the Accuser*; Heb *ha-satan*

1.1–2.13: Prologue. The prose prologue contains five scenes, artistically arranged: the first, third, and fifth scenes (1.1–5, 13–22; 2.7–13) take place on earth, the second and fourth (1.6–12; 2.1–6) in heaven. All the earthly characters, including Job, remain ignorant throughout the book of what takes place on the heavenly plane. **1.1–5:** The naïve language, in the style of a folktale, evokes a distant past. *The land of Uz* is Edom, southeast of Israel (cf. Jer 25.20; Lam 4.21). Job is not an Israelite; but he is a worshiper of the true God, although he, along with his friends, calls him "El," "Eloah," and "Elohim" (all meaning "God"), and "Shadday" ("the Almighty"), not "Yahweh" ("the LORD"). **2:** *Seven sons*, a perfect number. **4:** *Hold feasts . . . in turn*, lit. "each on his day," presumably on birthdays. **5:** *Cursed*, the Heb text has the word "blessed" here, apparently as a euphemism or pious scribal correction (so also in 1.11; 2.5, 9; see also 1 Kings 21.13). **6–12:** The gathering of the divine council in heaven (cf. 1 Kings 22.19–22; Ps 82.1) includes "the Satan," i.e., "the adversary" of Job and other humans (cf. Zech 3.1), not of God; he is not the "devil" of later Jewish and Christian literature (see textual note *b*). Here he acts as God's eyes and ears on earth. He questions whether Job's righteousness is for its own sake or for the sake of its reward. **13–22:** Four messengers announce four disasters, from all directions: *Sabeans* come from the south (Sheba), *Chaldeans* from the north, the lightning (*fire of God*) from the west, with storms sweeping

and they are dead; I alone have escaped to tell you.”

²⁰ Then Job arose, tore his robe, shaved his head, and fell on the ground and worshiped.

²¹ He said, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there; the LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.”

²² In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrongdoing.

2 One day the heavenly beings^a came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan^b also came among them to present himself before the LORD. ² The LORD said to Satan, ^b “Where have you come from?” Satan^c answered the LORD, “From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it.” ³ The LORD said to Satan, ^b “Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man who fears God and turns away from evil. He still persists in his integrity, although you incited me against him, to destroy him for no reason.” ⁴ Then Satan^b answered the LORD, “Skin for skin! All that people have they will give to save their lives.” ^d ⁵ But stretch out your hand now and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse you to your face.” ⁶ The LORD said to Satan, ^b “Very well, he is in your power; only spare his life.”

⁷ So Satan^b went out from the presence of the LORD, and inflicted loathsome sores on

Job from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. ⁸ Job^e took a potsherd with which to scrape himself, and sat among the ashes.

⁹ Then his wife said to him, “Do you still persist in your integrity? Curse^f God, and die.” ¹⁰ But he said to her, “You speak as any foolish woman would speak. Shall we receive the good at the hand of God, and not receive the bad?” In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

¹¹ Now when Job’s three friends heard of all these troubles that had come upon him, each of them set out from his home—Eli-phaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. They met together to go and console and comfort him. ¹² When they saw him from a distance, they did not recognize him, and they raised their voices and wept aloud; they tore their robes and threw dust in the air upon their heads.

¹³ They sat with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his suffering was very great.

^a Heb sons of God

^b Or *the Accuser*; Heb *ha-satan*

^c Or *The Accuser*; Heb *ha-satan*

^d Or *All that the man has he will give for his life*

^e Heb *He*

^f Heb *Bless*

in from the Mediterranean, the *great wind* from the eastern desert. 21: Job praises the LORD for both good and evil, proving God’s confidence in him justified. The *mother’s womb* to which Job will return is that of mother earth (cf. Gen 3.19). 2.1–6: Now again in the heavenly council, the LORD remarks that Job *still persists in his integrity*, i.e., continues blameless as ever. 4: *Skin for skin!* Job has saved his own skin by piously accepting the death of his children; if God now attacks Job himself, Job will attack God, by cursing him (see 1.5n.). 7–13: The fourth scene dissolves into the fifth: God authorizes the suffering, and immediately the Satan afflicts Job. 7: *Loathsome sores*, some unspecified skin disease (cf. 7.5; 30.30). 8: To express his sense of desolation and isolation, Job removes himself from society and sits on the rubbish heap outside his city, performing rituals of mourning (cf. Ezek 27.30; Jon 3.6). He uses broken pieces of pottery he finds there to scratch himself to relieve the itchiness. 9: The outcome of all Job’s piety has been to rob his wife of her ten children, her social standing, and her livelihood. When she urges him to *curse God* (see 1.5n.), and so bring his misery to an end with death, he mildly replies that she is speaking like *any foolish woman*, i.e., low-class, irreligious women, abandoning their family’s standards of formal and proper behavior. Job *did not sin with his lips*, it is not implied that he sinned in what he thought. Job has disproved the Satan’s claim that Job would sin with his lips by cursing God. 11–13: Job, being a chieftain of great importance (1.3), has other high-ranking friends. These three, all apparently from other towns in Edom, have kindly intentions toward him, but when they see how badly he is suffering they do not offer him any consolation, but treat him as if he were already dead, throwing *dust . . . upon their heads*, a mourning ritual (see Josh 7.6; Lam 2.10), and silently mourning him *seven days and seven nights* (see Gen 50.10; Sir 22.12).

- 3** After this Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth.² Job said:
³“Let the day perish in which I was born, and the night that said, ‘A man-child is conceived.’
⁴Let that day be darkness! May God above not seek it, or light shine on it.
⁵Let gloom and deep darkness claim it. Let clouds settle upon it; let the blackness of the day terrify it.
⁶That night—let thick darkness seize it! let it not rejoice among the days of the year; let it not come into the number of the months.
⁷Yes, let that night be barren; let no joyful cry be heard^a in it.
⁸Let those curse it who curse the Sea,^b those who are skilled to rouse up Leviathan.
⁹Let the stars of its dawn be dark; let it hope for light, but have none; may it not see the eyelids of the morning—
¹⁰because it did not shut the doors of my mother’s womb, and hide trouble from my eyes.
¹¹“Why did I not die at birth, come forth from the womb and expire?
¹²Why were there knees to receive me,

- or breasts for me to suck?
¹³Now I would be lying down and quiet; I would be asleep; then I would be at rest
¹⁴with kings and counselors of the earth who rebuild ruins for themselves,
¹⁵or with princes who have gold, who fill their houses with silver.
¹⁶Or why was I not buried like a stillborn child, like an infant that never sees the light?
¹⁷There the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary are at rest.
¹⁸There the prisoners are at ease together; they do not hear the voice of the taskmaster.
¹⁹The small and the great are there, and the slaves are free from their masters.
²⁰“Why is light given to one in misery, and life to the bitter in soul,
²¹who long for death, but it does not come, and dig for it more than for hidden treasures;
²²who rejoice exceedingly, and are glad when they find the grave?
²³Why is light given to one who cannot see the way,

^a Heb *come*^b Cn: Heb *day*

3.1–42.6: The dialogues.

3.1–11.20: First cycle of speeches.

3.1–26: Job’s first speech. After the grandeur and deliberateness of the prologue (chs 1–2), the reader is suddenly plunged into the dramatic turmoil of the poem (3.1–42.6); the external description of suffering gives way to Job’s inner experience. Its three strophes express a wish he had never been born (vv. 3–10); failing that, a wish he had died at birth (vv. 11–19); failing that, a wish that he, and people suffering as he does, could simply die when they are ready (vv. 20–26). **3–10:** A curse naturally concerns the future, and a curse on the day of his birth (cf. Jer 20.14–18) is a futile curse, for the past cannot be changed. Job wishes that the day of his birth and conception (viewed poetically as one event) could have been blacked out (vv. 4–6a) so that it would not have entered into the calendar of the year (vv. 6b,c); he wishes that the sorcerers who put a curse on days could have made it one of the unlucky days, in which it would have been impossible for his parents to have conceived him or for his mother to have given birth to him (vv. 8a,10a). **8:** Some ancient magicians obviously believed they could *rouse up Leviathan*, the sea-monster (cf. Ps 104.26; Isa 27.1) and dragon of chaos (see 7.12; Ps 74.13–14), who would perhaps swallow up the sun, so causing the darkness of eclipse. **11–19:** If he had to be born, why could he not have died at birth (v. 11a) or, at least, have been stillborn (v. 16)? Death has for him now become sweeter than life, and he compares the quiet peacefulness of the underworld (Sheol; cf. Eccl 6.3–5; Sir 30.3) to his present troubled and anxious lot (vv. 13–19). **14.** Near Eastern kings frequently boasted that they had rebuilt famous ruined cities. **20–26:** Now Job not only asks why he himself has to go on living, but why people in general cannot simply die when they want to (vv. 20–23). **23:** Previously, God’s hedge of protection about his life (cf.

whom God has fenced in?

²⁴For my sighing comes like^a my bread,
and my groanings are poured out like
water.

²⁵Truly the thing that I fear comes upon
me,
and what I dread befalls me.

²⁶I am not at ease, nor am I quiet;
I have no rest; but trouble comes.”

4 Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered:
²“If one ventures a word with you, will
you be offended?

But who can keep from speaking?

³See, you have instructed many;
you have strengthened the weak hands.

⁴Your words have supported those who
were stumbling,
and you have made firm the feeble
knees.

⁵But now it has come to you, and you are
impatient;
it touches you, and you are dismayed.

⁶Is not your fear of God your confidence,
and the integrity of your ways your
hope?

⁷“Think now, who that was innocent ever
perished?

Or where were the upright cut off?

⁸As I have seen, those who plow iniquity
and sow trouble reap the same.

⁹By the breath of God they perish,
and by the blast of his anger they are
consumed.

¹⁰The roar of the lion, the voice of the
fierce lion,
and the teeth of the young lions are
broken.

¹¹The strong lion perishes for lack of prey,
and the whelps of the lioness are
scattered.

¹²“Now a word came stealing to me,
my ear received the whisper of it.

¹³Amid thoughts from visions of the
night,
when deep sleep falls on mortals,

¹⁴dread came upon me, and trembling,
which made all my bones shake.

¹⁵A spirit glided past my face;
the hair of my flesh bristled.

¹⁶It stood still,
but I could not discern its appearance.

A form was before my eyes;
there was silence, then I heard a voice:

¹⁷“Can mortals be righteous before^b God?
Can human beings be pure before^b their
Maker?

¹⁸Even in his servants he puts no trust,
and his angels he charges with error;

¹⁹how much more those who live in
houses of clay,
whose foundation is in the dust,
who are crushed like a moth.

²⁰Between morning and evening they are
destroyed;
they perish forever without any
regarding it.

²¹Their tent-cord is plucked up within
them,
and they die devoid of wisdom.’

^a Heb *before*

^b Or *more than*

1.10) had ensured his well-being; but now that he wants to die, God’s preservation of his life seems an artificial prolongation of his misery, and the hedge has become a prison wall rather than a wall of defense. 26: Unlike the restfulness of the underworld, which is what he desires, his life has no rest, but only trouble.

4.1–5.27: Eliphaz’s first speech. Eliphaz regards Job as a pious man and urges him not to lose heart, since the innocent never finally suffer. Even the pious are not perfect, however, and may experience reproof and discipline (5.17); but they will soon come to an end (4.6). 4.2–6: Eliphaz is not scornful in reminding Job how he has comforted others; he believes that Job’s good deeds are a reason why God will soon restore him. 7–11: Eliphaz describes the fate of the wicked, as a contrast to what Job can expect since he is not one of them. 8: Cf. Hos 10.13; Gal 6.7. 10: Cf. Ps 58.6. 12–21: However, not even the angels are perfect (v. 18), still less the righteous (v. 17; cf. 15.14–16; 25.4–6). They are mere mortals, who, unlike the angels, can expire within a single day (v. 20a) and be so insignificant that they can die without anyone noticing (v. 20b) and without their ever attaining wisdom (v. 21b). Eliphaz’s dream or waking vision terrified him because of its supernatural source, but the message it

5 “Call now; is there anyone who will answer you?

To which of the holy ones will you turn?

² Surely vexation kills the fool,
and jealousy slays the simple.

³ I have seen fools taking root,
but suddenly I cursed their dwelling.

⁴ Their children are far from safety,
they are crushed in the gate,
and there is no one to deliver them.

⁵ The hungry eat their harvest,
and they take it even out of the thorns;^a
and the thirsty^b pant after their wealth.

⁶ For misery does not come from the earth,
nor does trouble sprout from the
ground;

⁷ but human beings are born to trouble
just as sparks^c fly upward.

⁸ “As for me, I would seek God,
and to God I would commit my cause.

⁹ He does great things and unsearchable,
marvelous things without number.

¹⁰ He gives rain on the earth
and sends waters on the fields;

¹¹ he sets on high those who are lowly,
and those who mourn are lifted to
safety.

¹² He frustrates the devices of the crafty,
so that their hands achieve no success.

¹³ He takes the wise in their own craftiness;
and the schemes of the wily are brought
to a quick end.

¹⁴ They meet with darkness in the daytime,
and grope at noonday as in the night.

¹⁵ But he saves the needy from the sword of
their mouth,
from the hand of the mighty.

¹⁶ So the poor have hope,
and injustice shuts its mouth.

¹⁷ “How happy is the one whom God
reproves;
therefore do not despise the discipline
of the Almighty.^d

¹⁸ For he wounds, but he binds up;
he strikes, but his hands heal.

¹⁹ He will deliver you from six troubles;
in seven no harm shall touch you.

²⁰ In famine he will redeem you from
death,
and in war from the power of the
sword.

²¹ You shall be hidden from the scourge of
the tongue,
and shall not fear destruction when it
comes.

²² At destruction and famine you shall
laugh,
and shall not fear the wild animals of
the earth.

²³ For you shall be in league with the
stones of the field,
and the wild animals shall be at peace
with you.

²⁴ You shall know that your tent is safe,
you shall inspect your fold and miss
nothing.

²⁵ You shall know that your descendants
will be many,

^a Meaning of Heb uncertain

^b Aquila Symmachus Syr Vg: Heb *snare*

^c Or *birds*; Heb *sons of Resheph*

^d Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*

brought was obvious. Appeals to revelatory experience are unusual in wisdom books, but see 33:15–18. 5:1–7: Suffering, in fact, has to be expected. Not believing that Job really wants to die (as in ch 3), Eliphaz assumes Job is hoping to escape his suffering. But that is wishful thinking, for suffering is natural for humans; they always bring trouble upon themselves (v. 7 may be better translated “Humans beget suffering for themselves”). Even the angels (*the holy ones*, v. 1) cannot prevent the cycle of cause and effect when humans sin and bring punishment upon themselves. The fools whose *vexation* or resentment and *jealousy* bring them to ruin are a case in point (cf. Prov 12:16; 14:30; Sir 30:24). 8–16: As in 4:2–6, Eliphaz regards Job as an essentially pious man, who should patiently leave his *cause*, or case, in divine hands (v. 8), since God is a great reverser of fortunes (vv. 11–16). 10–15: The destructive acts of God (vv. 12–14) are enclosed within the frame of his saving acts (vv. 10–11, 15), so the chief effect of this picture of God’s working is to give *hope* to the poor (v. 16; contrast Lk 1:51–53). 17–27: Eliphaz interprets Job’s suffering as God’s disciplining (cf. Ps 94:12; Prov 3:11–12; Hos 6:1), which is a blessing in itself (v. 17) and that “he who wounds is he who soothes the sore” (v. 18, JB). Job must only recognize and not reject (*despise*, v. 17) God’s discipline, and “apply it to yourself” (v. 27, NIV).

and your offspring like the grass of the earth.

²⁶ You shall come to your grave in ripe old age,
as a shock of grain comes up to the threshing floor in its season.

²⁷ See, we have searched this out; it is true.
Hear, and know it for yourself.”

6 Then Job answered:

² “O that my vexation were weighed,
and all my calamity laid in the balances!

³ For then it would be heavier than the sand of the sea;
therefore my words have been rash.

⁴ For the arrows of the Almighty^a are in me;
my spirit drinks their poison;
the terrors of God are arrayed against me.

⁵ Does the wild ass bray over its grass,
or the ox low over its fodder?

⁶ Can that which is tasteless be eaten without salt,
or is there any flavor in the juice of mallows?^b

⁷ My appetite refuses to touch them;
they are like food that is loathsome to me.^b

⁸ “O that I might have my request,
and that God would grant my desire;

⁹ that it would please God to crush me,
that he would let loose his hand and cut me off!

¹⁰ This would be my consolation;
I would even exult^b in unrelenting pain;
for I have not denied the words of the Holy One.

¹¹ What is my strength, that I should wait?

And what is my end, that I should be patient?

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

¹³ In truth I have no help in me,
and any resource is driven from me.

¹⁴ “Those who withhold^c kindness from a friend
forsake the fear of the Almighty.^a

¹⁵ My companions are treacherous like a torrent-bed,
like freshets that pass away,

¹⁶ that run dark with ice,
turbid with melting snow.

¹⁷ In time of heat they disappear;
when it is hot, they vanish from their place.

¹⁸ The caravans turn aside from their course;
they go up into the waste, and perish.

¹⁹ The caravans of Tema look,
the travelers of Sheba hope.

²⁰ They are disappointed because they were confident;
they come there and are confounded.

²¹ Such you have now become to me;^d
you see my calamity, and are afraid.

²² Have I said, ‘Make me a gift’?
Or, ‘From your wealth offer a bribe for me’?

²³ Or, ‘Save me from an opponent’s hand’?
Or, ‘Ransom me from the hand of oppressors’?

^a Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*

^b Meaning of Heb uncertain

^c Syr Vg Compare Tg: Meaning of Heb uncertain

^d Cn Compare Gk Syr: Meaning of Heb uncertain

6.1–7.21: Job’s second speech. 6.1–13: A soliloquy, addressed to no one. In ch 3 Job had only asked why sufferers like him must go on living; but here he actively yearns for immediate death (vv. 8–9). If he could die now, before his suffering leads him into blasphemy, he could at least have the *consolation* of not having *denied the words*, the commandments, of the *Holy One*. Eliphaz has called on Job to be *patient*, but patience needs a *strength* that Job does not have (vv. 11–13). He begins to think of God as his enemy, armed with poisoned *arrows* and with *terrors* as his army (v. 4; cf. Deut 32.23; Lam 2.4). 14–30: Turning now to the friends, Job accuses them of defrauding him of friendship’s debt of *kindness* or, rather, “loyalty” (v. 14), *afraid* that if they identify themselves too closely with Job they too will come under God’s judgment (v. 21). 15–17: The *torrent-bed* and *freshets* are the wadis that are full of water during the rainy seasons but are dry during the summer when water is most needed (cf. Jer 15.18). 18–20: *Tema* and *Sheba*, areas in northern and southwestern Arabia, respectively.

²⁴ “Teach me, and I will be silent;
make me understand how I have gone
wrong.

²⁵ How forceful are honest words!
But your reproof, what does it reprove?

²⁶ Do you think that you can reprove
words,
as if the speech of the desperate were
wind?

²⁷ You would even cast lots over the
orphan,
and bargain over your friend.

²⁸ “But now, be pleased to look at me;
for I will not lie to your face.

²⁹ Turn, I pray, let no wrong be done.
Turn now, my vindication is at stake.

³⁰ Is there any wrong on my tongue?
Cannot my taste discern calamity?

7 “Do not human beings have a hard
service on earth,
and are not their days like the days of a
laborer?

² Like a slave who longs for the shadow,
and like laborers who look for their
wages,

³ so I am allotted months of emptiness,
and nights of misery are apportioned
to me.

⁴ When I lie down I say, ‘When shall I
rise?’
But the night is long,
and I am full of tossing until dawn.

⁵ My flesh is clothed with worms and dirt;
my skin hardens, then breaks out
again.

⁶ My days are swifter than a weaver’s
shuttle,
and come to their end without hope.^a

⁷ “Remember that my life is a breath;
my eye will never again see good.

⁸ The eye that beholds me will see me no

more;
while your eyes are upon me, I shall be
gone.

⁹ As the cloud fades and vanishes,
so those who go down to Sheol do not
come up;

¹⁰ they return no more to their houses,
nor do their places know them any
more.

¹¹ “Therefore I will not restrain my mouth;
I will speak in the anguish of my spirit;
I will complain in the bitterness of my
soul.

¹² Am I the Sea, or the Dragon,
that you set a guard over me?

¹³ When I say, ‘My bed will comfort me,
my couch will ease my complaint,’

¹⁴ then you scare me with dreams
and terrify me with visions,

¹⁵ so that I would choose strangling
and death rather than this body.

¹⁶ I loathe my life; I would not live forever.
Let me alone, for my days are a breath.

¹⁷ What are human beings, that you make
so much of them,
that you set your mind on them,

¹⁸ visit them every morning,
test them every moment?

¹⁹ Will you not look away from me for a
while,
let me alone until I swallow my
spittle?

²⁰ If I sin, what do I do to you, you watcher
of humanity?

Why have you made me your target?
Why have I become a burden to you?

²¹ Why do you not pardon my
transgression
and take away my iniquity?

^a Or as the thread runs out

7:1–21: Turning now to God, Job interweaves his own death-wish with his experience of the futility and misery of human life generally. 9: *Sheol*, the abode of the dead. 12: God, far from letting him alone, treats him like one of the legendary monsters of the deep, Yam (*the Sea*) or Tannin (*the Dragon*), who had to be muzzled by God at creation (cf. 3.8n.; 38.8–11; Isa 51.9). 17–18: A bitter parody of Ps 8.4. The psalm expresses wonder at the high status humans have been given as rulers of the earth despite their apparent insignificance on the cosmic scale. Job’s language is a reproof of God for the disproportionate attention God gives to mortals, subjecting them to perpetual hostile scrutiny.

For now I shall lie in the earth;
you will seek me, but I shall not be.”

8 Then Bildad the Shuhite answered:
2 “How long will you say these things,
and the words of your mouth be a great
wind?

3 Does God pervert justice?
Or does the Almighty^a pervert the
right?

4 If your children sinned against him,
he delivered them into the power of
their transgression.

5 If you will seek God
and make supplication to the Almighty,^a

6 if you are pure and upright,
surely then he will rouse himself for
you

and restore to you your rightful place.

7 Though your beginning was small,
your latter days will be very great.

8 “For inquire now of bygone generations,
and consider what their ancestors have
found;

9 for we are but of yesterday, and we know
nothing,
for our days on earth are but a shadow.

10 Will they not teach you and tell you
and utter words out of their
understanding?

11 “Can papyrus grow where there is no
marsh?

Can reeds flourish where there is no
water?

12 While yet in flower and not cut down,
they wither before any other plant.

13 Such are the paths of all who forget God;
the hope of the godless shall perish.

14 Their confidence is gossamer,
a spider’s house their trust.

15 If one leans against its house, it will not
stand;

if one lays hold of it, it will not endure.

16 The wicked thrive^b before the sun,
and their shoots spread over the garden.

17 Their roots twine around the stoneheap;
they live among the rocks.^c

18 If they are destroyed from their place,
then it will deny them, saying, ‘I have
never seen you.’

19 See, these are their happy ways,^d
and out of the earth still others will
spring.

20 “See, God will not reject a blameless
person,
nor take the hand of evildoers.

21 He will yet fill your mouth with laughter,
and your lips with shouts of joy.

22 Those who hate you will be clothed with
shame,
and the tent of the wicked will be no
more.”

9 Then Job answered:
2 “Indeed I know that this is so;
but how can a mortal be just before
God?

^a Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*

^b Heb *He thrives*

^c Gk Vg: Meaning of Heb uncertain

^d Meaning of Heb uncertain

8.1–22: Bildad’s first speech. Like all the friends, Bildad believes that suffering is punishment, and that the death of Job’s children is proof of their sin. Bildad has less confidence in Job’s righteousness than Eliphaz did, and his encouragement to Job depends on a condition, *if you are pure and upright* (v. 6). **2–7:** Job’s children are dead, so they must have sinned (v. 4). By contrast, Job himself is not dead, so he must be innocent of anything deserving of death. He has only to *seek God* in prayer (v. 5), and if he is *pure and upright* his prayer will be heard. **8–19:** No effect without a cause, as the case of the wicked shows. **8–10:** Bildad’s trust in the wisdom of *bygone generations* instead of *we [who] know nothing* is contrasted with Job’s reliance on his own experience (6.4–7,30). **20–22:** Bildad believes Job may yet prove to be a *blameless person* (v. 20).

9.1–10.22: Job’s third speech. Here is Job’s strongest statement so far of his feeling of powerlessness (e.g. 9.3–4,14–20,30–31), his sense of being trapped (9.15,20,27–31), and his belief that God’s apparent concern for him throughout his life has not really been for his benefit, but in order to fasten guilt upon him (10.13–14). Novel in this speech is the question of how Job is to be vindicated, that is, shown publicly to be in the right after all. It is a hopeless task to make God declare him innocent (9.2), which eventually throws Job into despair (10.15–16).

³ If one wished to contend with him,
one could not answer him once in a
thousand.
⁴ He is wise in heart, and mighty in
strength
—who has resisted him, and succeeded?—
⁵ he who removes mountains, and they do
not know it,
when he overturns them in his anger;
⁶ who shakes the earth out of its place,
and its pillars tremble;
⁷ who commands the sun, and it does not
rise;
who seals up the stars;
⁸ who alone stretched out the heavens
and trampled the waves of the Sea;^a
⁹ who made the Bear and Orion,
the Pleiades and the chambers of the
south;
¹⁰ who does great things beyond
understanding,
and marvelous things without number.
¹¹ Look, he passes by me, and I do not see
him;
he moves on, but I do not perceive him.
¹² He snatches away; who can stop him?
Who will say to him, ‘What are you
doing?’
¹³ “God will not turn back his anger;
the helpers of Rahab bowed beneath
him.
¹⁴ How then can I answer him,
choosing my words with him?
¹⁵ Though I am innocent, I cannot answer
him;
I must appeal for mercy to my accuser.^b
¹⁶ If I summoned him and he answered me,

I do not believe that he would listen to
my voice.
¹⁷ For he crushes me with a tempest,
and multiplies my wounds without
cause;
¹⁸ he will not let me get my breath,
but fills me with bitterness.
¹⁹ If it is a contest of strength, he is the
strong one!
If it is a matter of justice, who can
summon him?^c
²⁰ Though I am innocent, my own mouth
would condemn me;
though I am blameless, he would prove
me perverse.
²¹ I am blameless; I do not know myself;
I loathe my life.
²² It is all one; therefore I say,
he destroys both the blameless and the
wicked.
²³ When disaster brings sudden death,
he mocks at the calamity^d of the
innocent.
²⁴ The earth is given into the hand of the
wicked;
he covers the eyes of its judges—
if it is not he, who then is it?
²⁵ “My days are swifter than a runner;
they flee away, they see no good.

^a Or *trampled the back of the sea dragon*

^b Or *for my right*

^c Compare Gk: Heb *me*

^d Meaning of Heb uncertain

But it has become an ambition that will only grow in attraction for him as the book progresses (cf. 13.13–23; 16.18–21; 19.23–27; 23.2–14). 9.2: Job is not saying that no one can actually be *just* in the sight of God, but complaining that because God has such power and wisdom he can defeat any human's attempt to be declared righteous or “win his case” (REB) against God; God will not give humans the satisfaction of hearing their innocence affirmed. 5–13: Job focuses upon the more negative aspects of God's power (vv. 5–7) not in order to picture him as a God of chaos but to emphasize his freedom to act, whether for good or ill. His freedom makes him incomprehensible (v. 10), unaccountable (v. 12), and uncontrollable (v. 13). 9: *Bear, Orion, Pleiades*, in the translation the familiar names of the star groups in Greek tradition are substituted for the Heb terms; cf. 38.31–33; Am 5.8. 13: *Rahab*, the legendary sea-monster of chaos, similar to or identical with Leviathan, with whom God did battle at creation (see also 26.12; Ps 89.10; Isa 51.9). 14–24: Job believes that even if he could bring God to court he would not get vindication. 15: Job is not going to *appeal for mercy* for that might sound like an admission of guilt. What he wants is vindication, not relief from his sufferings. 17: *Tempest*, better “storm.” 22: God *destroys both the blameless and the wicked* because he is determined upon hostility to humans. 25–35: The monologue has turned

²⁶ They go by like skiffs of reed,
like an eagle swooping on the prey.
²⁷ If I say, 'I will forget my complaint;
I will put off my sad countenance and
be of good cheer,'
²⁸ I become afraid of all my suffering,
for I know you will not hold me
innocent.
²⁹ I shall be condemned;
why then do I labor in vain?
³⁰ If I wash myself with soap
and cleanse my hands with lye,
³¹ yet you will plunge me into filth,
and my own clothes will abhor me.
³² For he is not a mortal, as I am, that I
might answer him,
that we should come to trial together.
³³ There is no umpire^a between us,
who might lay his hand on us both.
³⁴ If he would take his rod away from me,
and not let dread of him terrify me,
³⁵ then I would speak without fear of him,
for I know I am not what I am thought
to be.^b

10 "I loathe my life;
I will give free utterance to my
complaint;
I will speak in the bitterness of my soul.
² I will say to God, Do not condemn me;
let me know why you contend against me.
³ Does it seem good to you to oppress,
to despise the work of your hands
and favor the schemes of the wicked?
⁴ Do you have eyes of flesh?
Do you see as humans see?
⁵ Are your days like the days of mortals,
or your years like human years,
⁶ that you seek out my iniquity
and search for my sin,
⁷ although you know that I am not guilty,
and there is no one to deliver out of
your hand?

⁸ Your hands fashioned and made me;
and now you turn and destroy me.^c
⁹ Remember that you fashioned me like
clay;
and will you turn me to dust again?
¹⁰ Did you not pour me out like milk
and curdle me like cheese?
¹¹ You clothed me with skin and flesh,
and knit me together with bones and
sinews.
¹² You have granted me life and steadfast
love,
and your care has preserved my
spirit.
¹³ Yet these things you hid in your heart;
I know that this was your purpose.
¹⁴ If I sin, you watch me,
and do not acquit me of my iniquity.
¹⁵ If I am wicked, woe to me!
If I am righteous, I cannot lift up my
head,
for I am filled with disgrace
and look upon my affliction.
¹⁶ Bold as a lion you hunt me;
you repeat your exploits against me.
¹⁷ You renew your witnesses against me,
and increase your vexation toward me;
you bring fresh troops against me.^d
¹⁸ "Why did you bring me forth from the
womb?
Would that I had died before any eye
had seen me,
¹⁹ and were as though I had not been,
carried from the womb to the grave.

^a Another reading is *Would that there were an umpire*

^b Cn: Heb *for I am not so in myself*

^c Cn Compare Gk Syr: Heb *made me together all around, and you destroy me*

^d Cn Compare Gk: Heb *toward me; changes and a troop are with me*

into an address to God. 32–35: A legal confrontation with God is doomed because the two parties cannot be on the same level (v. 32). Job needs an *umpire* or arbitrator, one who would *lay his hand* upon both parties as a gesture of reconciliation. Since there is no such umpire, Job will have to conduct his lawsuit himself. 10.1–2: Job's intention to begin a legal controversy with God. 3–7: Speculation about God's motives for his treatment of Job. 8–17: The contradiction between God's real and apparent purposes in creating Job and keeping him alive. 9: Cf. 33.6; Gen 2.7; 3.19; Isa 64.8. 10: Human conception is pictured as cheese-making: semen, a milk-like substance, is poured into the womb, where, like cheese, it coagulates into the embryo (cf. Ps 139.13–16; Wis 7.2). 18–22: An appeal for release from God's oppressive presence.

²⁰ Are not the days of my life few?^a
Let me alone, that I may find a little
comfort^b

²¹ before I go, never to return,
to the land of gloom and deep darkness,

²² the land of gloom^c and chaos,
where light is like darkness.”

11 Then Zophar the Naamathite answered:

² “Should a multitude of words go
unanswered,
and should one full of talk be
vindicated?

³ Should your babble put others to silence,
and when you mock, shall no one
shame you?

⁴ For you say, ‘My conduct^d is pure,
and I am clean in God’s^e sight.’

⁵ But O that God would speak,
and open his lips to you,

⁶ and that he would tell you the secrets of
wisdom!

For wisdom is many-sided.^f

Know then that God exacts of you less
than your guilt deserves.

⁷ “Can you find out the deep things of
God?

Can you find out the limit of the
Almighty?^g

⁸ It is higher than heaven^h—what can you
do?

Deeper than Sheol—what can you
know?

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

¹⁰ If he passes through, and imprisons,
and assembles for judgment, who can
hinder him?

¹¹ For he knows those who are worthless;
when he sees iniquity, will he not
consider it?

¹² But a stupid person will get understanding,
when a wild ass is born human.^f

¹³ “If you direct your heart rightly,
you will stretch out your hands toward
him.

¹⁴ If iniquity is in your hand, put it far away,
and do not let wickedness reside in
your tents.

¹⁵ Surely then you will lift up your face
without blemish;
you will be secure, and will not fear.

¹⁶ You will forget your misery;
you will remember it as waters that
have passed away.

¹⁷ And your life will be brighter than the
noonday;
its darkness will be like the morning.

¹⁸ And you will have confidence, because
there is hope;

you will be protectedⁱ and take your rest
in safety.

¹⁹ You will lie down, and no one will make
you afraid;
many will entreat your favor.

²⁰ But the eyes of the wicked will fail;
all way of escape will be lost to them,
and their hope is to breathe their last.”

12 Then Job answered:

² “No doubt you are the people,
and wisdom will die with you.

^a Cn Compare Gk Syr: Heb *Are not my days few? Let him cease!*

^b Heb *that I may brighten up a little*

^c Heb *gloom as darkness, deep darkness*

^d Gk: Heb *teaching*

^e Heb *your*

^f Meaning of Heb uncertain

^g Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*

^h Heb *The heights of heaven*

ⁱ Or *you will look around*

11.1–20: Zophar’s first speech. Zophar is the least sympathetic of the three friends. His message to Job is simple: you are suffering because God knows that you are a secret sinner (v. 6); therefore repent (vv. 13–14)! **4–6:** Zophar agrees with Job that the real issue is the question of sin. Since it is not obvious that Job is a sinner, his sin must be secret. So bad a sinner is Job that even with all his punishment God is letting Job off lightly (v. 6). **7–12:** God’s wisdom is focused on the detection of wrongdoing. **8:** *Sheol*, the abode of the dead. **13–20:** Restoration depends entirely on Job’s complete repentance. He must *stretch out* his hands in prayer and renounce his present sinfulness. The result will be a clear conscience (*you will lift up your face*) and a sense of security (v. 15).

12.1–20.29: Second cycle of speeches.

³ But I have understanding as well as you;
I am not inferior to you.

Who does not know such things as
these?

⁴ I am a laughingstock to my friends;
I, who called upon God and he
answered me,
a just and blameless man, I am a
laughingstock.

⁵ Those at ease have contempt for
misfortune,^a
but it is ready for those whose feet are
unstable.

⁶ The tents of robbers are at peace,
and those who provoke God are secure,
who bring their god in their hands.^b

⁷ “But ask the animals, and they will teach
you;
the birds of the air, and they will tell
you;

⁸ ask the plants of the earth,^c and they will
teach you;
and the fish of the sea will declare to
you.

⁹ Who among all these does not know
that the hand of the LORD has done
this?

¹⁰ In his hand is the life of every living
thing
and the breath of every human being.

¹¹ Does not the ear test words
as the palate tastes food?

¹² Is wisdom with the aged,
and understanding in length of days?

¹³ “With God^d are wisdom and strength;
he has counsel and understanding.

¹⁴ If he tears down, no one can rebuild;
if he shuts someone in, no one can
open up.

¹⁵ If he withholds the waters, they dry up;
if he sends them out, they overwhelm
the land.

¹⁶ With him are strength and wisdom;
the deceived and the deceiver are his.

¹⁷ He leads counselors away stripped,
and makes fools of judges.

¹⁸ He looses the sash of kings,
and binds a waistcloth on their loins.

¹⁹ He leads priests away stripped,
and overthrows the mighty.

²⁰ He deprives of speech those who are
trusted,
and takes away the discernment of the
elders.

²¹ He pours contempt on princes,
and looses the belt of the strong.

²² He uncovers the deeps out of darkness,
and brings deep darkness to light.

²³ He makes nations great, then destroys
them;

he enlarges nations, then leads them
away.

²⁴ He strips understanding from the
leaders^e of the earth,
and makes them wander in a pathless
waste.

²⁵ They grope in the dark without light;
he makes them stagger like a drunkard.

13 “Look, my eye has seen all this,
my ear has heard and understood it.

² What you know, I also know;
I am not inferior to you.

^a Meaning of Heb uncertain

^b Or *whom God brought forth by his hand*; Meaning of Heb uncertain

^c Or *speak to the earth*

^d Heb *him*

^e Heb adds *of the people*

12.1–14.22: Job's fourth speech. In the first part, Job addresses his friends (12.2–13.19) and in the second, God (13.20–14.22). The essence of the whole speech is: I want nothing to do with you *worthless physicians* (13.4); I desire to *speak to the Almighty* (13.3). **12.2–13.19:** For the first time Job shows himself contemptuous of the friends. He believes his wisdom is superior to theirs (12.2), for he knows something they do not: that it is possible for a righteous person to be afflicted and, equally, that the deeds of the wicked can go unpunished (vv. 4–6). **7–12:** Job is not addressing the friends, but ironically imagining what they might say to him. **13–25:** This hymn to the destructive power of the Almighty presents Job's new wisdom: God is no calm governor of a well-ordered universe, but an eccentric deity who cannot be comprehended or tamed. His chief characteristic is his upsetting of stable order. **13.1–3:** Nevertheless, Job is determined to argue a lawsuit with God. **4–12:** The friends have been speaking as false witnesses on behalf of God. Although Job has many doubts about God's justice, he does not doubt that God will

or the moon moving in splendor,
²⁷ and my heart has been secretly enticed,
 and my mouth has kissed my hand;
²⁸ this also would be an iniquity to be
 punished by the judges,
 for I should have been false to God
 above.

²⁹ “If I have rejoiced at the ruin of those
 who hated me,
 or exulted when evil overtook them—
³⁰ I have not let my mouth sin
 by asking for their lives with a curse—
³¹ if those of my tent ever said,
 ‘O that we might be sated with his
 flesh!’^a—
³² the stranger has not lodged in the street;
 I have opened my doors to the
 traveler—
³³ if I have concealed my transgressions as
 others do,^b
 by hiding my iniquity in my bosom,
³⁴ because I stood in great fear of the
 multitude,
 and the contempt of families terrified
 me,
 so that I kept silence, and did not go out
 of doors—
³⁵ O that I had one to hear me!
 (Here is my signature! Let the Almighty^c
 answer me!)
 O that I had the indictment written by
 my adversary!

³⁶ Surely I would carry it on my shoulder;
 I would bind it on me like a crown;
³⁷ I would give him an account of all my
 steps;
 like a prince I would approach him.

³⁸ “If my land has cried out against me,
 and its furrows have wept together;
³⁹ if I have eaten its yield without payment,
 and caused the death of its owners;
⁴⁰ let thorns grow instead of wheat,
 and foul weeds instead of barley.”

The words of Job are ended.

32 So these three men ceased to answer Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes. ² Then Elihu son of Barachel the Buzite, of the family of Ram, became angry. He was angry at Job because he justified himself rather than God; ³ he was angry also at Job's three friends because they had found no answer, though they had declared Job to be in the wrong. ⁴ Now Elihu had waited to speak to Job, because they were older than he. ⁵ But when Elihu saw that there was no answer in the mouths of these three men, he became angry.

^a Meaning of Heb uncertain

^b Or as Adam did

^c Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*

^d Another ancient tradition reads *answer, and had put God in the wrong*

are two forms of false worship. **27:** *My mouth has kissed my hand*, to throw a kiss as a gesture of worship. **31:** *O that we might be sated with his flesh!*, or better, “O that there were someone not yet satisfied with his meat!” There is no chance of finding anyone who has not benefited from Job's hospitality. **35–37:** These verses are the climax to the speech, and it is strange that they are not at the end; perhaps vv. 38–40 have been misplaced and should follow v. 34. **35:** *One to hear me*, i.e., God. **36:** Job would be proud to display the sheet of charges God has against him, for it would be blank (or else filled with falsehoods).

32.1–37.24: Elihu's speeches. Many scholars think that the Elihu speeches (chs. 32–37) are a later addition to the book, partly because Elihu is not mentioned in the prologue or epilogue. It may be, however, that the Elihu speeches originally followed directly after the last of the friends' third speeches, i.e., after chap. 27, and that chap. 28 was the last of Elihu's speeches. This rearrangement would make better sense of the phrase *these three men* in 32.1, and it would also mean that the LORD addresses Job immediately after Job's last speech (chaps. 29–31) is concluded. In any case, the Elihu speeches are part of the book we now have, and Elihu has a distinctive contribution to make to its argument. Elihu, who professes himself opposed both to Job and to his friends (32.2–3, 10–12; 33.1–12) is offering a middle way between them. Against the friends, he argues that suffering is not necessarily the penalty for sin already committed, but may be a warning, to keep a person back from sin; it is better understood as discipline or education.

32.1–33.33: Elihu's first speech. **32.6–14:** Elihu has hitherto deferred to the other friends on account of their greater age, but he realizes that all humans have an equal access to wisdom, since all have in them the *breath of the Almighty* (v. 8; cf. Gen 2.7). He feels he must speak because the friends have not answered Job adequately (vv.

⁶ Elihu son of Barachel the Buzite answered:

“I am young in years,
and you are aged;
therefore I was timid and afraid
to declare my opinion to you.

⁷ I said, ‘Let days speak,
and many years teach wisdom.’

⁸ But truly it is the spirit in a mortal,
the breath of the Almighty,^a that makes
for understanding.

⁹ It is not the old^b that are wise,
nor the aged that understand what is
right.

¹⁰ Therefore I say, ‘Listen to me;
let me also declare my opinion.’

¹¹ “See, I waited for your words,
I listened for your wise sayings,
while you searched out what to say.

¹² I gave you my attention,
but there was in fact no one that
confuted Job,
no one among you that answered his
words.

¹³ Yet do not say, ‘We have found wisdom;
God may vanquish him, not a
human.’

¹⁴ He has not directed his words against
me,
and I will not answer him with your
speeches.

¹⁵ “They are dismayed, they answer no
more;
they have not a word to say.

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

¹⁷ I also will give my answer;
I also will declare my opinion.

¹⁸ For I am full of words;
the spirit within me constrains me.

¹⁹ My heart is indeed like wine that has no
vent;

like new wineskins, it is ready to burst.
²⁰ I must speak, so that I may find relief;
I must open my lips and answer.

²¹ I will not show partiality to any person
or use flattery toward anyone.

²² For I do not know how to flatter—
or my Maker would soon put an end to
me!

33 “But now, hear my speech, O Job,
and listen to all my words.

² See, I open my mouth;
the tongue in my mouth speaks.

³ My words declare the uprightness of my
heart,
and what my lips know they speak
sincerely.

⁴ The spirit of God has made me,
and the breath of the Almighty^a gives
me life.

⁵ Answer me, if you can;
set your words in order before me; take
your stand.

⁶ See, before God I am as you are;
I too was formed from a piece of clay.

⁷ No fear of me need terrify you;
my pressure will not be heavy on you.

⁸ “Surely, you have spoken in my hearing,
and I have heard the sound of your
words.

⁹ You say, ‘I am clean, without
transgression;
I am pure, and there is no iniquity in
me.

¹⁰ Look, he finds occasions against me,
he counts me as his enemy;

¹¹ he puts my feet in the stocks,
and watches all my paths.’

^a Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*

^b Gk Syr Vg: Heb *many*

11–14). 7: *I said*, i.e., to myself. 9: *It is not the old that are wise*, he must mean that it is not always the old who have wisdom. 15: From here to the end of ch 33 Elihu addresses Job, referring to the friends as “they.” 17–22: Elihu’s third reason for speaking is that he feels he will explode with frustration if he does not. 19: It is not his *heart* but his “belly” that is like a wineskin that the new fermenting wine will burst if it is not vented. 33.1–7: Elihu challenges Job to prepare for debate. 8–33: Job believes, says Elihu, that he is faultless (v. 9), that God’s treatment of him is pure malice (vv. 10–11), and that God refuses to answer his complaints of injustice (v. 13). Elihu’s response is that God has various ways of speaking to humans, e.g., dreams (vv. 15–17) and suffering (vv. 19–28). In both

¹² “But in this you are not right. I will answer you:
 God is greater than any mortal.
¹³ Why do you contend against him, saying, ‘He will answer none of my^a words’?
¹⁴ For God speaks in one way, and in two, though people do not perceive it.
¹⁵ In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls on mortals, while they slumber on their beds,
¹⁶ then he opens their ears, and terrifies them with warnings,
¹⁷ that he may turn them aside from their deeds,
 and keep them from pride,
¹⁸ to spare their souls from the Pit, their lives from traversing the River.
¹⁹ They are also chastened with pain upon their beds,
 and with continual strife in their bones,
²⁰ so that their lives loathe bread, and their appetites dainty food.
²¹ Their flesh is so wasted away that it cannot be seen;
 and their bones, once invisible, now stick out.
²² Their souls draw near the Pit, and their lives to those who bring death.
²³ Then, if there should be for one of them an angel,
 a mediator, one of a thousand, one who declares a person upright,
²⁴ and he is gracious to that person, and says,
 ‘Deliver him from going down into the Pit;
 I have found a ransom;

²⁵ let his flesh become fresh with youth; let him return to the days of his youthful vigor’;
²⁶ then he prays to God, and is accepted by him,
 he comes into his presence with joy, and God^b repays him for his righteousness.
²⁷ That person sings to others and says, ‘I sinned, and perverted what was right, and it was not paid back to me.
²⁸ He has redeemed my soul from going down to the Pit, and my life shall see the light.’
²⁹ “God indeed does all these things, twice, three times, with mortals,
³⁰ to bring back their souls from the Pit, so that they may see the light of life.^c
³¹ Pay heed, Job, listen to me; be silent, and I will speak.
³² If you have anything to say, answer me; speak, for I desire to justify you.
³³ If not, listen to me; be silent, and I will teach you wisdom.”

34 Then Elihu continued and said:
² “Hear my words, you wise men, and give ear to me, you who know;
³ for the ear tests words as the palate tastes food.
⁴ Let us choose what is right; let us determine among ourselves what is good.
⁵ For Job has said, ‘I am innocent, and God has taken away my right;

^a Compare Gk: Heb *his*

^b Heb *he*

^c Syr: Heb *to be lighted with the light of life*

cases, God’s purpose is not to punish but to rescue humans from their sin (vv. 29–30). **18:** *The Pit*, another term for Sheol, the abode of the dead. *The River*, the underworld stream the dead must cross before they reach Sheol, like the Greek river Styx. **23:** *An angel, a mediator, one of a thousand*, probably “the thousand” were a group of supportive angels (unlike the accusatory angel the Satan), who would take up the cause of humans in the divine court (cf. 5.1, where Eliphaz denies that Job can expect any help from such angels). **24:** *Ransom* is usually money paid to release a guilty person from punishment, but here some unspecified ground for forgiveness. **32:** Elihu’s ultimate purpose, to *justify* Job, is like that of the supportive angels.

34.1–37: *Elihu’s second speech*. In vv. 2–15 Elihu addresses the friends, in vv. 16–37 Job. God, he argues, cannot do wrong by failing to execute retribution; but Job is doing wrong by claiming that God has acted unjustly toward him. All of Elihu’s criticism of Job concerns Job’s speeches; he does not hold against him anything he may have said or done before the book opened. His focus is not on what Job deserves but on the infamy of his

- ³⁰ so that the godless should not reign,
or those who ensnare the people.
- ³¹ “For has anyone said to God,
‘I have endured punishment; I will not
offend any more;
³² teach me what I do not see;
if I have done iniquity, I will do it no
more’?”
- ³³ Will he then pay back to suit you,
because you reject it?
For you must choose, and not I;
therefore declare what you know.^a
- ³⁴ “Those who have sense will say to me,
and the wise who hear me will say,
³⁵ ‘Job speaks without knowledge,
his words are without insight.’”
- ³⁶ Would that Job were tried to the limit,
because his answers are those of the
wicked.
- ³⁷ For he adds rebellion to his sin;
he claps his hands among us,
and multiplies his words against God.”

- 35** Elihu continued and said:
² “Do you think this to be just?
You say, ‘I am in the right before God.’
³ If you ask, ‘What advantage have I?
How am I better off than if I had sinned?’
⁴ I will answer you
and your friends with you.
⁵ Look at the heavens and see;
observe the clouds, which are higher
than you.
⁶ If you have sinned, what do you
accomplish against him?
And if your transgressions are
multiplied, what do you do to him?
⁷ If you are righteous, what do you give to
him;
or what does he receive from your
hand?”

- ⁸ Your wickedness affects others like you,
and your righteousness, other human
beings.
- ⁹ “Because of the multitude of oppressions
people cry out;
they call for help because of the arm of
the mighty.
¹⁰ But no one says, ‘Where is God my
Maker,
who gives strength in the night,
¹¹ who teaches us more than the animals of
the earth,
and makes us wiser than the birds of
the air?’”
- ¹² There they cry out, but he does not
answer,
because of the pride of evildoers.
¹³ Surely God does not hear an empty cry,
nor does the Almighty^b regard it.
¹⁴ How much less when you say that you do
not see him,
that the case is before him, and you are
waiting for him!
¹⁵ And now, because his anger does not
punish,
and he does not greatly heed
transgression,^c
¹⁶ Job opens his mouth in empty talk,
he multiplies words without
knowledge.”

- 36** Elihu continued and said:
² “Bear with me a little, and I will show
you,

^a Meaning of Heb of verses 29-33 uncertain

^b Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*

^c Theodotion Symmachus Compare Vg: Meaning of Heb uncertain

35.1–16: Elihu's third speech. 2–8: Elihu takes up Job's complaints, that he is no better off than if he had sinned (v. 3b), and that there is no benefit in righteousness (v. 3a). Elihu responds that piety should be assessed in terms of benefit, and that justice is not a matter of one's own rights and deserts, but of others benefiting from one's virtue. 6: Reminiscent of Job in 7.20; but whereas Job meant that any sin he may have done is hardly worth retribution since he himself will soon be dead, Elihu means that the important thing is the effect of sin or righteousness upon humans rather than upon God. 9–16: The absence of a response from God does not mean that God cares nothing about humans, as Job claimed (24.12). God responds to the cries of the oppressed only if they deserve justice, for being oppressed is no proof of innocence, and crying out in pain is not the same as crying to God for deliverance.

- for I have yet something to say on God's behalf.
- ³ I will bring my knowledge from far away, and ascribe righteousness to my Maker.
- ⁴ For truly my words are not false; one who is perfect in knowledge is with you.
- ⁵ "Surely God is mighty and does not despise any; he is mighty in strength of understanding.
- ⁶ He does not keep the wicked alive, but gives the afflicted their right.
- ⁷ He does not withdraw his eyes from the righteous, but with kings on the throne he sets them forever, and they are exalted.
- ⁸ And if they are bound in fetters and caught in the cords of affliction,
- ⁹ then he declares to them their work and their transgressions, that they are behaving arrogantly.
- ¹⁰ He opens their ears to instruction, and commands that they return from iniquity.
- ¹¹ If they listen, and serve him, they complete their days in prosperity, and their years in pleasantness.
- ¹² But if they do not listen, they shall perish by the sword, and die without knowledge.
- ¹³ "The godless in heart cherish anger; they do not cry for help when he binds them.
- ¹⁴ They die in their youth, and their life ends in shame.^a
- ¹⁵ He delivers the afflicted by their affliction, and opens their ear by adversity.
- ¹⁶ He also allured you out of distress into a broad place where there was no constraint, and what was set on your table was full of fatness.
- ¹⁷ "But you are obsessed with the case of the wicked; judgment and justice seize you.
- ¹⁸ Beware that wrath does not entice you into scoffing, and do not let the greatness of the ransom turn you aside.
- ¹⁹ Will your cry avail to keep you from distress, or will all the force of your strength?
- ²⁰ Do not long for the night, when peoples are cut off in their place.
- ²¹ Beware! Do not turn to iniquity; because of that you have been tried by affliction.
- ²² See, God is exalted in his power; who is a teacher like him?
- ²³ Who has prescribed for him his way, or who can say, 'You have done wrong'?
- ²⁴ "Remember to extol his work, of which mortals have sung.
- ²⁵ All people have looked on it; everyone watches it from far away.
- ²⁶ Surely God is great, and we do not know him; the number of his years is unsearchable.
- ²⁷ For he draws up the drops of water; he distills^b his mist in rain,
- ²⁸ which the skies pour down and drop upon mortals abundantly.
- ²⁹ Can anyone understand the spreading of the clouds,

^a Heb *ends among the temple prostitutes*

^b Cn: Heb *they distill*

36.1–37.24: Elihu's fourth speech. It has two parts: 36.2–25, continuing the theme of the justice of God, and 36.26–37.24, an instruction on the theme of the God of nature, its subtext being that God's energies in creation and world governance are vehicles of his righteous judgments. 36.5–15: The topic is how God treats those righteous people who fall into sin (vv. 7–12,15) in comparison with how he treats the truly wicked (vv. 6,14). By allowing that the righteous are sometimes sinful, Elihu transcends the traditional dogma that drew a firm line between righteous and wicked. 16–25: Now Elihu offers his personal advice to Job. Finding himself subject to God's punishment, what he should do is not to complain about the injustice of it, but to discover in it God's instruction. 36.26–37.24: Suffering is education, says Elihu, and God is the great Teacher. He has built into the order of creation lessons for the improvement of humans. Rain, for example, is a means of exhibiting divine

the thunderings of his pavilion?

³⁰ See, he scatters his lightning around him
and covers the roots of the sea.

³¹ For by these he governs peoples;
he gives food in abundance.

³² He covers his hands with the lightning,
and commands it to strike the mark.

³³ Its crashing^a tells about him;
he is jealous^a with anger against
iniquity.

37 “At this also my heart trembles,
and leaps out of its place.

² Listen, listen to the thunder of his voice
and the rumbling that comes from his
mouth.

³ Under the whole heaven he lets it loose,
and his lightning to the corners of the
earth.

⁴ After it his voice roars;
he thunders with his majestic voice
and he does not restrain the lightnings^b
when his voice is heard.

⁵ God thunders wondrously with his voice;
he does great things that we cannot
comprehend.

⁶ For to the snow he says, ‘Fall on the
earth’;
and the shower of rain, his heavy
shower of rain,

⁷ serves as a sign on everyone’s hand,
so that all whom he has made may
know it.^c

⁸ Then the animals go into their lairs
and remain in their dens.

⁹ From its chamber comes the whirlwind,
and cold from the scattering winds.

¹⁰ By the breath of God ice is given,
and the broad waters are frozen fast.

¹¹ He loads the thick cloud with moisture;
the clouds scatter his lightning.

¹² They turn round and round by his
guidance,
to accomplish all that he commands
them
on the face of the habitable world.

¹³ Whether for correction, or for his land,
or for love, he causes it to happen.

¹⁴ “Hear this, O Job;
stop and consider the wondrous works
of God.

¹⁵ Do you know how God lays his command
upon them,
and causes the lightning of his cloud to
shine?

¹⁶ Do you know the balancings of the
clouds,
the wondrous works of the one whose
knowledge is perfect,

¹⁷ you whose garments are hot
when the earth is still because of the
south wind?

¹⁸ Can you, like him, spread out the skies,
hard as a molten mirror?

¹⁹ Teach us what we shall say to him;
we cannot draw up our case because of
darkness.

²⁰ Should he be told that I want to speak?
Did anyone ever wish to be swallowed
up?

²¹ Now, no one can look on the light
when it is bright in the skies,
when the wind has passed and cleared
them.

²² Out of the north comes golden splendor;
around God is awesome majesty.

^a Meaning of Heb uncertain

^b Heb *them*

^c Meaning of Heb of verse 7 uncertain

munificence toward humans. **29:** *Pavilion*, God’s heavenly dwelling (cf. 2 Sam 22.12). **30:** *Covers the roots of the sea*, the verb should rather mean “uncovers.” **32:** It is here bolt lightning, as distinct from sheet lightning in v. 30. **36.33–37.5:** Thunder and lightning are further examples of how God teaches humans. **37.6–8:** The snows and rains of winter are both mysterious (v. 5b) and a further communication of the divine, “so that all may recognize that he is at work” (as v. 7b should probably be translated). **9–13:** Other meteorological phenomena. **9:** The winds are stored in heavenly chambers. *Whirlwind*, or rather “tempest” (a whirlwind is properly a tornado). **13:** Rain can have various significances: it may be a punishment (a *correction*), a sign of God’s *love* (or rather, “loyalty”), or a token of his care for his world (as when it falls on uninhabited land; cf. 38.26). In any case, it tells humans something about God’s workings. **14–24:** Some of the most obscure verses in the whole book. **22:** The *north* sometimes means the heavens (as in 26.7), and the *golden splendor* may be simply the sun. For the

- ²³The Almighty^a—we cannot find him;
he is great in power and justice,
and abundant righteousness he will not
violate.
²⁴Therefore mortals fear him;
he does not regard any who are wise in
their own conceit.”

38 Then the LORD answered Job out of
the whirlwind:

- ²Who is this that darkens counsel by
words without knowledge?
³Gird up your loins like a man,
I will question you, and you shall
declare to me.

⁴“Where were you when I laid the
foundation of the earth?
Tell me, if you have understanding.
⁵Who determined its measurements—
surely you know!
Or who stretched the line upon it?
⁶On what were its bases sunk,
or who laid its cornerstone
⁷when the morning stars sang together
and all the heavenly beings^b shouted
for joy?

⁸“Or who shut in the sea with doors
when it burst out from the womb?—
⁹when I made the clouds its garment,
and thick darkness its swaddling band,

- ¹⁰and prescribed bounds for it,
and set bars and doors,
¹¹and said, “Thus far shall you come, and
no farther,
and here shall your proud waves be
stopped?”

¹²“Have you commanded the morning
since your days began,
and caused the dawn to know its place,
¹³so that it might take hold of the skirts of
the earth,
and the wicked be shaken out of it?
¹⁴It is changed like clay under the seal,
and it is dyed^c like a garment.
¹⁵Light is withheld from the wicked,
and their uplifted arm is broken.

¹⁶“Have you entered into the springs of
the sea,
or walked in the recesses of the deep?
¹⁷Have the gates of death been revealed to
you,
or have you seen the gates of deep
darkness?
¹⁸Have you comprehended the expanse of
the earth?
Declare, if you know all this.

^a Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*

^b Heb *sons of God*

^c Cn: Heb *and they stand forth*

possibility that the speeches of Elihu originally ended with the poem about wisdom, see 32.1–37.24n; 28.1–28n.

38.1–42.6: The LORD’s speeches and Job’s responses.

38.1–40.2: The LORD’s first speech. Between the proem in 38.2–3 and the peroration in 40.1–2, the speech is divided into two almost equal halves: 38.4–38 concerning the physical universe, and 38.39–39.30 concerning the world of animals. The divine speeches are notable for their silence over Job’s complaint of injustice, as if God means to say that administering justice is not part of his cosmic plan. **38.1:** *Whirlwind*, better “storm,” see 37.9. **2:** *Counsel*, or rather “the plan,” the set of divine principles according to which the creation is run. Job *darkens*, or “obscures,” them by focusing on his quest for justice, which is not included in the divine plan. **3:** *Gird up your loins like a man*, as a warrior does in preparation for combat. Job had better understand that summoning God to trial will not lead to a calm, rational, orderly legal process. **4–38:** In ten strophes, the LORD sketches his design, or plan, for the universe. **4–7:** Creation is conceived as the erection of a building. For the creator as architect, see Prov 8.27–30. The earth was built on foundations (vv. 4–6; see Pss 78.69; 102.25; 104.5; Isa 48.13), and strict limits were set for the primeval waters of chaos (vv. 8–11; 26.10; Pss 104.9; 148.6). **5:** *The line*, the measuring line for its foundations. **6:** *Cornerstone* should properly be “capstone,” the last and topmost stone laid. Sinking the bases and laying the capstone mark the beginning and end of the work. **7:** The *stars* are regarded as *heavenly beings*. **8–11:** The separation of sea and land at creation. There is allusion to the ancient myth of a primordial divine struggle with the sea (cf. 7.12; 9.13), although the imagery uncharacteristically treats the sea as a newborn baby. **12–15:** The daily renewal of creation as each day is created afresh. As in 24.13–17, it is assumed that the wicked prefer the cover of darkness for their activities. **16–18:** The extent of the world, together with

- 19 “Where is the way to the dwelling of
light,
and where is the place of darkness,
20 that you may take it to its territory
and that you may discern the paths to
its home?
21 Surely you know, for you were born then,
and the number of your days is great!
- 22 “Have you entered the storehouses of
the snow,
or have you seen the storehouses of the
hail,
23 which I have reserved for the time of
trouble,
for the day of battle and war?
24 What is the way to the place where the
light is distributed,
or where the east wind is scattered
upon the earth?
- 25 “Who has cut a channel for the torrents
of rain,
and a way for the thunderbolt,
26 to bring rain on a land where no one
lives,
on the desert, which is empty of human
life,
27 to satisfy the waste and desolate land,
and to make the ground put forth grass?
- 28 “Has the rain a father,
or who has begotten the drops of dew?
29 From whose womb did the ice come
forth,
and who has given birth to the
hoarfrost of heaven?
- 30 The waters become hard like stone,
and the face of the deep is frozen.
- 31 “Can you bind the chains of the
Pleiades,
or loose the cords of Orion?
32 Can you lead forth the Mazzaroth in
their season,
or can you guide the Bear with its
children?
33 Do you know the ordinances of the
heavens?
Can you establish their rule on the
earth?
- 34 “Can you lift up your voice to the
clouds,
so that a flood of waters may cover you?
35 Can you send forth lightnings, so that
they may go
and say to you, ‘Here we are’?
36 Who has put wisdom in the inward
parts,^a
or given understanding to the mind?^a
37 Who has the wisdom to number the
clouds?
Or who can tilt the waterskins of the
heavens,
38 when the dust runs into a mass
and the clods cling together?
- 39 “Can you hunt the prey for the lion,
or satisfy the appetite of the young
lions,

^a Meaning of Heb uncertain

the underworld, *death* being regarded as a city with *gates*. 19–21: *Light* and *darkness* are thought of as dwelling in the same home, using it each day in turns. 22–24: *Snow*, *hail*, and heat are kept in heavenly storehouses. 24: It is probably “heat,” rather than *light* that is distributed over the earth, often by the hot, violent *east wind* or *sirocco*. 25–27: Rainstorms travel via an unseen channel through the air from the clouds to the earth. 28–30: *Rain*, *dew*, *ice*, *hoarfrost* are more placid forms of moisture than torrents (v. 25). 28: *Has the rain a father?* No, it has no mythological ancestry, it is not supernatural. 29: *Ice* is properly “rime” formed when water droplets in fog freeze, as on trees, as distinct from *hoarfrost* formed when water vapor settles, as on the ground. 31–33: The four constellations, the *Pleiades*, *Orion*, *Mazzaroth* (perhaps the Hyades), and the *Bear* (or better, *Aldebaran*), were all regarded as bringers of rain; see 9.9n. *Binding* and *loosing* would be interfering with their rain-making. 34–38: The clouds and lightning do not fall of their own accord, but in obedience to their master’s voice. 36: The verse should be translated: “Who gave the ibis its wisdom or endowed the rooster with its intelligence?” Both birds were regarded as foretellers of rain, which is depicted as stored in great jars (v. 37; not *waterskins*) in the clouds. 38.39–39.30: In seven strophes, nine animals are depicted. They are all undomesticated animals, which live independently of humans. 38.39–41: The lion and the raven—one huge, the other small—both need

- ⁴⁰ when they crouch in their dens,
or lie in wait in their covert?
⁴¹ Who provides for the raven its prey,
when its young ones cry to God,
and wander about for lack of food?

39 “Do you know when the mountain
goats give birth?
Do you observe the calving of the deer?

- ² Can you number the months that they
fulfill,
and do you know the time when they
give birth,

- ³ when they crouch to give birth to their
offspring,
and are delivered of their young?

- ⁴ Their young ones become strong, they
grow up in the open;
they go forth, and do not return to
them.

- ⁵ “Who has let the wild ass go free?
Who has loosed the bonds of the swift
ass,

- ⁶ to which I have given the steppe for its
home,
the salt land for its dwelling place?

- ⁷ It scorns the tumult of the city;
it does not hear the shouts of the driver.

- ⁸ It ranges the mountains as its pasture,
and it searches after every green thing.

- ⁹ “Is the wild ox willing to serve you?
Will it spend the night at your crib?

- ¹⁰ Can you tie it in the furrow with ropes,
or will it harrow the valleys after you?

- ¹¹ Will you depend on it because its
strength is great,
and will you hand over your labor to it?

- ¹² Do you have faith in it that it will return,
and bring your grain to your threshing
floor?^a

- ¹³ “The ostrich’s wings flap wildly,
though its pinions lack plumage.^b

- ¹⁴ For it leaves its eggs to the earth,
and lets them be warmed on the
ground,

- ¹⁵ forgetting that a foot may crush them,
and that a wild animal may trample
them.

- ¹⁶ It deals cruelly with its young, as if they
were not its own;
though its labor should be in vain, yet it
has no fear;

- ¹⁷ because God has made it forget wisdom,
and given it no share in understanding.

- ¹⁸ When it spreads its plumes aloft,^b
it laughs at the horse and its rider.

- ¹⁹ “Do you give the horse its might?
Do you clothe its neck with mane?

- ²⁰ Do you make it leap like the locust?
Its majestic snorting is terrible.

- ²¹ It paws^c violently, exults mightily;
it goes out to meet the weapons.

- ²² It laughs at fear, and is not dismayed;
it does not turn back from the sword.

- ²³ Upon it rattle the quiver,
the flashing spear, and the javelin.

- ²⁴ With fierceness and rage it swallows the
ground;
it cannot stand still at the sound of the
trumpet.

- ²⁵ When the trumpet sounds, it says ‘Aha!’
From a distance it smells the battle,
the thunder of the captains, and the
shouting.

- ²⁶ “Is it by your wisdom that the hawk
soars,
and spreads its wings toward the south?

- ²⁷ Is it at your command that the eagle
mounts up

^a Heb your grain and your threshing floor

^b Meaning of Heb uncertain

^c Gk Syr Vg: Heb *they dig*

to hunt to feed their young. 39.1–4: *Mountain goats* or ibexes, unlike lions and ravens, are shy and elusive. 5–8: The *wild ass* or onager was famous for its independence and freedom, in contrast to its domesticated cousin the ass. 9–12: The *wild ox* or aurochs was a massive animal with long thick horns; it too is contrasted with its obedient and hard-working domesticated counterpart. 13–18: The *ostrich* is a paradoxical creature: it is a bird that cannot fly, and while reputedly foolish, it is clever enough to escape its predators. 19–25: The war *horse* is not exactly wild, but it has a will of its own and is not a servant of humans. 26–30: The *hawk* and the *eagle* are

and makes its nest on high?

²⁸ It lives on the rock and makes its home in the fastness of the rocky crag.

²⁹ From there it spies the prey; its eyes see it from far away.

³⁰ Its young ones suck up blood; and where the slain are, there it is.”

40 And the LORD said to Job:
² “Shall a faultfinder contend with the Almighty?^a

Anyone who argues with God must respond.”

³ Then Job answered the LORD:

⁴ “See, I am of small account; what shall I answer you?

I lay my hand on my mouth.

⁵ I have spoken once, and I will not answer; twice, but will proceed no further.”

⁶ Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind:

⁷ “Gird up your loins like a man; I will question you, and you declare to me.

⁸ Will you even put me in the wrong? Will you condemn me that you may be justified?

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

¹⁰ “Deck yourself with majesty and dignity; clothe yourself with glory and splendor.

¹¹ Pour out the overflowings of your anger, and look on all who are proud, and abase them.

¹² Look on all who are proud, and bring them low; tread down the wicked where they stand.

¹³ Hide them all in the dust together; bind their faces in the world below.^b

¹⁴ Then I will also acknowledge to you that your own right hand can give you victory.

¹⁵ “Look at Behemoth, which I made just as I made you; it eats grass like an ox.

¹⁶ Its strength is in its loins, and its power in the muscles of its belly.

¹⁷ It makes its tail stiff like a cedar; the sinews of its thighs are knit together.

¹⁸ Its bones are tubes of bronze, its limbs like bars of iron.

¹⁹ “It is the first of the great acts of God—only its Maker can approach it with the sword.

²⁰ For the mountains yield food for it where all the wild animals play.

^a Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*

^b Heb *the hidden place*

birds of prey. **26:** The *wisdom* of the hawk is its instinct for its seasonal migration. **27:** *Eagle*, probably vulture. **30:** Vultures feed on the dead *slain* in battle. **40.1–2:** Despite the didactic language of the divine speech, this challenge shows that the ruling metaphor is still that of the lawsuit, in which Job must now either concede the case or offer new arguments.

40.3–5: Job’s first response. Strikingly, Job does not capitulate; he says only that he will not repeat what he has already said. He defers his response until he speaks again in 42.2–6.

40.6–41.34: The LORD’s second speech. 40.7–14: God’s question *Will you even put me in the wrong?* (v. 8) means that he has correctly heard Job’s speeches as not merely a demand for personal vindication but as a far-reaching critique of God’s government of the world and as a demand for an alternative world order. God is obviously not going to change his world order, so his ironic response is: let Job re-order the world to his own taste by crushing the wicked (vv. 11–13); then he will have nothing to complain about. **15–24: Behemoth** is an ambiguous figure. It is dangerous, and yet to try capturing it is so absurd that it is beyond being a danger. It is powerful but actually does little except sleep, eat, and procreate. Unlike the animals of the first divine speech, it is a beast without qualities. Yet it is God’s showpiece (v. 19a). Is it because it so well represents God’s freedom to refuse rules and rationality and principles of utility? *Behemoth* is literally the plural of the common Heb term for “animal.” Scholarly opinion is divided as to whether it is a primeval monster (v. 19) or is to be identified with

²¹ Under the lotus plants it lies,
in the covert of the reeds and in the
marsh.

²² The lotus trees cover it for shade;
the willows of the wadi surround it.

²³ Even if the river is turbulent, it is not
frightened;
it is confident though Jordan rushes
against its mouth.

²⁴ Can one take it with hooks^a
or pierce its nose with a snare?

41^b "Can you draw out Leviathan^c with a
fishhook,
or press down its tongue with a cord?

² Can you put a rope in its nose,
or pierce its jaw with a hook?

³ Will it make many supplications to you?
Will it speak soft words to you?

⁴ Will it make a covenant with you
to be taken as your servant forever?

⁵ Will you play with it as with a bird,
or will you put it on leash for your girls?

⁶ Will traders bargain over it?
Will they divide it up among the
merchants?

⁷ Can you fill its skin with harpoons,
or its head with fishing spears?

⁸ Lay hands on it;
think of the battle; you will not do it
again!

^{9d} Any hope of capturing it^e will be
disappointed;
were not even the gods^f overwhelmed
at the sight of it?

¹⁰ No one is so fierce as to dare to stir it up.
Who can stand before it?^g

¹¹ Who can confront it^g and be safe?^h
—under the whole heaven, who?ⁱ

¹² "I will not keep silence concerning its
limbs,
or its mighty strength, or its splendid
frame.

¹³ Who can strip off its outer garment?
Who can penetrate its double coat of
mail?^j

¹⁴ Who can open the doors of its face?
There is terror all around its teeth.

¹⁵ Its back^k is made of shields in rows,
shut up closely as with a seal.

¹⁶ One is so near to another
that no air can come between them.

¹⁷ They are joined one to another;
they clasp each other and cannot be
separated.

¹⁸ Its sneezes flash forth light,
and its eyes are like the eyelids of the
dawn.

¹⁹ From its mouth go flaming torches;
sparks of fire leap out.

²⁰ Out of its nostrils comes smoke,
as from a boiling pot and burning
rushes.

²¹ Its breath kindles coals,
and a flame comes out of its mouth.

²² In its neck abides strength,
and terror dances before it.

²³ The folds of its flesh cling together;
it is firmly cast and immovable.

²⁴ Its heart is as hard as stone,
as hard as the lower millstone.

²⁵ When it raises itself up the gods are
afraid;
at the crashing they are beside
themselves.

²⁶ Though the sword reaches it, it does not
avail,
nor does the spear, the dart, or the
javelin.

^a Cn: Heb *in his eyes*

^b Ch 40.25 in Heb

^c Or *the crocodile*

^d Ch 41.1 in Heb

^e Heb *of it*

^f Cn Compare Symmachus Syr: Heb *one is*

^g Heb *me*

^h Gk: Heb *that I shall repay*

ⁱ Heb *to me*

^j Gk: Heb *bridle*

^k Cn Compare Gk Vg: Heb *pride*

the hippopotamus. It is otherwise not mentioned in the Hebrew Bible; see 2 Esd 6.49,51. 41.1–34: The depiction of *Leviathan* treats, first, the impossibility of capturing it (vv. 1–11), second, its physical characteristics (vv. 12–24), and third, the creature in motion (vv. 25–32). Unlike Behemoth, who was indolent and unthreatening, Leviathan is nothing but violence and turmoil. Leviathan is described in terms that evoke the crocodile; some

- ²⁷ It counts iron as straw,
and bronze as rotten wood.
²⁸ The arrow cannot make it flee;
slingstones, for it, are turned to chaff.
²⁹ Clubs are counted as chaff;
it laughs at the rattle of javelins.
³⁰ Its underparts are like sharp potsherds;
it spreads itself like a threshing sledge
on the mire.
³¹ It makes the deep boil like a pot;
it makes the sea like a pot of ointment.
³² It leaves a shining wake behind it;
one would think the deep to be white-
haired.
³³ On earth it has no equal,
a creature without fear.
³⁴ It surveys everything that is lofty;
it is king over all that are proud.”

42 Then Job answered the LORD:
² “I know that you can do all things,
and that no purpose of yours can be
thwarted.
³ “Who is this that hides counsel without
knowledge?”
Therefore I have uttered what I did not
understand,
things too wonderful for me, which I
did not know.

- ⁴ “Hear, and I will speak;
I will question you, and you declare to
me.’
⁵ I had heard of you by the hearing of the
ear,
but now my eye sees you;
⁶ therefore I despise myself,
and repent in dust and ashes.”

⁷ After the LORD had spoken these words
to Job, the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite:
“My wrath is kindled against you and against
your two friends; for you have not spoken of
me what is right, as my servant Job has. ⁸ Now
therefore take seven bulls and seven rams,
and go to my servant Job, and offer up for
yourselves a burnt offering; and my servant
Job shall pray for you, for I will accept his
prayer not to deal with you according to your
folly; for you have not spoken of me what
is right, as my servant Job has done.” ⁹ So
Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite
and Zophar the Naamathite went and did
what the LORD had told them; and the LORD
accepted Job’s prayer.

¹⁰ And the LORD restored the fortunes
of Job when he had prayed for his friends;
and the LORD gave Job twice as much as he
had before. ¹¹ Then there came to him all his

scholars understand it as the mythical chaos monster. (See 3.8n.) **34:** As *king* of beasts, Leviathan is a source of pleasure and pride for its maker.

42.1–6: Job’s second response. Job abandons his lawsuit against God, but his charges have not been answered. He says: (1) *I know that you can do all things* (v. 2). He has always known that, but he means that he now recognizes that for God questions of justice are collapsed into the issue of his power. Job can only ever confront God’s power, a sphere where he will inevitably be a loser. (2) *I have uttered . . . things too wonderful for me* (v. 3), Job means that he now realizes that cosmic justice is a marvel beyond human comprehension, like the structure of the universe. Justice is not a principle or value to which God is subject. (3) Now that he has *heard* God for himself and his *eye sees* him (a metaphor for his experience of God), he “submits” and “accepts consolation.” *I despise myself*, no object of the verb is expressed, and the verb is probably not Heb “mā’as,” “despise,” but “masas,” “melt, be discouraged,” as in Josh 2.11 (REB rightly translates “I yield”). *Repent*, Job has never acknowledged any sin, so he cannot be repenting; the verb means rather “be comforted.” Job means he will now end his period of mourning (in *dust and ashes*) and resume his normal life.

42.7–17: Epilogue. The naïve narrative of the folktale world of the prologue resumes, as Job is vindicated in the eyes of his friends (vv. 7–9) and his extended family (vv. 10–17). **7:** Surprisingly, the LORD is angry with the friends and their *folly* (v. 8), but says Job has *spoken of me what is right*. He must be referring to Job’s conclusion that God does not execute justice in the realm of humans, which the friends always denied but which God himself has effectively admitted in his speeches. **10–17:** Job’s lost possessions are restored to him twice over—perhaps an acknowledgment that what he had lost at the beginning of the story had actually been stolen from him by God (cf. Ex 22.4, where a thief must pay double restitution). He acquires a new family to replace his dead children, and he is feted by his family and friends. The pious man Job once again becomes the wealthiest man in all the east; so is the doctrine of retribution—which the book of Job has seemed so concerned to refute—here

brothers and sisters and all who had known him before, and they ate bread with him in his house; they showed him sympathy and comforted him for all the evil that the LORD had brought upon him; and each of them gave him a piece of money^a and a gold ring. ¹²The LORD blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning; and he had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand donkeys. ¹³He also had seven sons and three

daughters. ¹⁴He named the first Jemimah, the second Keziah, and the third Keren-happuch. ¹⁵In all the land there were no women so beautiful as Job's daughters; and their father gave them an inheritance along with their brothers. ¹⁶After this Job lived one hundred and forty years, and saw his children, and his children's children, four generations. ¹⁷And Job died, old and full of days.

^a Heb *a qesitah*

affirmed? **11:** *Bread* means "food." The *piece of money* is not a coin but a piece of silver of guaranteed weight. **14:** *Jemimah* probably means "turtledove," *Keziah* "cassia" or cinnamon, *Keren-happuch* "antimony," a black eye-cosmetic, the three names invoking the three senses of hearing, taste, and sight. **15:** Along with his sons, Job's daughters are given an inheritance, an unusual practice.