
JOB 3: 1 After this Job opened his mouth, and cursed the day of his birth.

Job curses the day of his birth, and regrets that he ever saw the light, Job 3:1-12. Describes the empire of death and its inhabitants, Job 3:13-19. Regrets that he is appointed to live in the midst of sorrows, for the calamities which he feared had overtaken him, vv.20-26.

Verse 1

After this opened Job his mouth - After the seven days' mourning was over, there being no prospect of relief, Job is represented as thus cursing the day of his birth. Here the poetic part of the book begins; for most certainly there is nothing in the preceding chapters either in the form or spirit of Hebrew poetry. It is easy indeed to break the sentences into hemistichs; but this does not constitute them poetry: for, although Hebrew poetry is in general in hemistichs, yet it does not follow that the division of narrative into hemistichs must necessarily constitute it poetry.

In many cases the Asiatic poets introduce their compositions with prose narrative; and having in this way prepared the reader for what he is to expect, begin their deevans, cassidehs, gazels, etc. This appears to be the plan followed by the author of this book. Those who still think, after examining the structure of those chapters, and comparing them with the undoubted poetic parts of the book, that they also, and the ten concluding verses, are poetry, have my consent, while I take the liberty to believe most decidedly the opposite.

Cursed his day - That is, the day of his birth; and thus he gave vent to the agonies of his soul, and the distractions of his mind. His execrations have something in them awfully solemn, tremendously deep, and strikingly sublime. But let us not excuse all the things which he said in his haste, and in the bitterness of his soul, because of his former well established character of patience. He bore all his privations with becoming resignation to the Divine will and providence: but now, feeling himself the subject of continual sufferings, being in heaviness through manifold temptation, and probably having the light of God withdrawn from his mind, as his consolations most undoubtedly were, he regrets that ever he was born; and in a very high strain of impassioned poetry curses his day. We find a similar execration to this in Jeremiah, Jer 20:14-18, and in other places; which, by the way, are no proofs that the one borrowed from the other; but that this was the common mode of Asiatic thinking, speaking, and feeling, on such occasions.

JOB 3: 2 Job answered:

JOB 3: 3 "Let the day perish in which I was born, the night which said, 'There is a boy conceived.'

Verse 3

There is a man-child conceived - The word הרה *harah* signifies to conceive; yet here, it seems, it should be taken in the sense of being born, as it is perfectly unlikely that the night of conception should be either distinctly known or published.

JOB 3: 4 Let that day be darkness. Don't let God from above seek for it, neither let the light shine on it.

Verse 4

Let that day be darkness - The meaning is exactly the same with our expression, "Let it be blotted out of the calendar." However distinguished it may have been, as the birthday of a man once celebrated for his possessions, liberality, and piety, let it no longer be thus noted; as he who was thus celebrated is now the sport of adversity, the most impoverished, most afflicted, and most wretched of human beings.

Let not God regard it from above - ידרשהו אל al yidreshehu, "Let Him not require it" - let Him not consider it essential to the completion of the days of the year; and therefore he adds, neither let the light shine upon it. If it must be a part of duration, let it not be distinguished by the light of the sun.

JOB 3: 5 Let darkness and the shadow of death claim it for their own. Let a cloud dwell on it. Let all that makes black the day terrify it.

Verse 5

Let darkness and the shadow of death stain it - יגאלהו yigaluhu, "pollute or avenge it," from גאל gaal, to vindicate, avenge, etc.; hence גאל goel, the nearest of kin, whose right it was to redeem an inheritance, and avenge the death of his relative by slaying the murderer. Let this day be pursued, overtaken, and destroyed. Let natural darkness, the total privation of the solar light, rendered still more intense by death's shadow projected over it, seize on and destroy this day, ελαβοι αυτην, Septuagint; alluding, perhaps, says Mr. Parkhurst, to the avenger of blood seizing the offender.

Let a cloud dwell upon it - Let the dymme cloude fall upon it - Coverdale. Let the thickest clouds have there their dwelling-place - let that be the period of time on which they shall constantly rest, and never be dispersed. This seems to be the import of the original, תשכן עליו אננה tishcan alaiv ananah. Let it be the place in which clouds shall be continually gathered together, so as to be the storehouse of the densest vapors, still in the act of being increasingly condensed.

Let the blackness of the day terrify it - And let it be lapped in with sorrowe. - Coverdale. This is very expressive: lap signifies to fold up, or envelope any particular thing with fold upon fold, so as to cover it everywhere and secure it in all points. Leaving out the semicolon, we had better translate the whole clause thus: "Let the thickest cloud have its dwelling-place upon it, and let the bitterness of a day fill it with terror." A day similar to that, says the Targum, in which Jeremiah was distressed for the destruction of the house of the sanctuary; or like that in which Jonah was cast into the sea of Tarsis; such a day as that on which some great or national misfortune has happened: probably in allusion to that in which the darkness that might be felt enveloped the whole land of Egypt, and the night in which the destroying angel slew all the first-born in the land.

JOB 3: 6 As for that night, let thick darkness seize on it. Let it not rejoice among the days of the year. Let it not come into the number of the months.

 Verse 6

As for that night, let darkness seize upon it - I think the Targum has hit the sense of this whole verse: "Let darkness seize upon that night; let it not be reckoned among the annual festivals; in the number of the months of the calendar let it not be computed." Some understand the word אפל *ophel* as signifying a dark storm; hence the Vulgate, *tenebrosus turbo*, "a dark whirlwind." And hence Coverdale, Let the darck storme overcome that night, let it not be reckoned amonge the dayes off the yeare, nor counted in the monethes. Every thing is here personified; day, night, darkness, shadow of death, cloud, etc.; and the same idea of the total extinction of that portion of time, or its being rendered ominous and portentous, is pursued through all these verses, from the third to the ninth, inclusive. The imagery is diversified, the expressions varied, but the idea is the same.

JOB 3: 7 Behold, let that night be barren. Let no joyful voice come therein.

Verse 7

Lo, let that night be solitary - The word הנה *hinneh*, behold, or lo, is wanting in one of De Rossi's MSS., nor is it expressed in the Septuagint, Vulgate, Syriac, or Arabic. The word גלמוד *galmud*, which we translate solitary, is properly Arabic. From *ghalama* or *jalama*, signifying to cut off, make bare, amputate, comes *jalmud*, a rock, a great stone; and *jalameedet*, weight, a burden, trouble, from which we may gather Job's meaning: "Let that night be grievous, oppressive, as destitute of good as a bare rock is of verdure." The Targum gives the sense, In that night let there be tribulation.

Let no joyful voice come therein - Let there be no choirs of singers; no pleasant music heard; no dancing or merriment. The word רננה *renanah* signifies any brisk movement, such as the vibration of the rays of light, or the brisk modulation of the voice in a cheerful ditty. The Targum has, Let not the crowing of the rural or wild cock resound in it. Let all work be intermitted; let there be no sportive exercises, and let all animals be totally silent.

JOB 3: 8 Let them curse it who curse the day, who are ready to rouse up leviathan.

Verse 8

Let them curse it that curse the day - This translation is scarcely intelligible. I have waded through a multitude of interpretations, without being able to collect from them such a notion of the verse as could appear to me probable. Schultens, Rosenmiller, and after them Mr. Good, have labored much to make it plain. They think the custom of sorcerers who had execrations for peoples, places, things, days, etc., is here referred to; such as Balaam, Elymas, and many others were: but I cannot think that a man who knew the Divine Being and his sole government of the world so well as Job did, would make such an allusion, who must have known that such persons and their pretensions were impostors and execrable vanities. I shall give as near a translation as I can of the words, and subjoin a short paraphrase: יום העתידימערר לויתן *yikkebuhu orerey yom haathidim orer livyathan*; "Let them curse it who detest the day; them who are ready to raise up the leviathan." That is, Let them curse my birthday who hate daylight, such as adulterers, murderers, thieves, and banditti, for

whose practices the night is more convenient; and let them curse it who, being like me weary of life, are desperate enough to provoke the leviathan, the crocodile, to tear them to pieces. This version is nearly the same as that given by Coverdale. Let them that curse the daye give it their curse also, then those that be ready to rayse up leviathan. By leviathan some understand the greatest and most imminent dangers; and others, the devil, whom the enchanters are desperate enough to attempt to raise by their incantations. Calmet understands the whole to be spoken of the Atlantes, a people of Ethiopia, who curse the sun because it parches their fields and their bodies; and who fearlessly attack, kill, and eat the crocodile. This seems a good sense.

JOB 3: 9 Let the stars of its twilight be dark. Let it look for light, but have none, neither let it see the eyelids of the morning,

Verse 9

Let the stars of the twilight thereof - The stars of the twilight may here refer to the planets Venus, Jupiter, Mars, and Mercury, as well as to the brighter fixed stars.

Let it look for light - Here the prosopopoeia or personification is still carried on. The darkness is represented as waiting for the lustre of the evening star, but is disappointed; and these for the aurora or dawn, but equally in vain. He had prayed that its light, the sun, should not shine upon it, Job 3:4; and here he prays that its evening star may be totally obscured, and that it might never see the dawning of the day. Thus his execration comprehends every thing that might irradiate or enliven it.

JOB 3: 10 because it didn't shut up the doors of my mother's womb, nor did it hide trouble from my eyes.

Verse 10

Because it shut not up the doors - Here is the reason why he curses the day and the night in which he was conceived and born; because, had he never been brought into existence, he would never have seen trouble. It seems, however, very harsh that he should have wished the destruction of his mother, in order that his birth might have been prevented; and I rather think Job's execration did not extend thus far. The Targum understands the passage as speaking of the umbilical cord, by which the fetus is nourished in its mother's womb: had this been shut up, there must have been a miscarriage, or he must have been dead born; and thus sorrow would have been hidden from his eyes. This seeming gloss is much nearer the letter and spirit of the Hebrew than is generally imagined. I shall quote the words: *כי לא סגר דלתי בטני* ki lo sagar dalthey bitni, because it did not shut up the doors of my belly. This is much more consistent with the feelings of humanity, than to wish his mother's womb to have been his grave.

JOB 3: 11 "Why didn't I die from the womb? Why didn't I give up the spirit when my mother bore me?"

 Verse 11

Why died I not from the womb - As the other circumstance did not take place, why was I not still-born, without the possibility of reviviscence? or, as this did not occur, why did I not die as soon as born? These three things appear to me to be clearly intended here: -

1. Dying in the womb, or never coming to maturity, as in the case of an abortion.
 2. Being still-born, without ever being able to breathe.
 3. Or, if born alive, dying within a short time after. And to these states he seems to refer in the following verses.
-

JOB 3: 12 Why did the knees receive me? Or why the breast, that I should nurse?

Verse 12

Why did the knees prevent me? - Why was I dandled on the knees? Why was I nourished by the breasts? In either of the above cases I had neither been received into a mother's lap, nor hung upon a mother's breasts.

JOB 3: 13 For now should I have lain down and been quiet. I should have slept, then I would have been at rest,

Verse 13

For now should I have lain still - In that case I had been insensible; quiet - without these overwhelming agitations; slept - unconscious of evil; been at rest - been out of the reach of calamity and sorrow.

JOB 3: 14 with kings and counsellors of the earth, who built up waste places for themselves;

Verse 14

With kings and counsellors of the earth - I believe this translation to be perfectly correct. The counsellors, 'עצ' yoatsey, I suppose to mean the privy council, or advisers of kings; those without whose advice kings seldom undertake wars, expeditions, etc. These mighty agitators of the world are at rest in their graves, after the lives of commotion which they have led among men: most of whom indeed have been the troublers of the peace of the globe.

Which built desolate places - Who erect mausoleums, funeral monuments, sepulchral pyramids, etc., to keep their names from perishing, while their bodies are turned to corruption. I cannot think, with some learned men, that Job is here referring to those patriotic princes who employed

themselves in repairing the ruins and desolations which others had occasioned. His simple idea is, that, had he died from the womb, he would have been equally at rest, neither troubling nor troubled, as those defunct kings and planners of wars and great designs are, who have nothing to keep even their names from perishing, but the monuments which they have raised to contain their corrupting flesh, moldering bones, and dust.

JOB 3: 15 or with princes who had gold, who filled their houses with silver:

Verse 15

Or with princes that had gold - Chief or mighty men, lords of the soil, or fortunate adventurers in merchandise, who got gold in abundance, filled their houses with silver, left all behind, and had nothing reserved for themselves but the empty places which they had made for their last dwelling, and where their dust now sleeps, devoid of care, painful journeys, and anxious expectations. He alludes here to the case of the covetous, whom nothing can satisfy, as an Asiatic writer has observed, but the dust that fills his mouth when laid in the grave - Saady.

JOB 3: 16 or as a hidden untimely birth I had not been, as infants who never saw light.

Verse 16

Or as a hidden untimely birth - An early miscarriage, which was scarcely perceptible by the parent herself; and in this case he had not been - he had never had the distinguishable form of a human being, whether male or female.

As infants - Little ones; those farther advanced in maturity, but miscarried long before the time of birth.

JOB 3: 17 There the wicked cease from troubling. There the weary are at rest.

Verse 17

There the wicked cease - In the grave the oppressors of men cease from irritating, harassing, and distressing their fellow creatures and dependents.

And there the weary be at rest - Those who were worn out with the cruelties and tyrannies of the above. The troubles and the troubled, the restless and the submissive, the toils of the great and the labors of the slave, are here put in opposition.

JOB 3: 18 There the prisoners are at ease together. They don't hear the voice of the taskmaster.

Verse 18

The prisoners rest together - Those who were slaves, feeling all the troubles, and scarcely tasting any of the pleasures of life, are quiet in the grave together; and the voice of the oppressor, the hard, unrelenting task-master, which was more terrible than death, is heard no more. They are free from his exactions, and his mouth is silent in the dust. This may be a reference to the Egyptian bondage. The children of Israel cried by reason of their oppressors or task-masters.

JOB 3: 19 The small and the great are there. The servant is free from his master.

Verse 19

The small and great are there - All sorts and conditions of men are equally blended in the grave, and ultimately reduced to one common dust; and between the bond and free there is no difference. The grave is "The appointed place of rendezvous, where all These travelers meet."

Equality is absolute among the sons of men in their entrance into and exit from the world: all the intermediate state is disparity. All men begin and end life alike; and there is no difference between the king and the cottager.

A contemplation of this should equally humble the great and the small.

The saying is trite, but it is true: -

Pallida mors aequo pulsat pede pauperum tabernas,

Regumque turres.

Hor. Odar. lib. i., Od. iv., ver. 13. "With equal pace impartial Fate

Knocks at the palace as the cottage gate."

Death is that state, "Where they an equal honor share
Who buried or unburied are. Where
Agamemnon knows no more
Than Irus he contemn'd before. Where fair Achilles and Thersites
lie, Equally naked, poor, and dry."

And why do not the living lay these things to heart?

There is a fine saying in Seneca ad Marciam, cap. 20, on this subject, which may serve as a comment on this place: *Mors-servitutum invito domino remittit; haec captivorum catenas levat; haec e carcere eduxit, quos exire imperium impotens vetuerat. Haec est in quo nemo humilitatem suam sensit; haec quae nulli paruit; haec quae nihil quicquam alieno fecit arbitrio. Haec, ubi res communes fortuna male divisit, et aequo jure genitos alium alii donavit, exaequat omnia.* - "Death, in spite of the master, manumits the slave. It loosens the chains of the prisoners. It brings out of the dungeon those whom impotent authority had forbidden to go at large. This is the state in which none is sensible of his humiliation. Death obeys no man. It does nothing according to the will of another. It reduces, by a just law, to a state of equality, all who in their families and circumstances had unequal lots in life."

JOB 3: 20 "Why is light given to him who is in misery, life to the bitter in soul,

Verse 20

Wherefore is light given - Why is life granted to him who is incapable of enjoying it, or of performing its functions?

JOB 3: 21 Who long for death, but it doesn't come; and dig for it more than for hidden treasures,

Verse 21

Which long for death - They look to it as the end of all their miseries; and long more for a separation from life, than those who love gold do for a rich mine.

JOB 3: 22 who rejoice exceedingly, and are glad, when they can find the grave?

Verse 22

Which rejoice exceedingly - Literally, They rejoice with joy, and exult when they find the grave. There is a various reading here in one of Kennicott's MSS., which gives a different sense. Instead of who rejoice, אֵלֵי גִיל eley gil, with Joy, it has אֵלֵי גַל eley gal, who rejoice at the Tomb, and exult when they find the grave.

JOB 3: 23 Why is light given to a man whose way is hidden, whom God has hedged in?

Verse 23

To a man whose way is hid - Who knows not what is before him in either world, but is full of fears and trembling concerning both.

God hath hedged in? - Leaving him no way to escape; and not permitting him to see one step before him. There is an exact parallel to this passage in Lam 3:7, Lam 3:9: He hath hedged me about that I cannot get out. He hath inclosed my ways with hewn stone. Mr. Good translates the verse thus: To the man whose path is broken up, and whose futurity God hath overwhelmed. But I cannot see any necessity for departing from the common text, which gives both an easy and a natural sense.

JOB 3: 24 For my sighing comes before I eat. My groanings are poured out like water.

Verse 24

For my sighing cometh - Some think that this refers to the ulcerated state of Job's body, mouth, hands, etc. He longed for food, but was not able to lift it to his mouth with his hands, nor masticate

it when brought thither. This is the sense in which Origen has taken the words. But perhaps it is most natural to suppose that he means his sighing took away all appetite, and served him in place of meat. There is the same thought in Psa 42:3: My tears have been my meat day and night; which place is not an imitation of Job, but more likely Job an imitation of it, or, rather, both an imitation of nature.

My roarings are poured out - My lamentations are like the noise of the murmuring stream, or the dashings of the overswollen torrent.

JOB 3: 25 For the thing which I fear comes on me, That which I am afraid of comes to me.

Verse 25

For the thing which I greatly reared - Literally, the fear that I feared; or, I feared a fear, as in the margin. While I was in prosperity I thought adversity might come, and I had a dread of it. I feared the loss of my family and my property; and both have occurred. I was not lifted up: I knew that what I possessed I had from Divine Providence, and that he who gave might take away. I am not stripped of my all as a punishment for my self-confidence.

JOB 3: 26 I am not at ease, neither am I quiet, neither have I rest; but trouble comes."

Verse 26

I was not in safety - If this verse be read interrogatively, it will give a good and easy sense: Was I not in safety? Had I not rest? Was I not in comfort? Yet trouble came. It is well known that, previously to this attack of Satan, Job was in great prosperity and peace. Mr. Good translates, I had no peace; yea, I had no rest. Yea, I had no respite, as the trouble came on; and refers the whole to the quick succession of the series of heavy evils by which he was tried. There is a similar thought in the Psalmist: Deep crieth unto deep at the noise of thy water-spouts; all thy waves and thy billows have gone over me; Psa 42:7. One evil treads on the heels of another.

In this chapter Job's conflict begins. Now, and not before, Satan appears to have access to his mind. When he deprived him of his property, and, what was still dearer, of his sons and his daughters, the hope of his family, he bore all with the most exemplary patience, and the deepest resignation to the Divine will. When his adversary was permitted to touch his body, and afflict it in the most grievous and distressing manner, rendered still more intolerable by his being previously deprived of all the comforts and necessaries of life; still he held fast his integrity; no complaint, no murmur was heard. From the Lord's hand he received his temporal good; and from that hand he received his temporal evil, the privation of that good. Satan was, therefore, baffled in all his attempts; Job continued to be a perfect and upright man, fearing God, and avoiding evil. This was Job's triumph, or rather the triumph of Divine grace; and Satan's defeat and confusion.

It is indeed very seldom that God permits Satan to waste the substance or afflict the body of any man; but at all times this malevolent spirit may have access to the mind of any man, and inject doubts, fears, diffidence, perplexities, and even unbelief. And here is the spiritual conflict. Now, their wrestling is not with flesh and blood - with men like themselves, nor about secular affairs; but they

have to contend with angels, principalities and powers, and the rulers of the darkness of this world, and spiritual wickednesses in heavenly places. In such cases Satan is often permitted to diffuse darkness into the understanding, and envelope the heavens with clouds. Hence are engendered false views of God and his providence, of men, of the spiritual world, and particularly of the person's own state and circumstances. Every thing is distorted, and all seen through a false medium. Indescribable distractions and uneasiness are hereby induced; the mind is like a troubled sea, tossed by a tempest that seems to confound both heaven and earth. Strong temptations to things which the soul contemplates with abhorrence are injected; and which are followed by immediate accusations, as if the injections were the offspring of the heart itself; and the trouble and dismay produced are represented as the sense of guilt, from a consciousness of having, in heart, committed these evils. Thus Satan tempts, accuses, and upbraids, in order to perplex the soul, induce skepticism, and destroy the empire of faith. Behold here the permission of God, and behold also his sovereign control: all this time the grand tempter is not permitted to touch the heart, the seat of the affections, nor offer even the slightest violence to the will. The soul is cast down, but not destroyed; perplexed, but not in despair. It is on all sides harassed; without are fightings, within are fears: but the will is inflexible on the side of God and truth, and the heart, with all its train of affections and passions, follows it. The man does not wickedly depart from his God; the outworks are violently assailed, but not taken; the city is still safe, and the citadel impregnable. Heaviness may endure for the night, but joy cometh in the morning. Jesus is soon seen walking upon the waters. He speaks peace to the winds and the sea: immediately there is a calm. Satan is bruised down under the feet of the sufferer, the clouds are dispersed, the heavens re-appear, and the soul, to its surprise, finds that the storm, instead of hindering, has driven it nearer to the haven whither it would be.

The reader who closely examines the subject will find that this was the case of Job. The following chapters show the conflict of the soul; the end of the book, God's victory and his exaltation. Satan sifted Job as wheat, but his faith failed not.