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JOB 5: 1 "Call now; is there any who will answer you? To which of the holy ones will you turn?"

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Eliphaz proceeds to show that the wicked are always punished by the justice of God, though they may appear to flourish for a time, Job 5:1-8; extols the providence of God, by which the counsels of the wicked are brought to naught, and the poor fed and supported, Job 5:9-16; shows the blessedness of being corrected by God, in the excellent fruits that result from it; and exhorts Job to patience and submission, with the promise of all secular prosperity, and a happy death in a mature and comfortable old age, Job 5:17-27.

Verse 1

Call now, if there be any - This appears to be a strong irony. From whom among those whose foundations are in the dust, and who are crushed before the moth, canst thou expect succor?

To which of the saints wilt thou turn? - To whom among the holy ones, (קְדוֹשִׁים kedoshim), or among those who are equally dependent on Divine support with thyself, and can do no good but as influenced and directed by God, canst thou turn for help? Neither angel nor saint can help any man unless sent especially from God; and all prayers to them must be foolish and absurd, not to say impious. Can the channel afford me water, if the fountain cease to emit it?

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JOB 5: 2 For resentment kills the foolish man, and jealousy kills the simple.

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Verse 2

For wrath killeth the foolish man - Foolish, silly, and simple, are epithets given by Solomon to sinners and transgressors of all kinds. Such parallelisms have afforded a presumptive argument that Solomon was the author of this book. See the preface. The words of Eliphaz may be considered as a sort of maxim, which the wisdom and experience of ages had served to establish; viz., The wrath of God is manifested only against the wicked and impious; and if thou wert not such, God would not thus contend with thee.

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JOB 5: 3 I have seen the foolish taking root, but suddenly I cursed his habitation.

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Verse 3

I have seen the foolish taking root - I have seen wicked men for a time in prosperity, and becoming established in the earth; but I well knew, from God's manner of dealing with men, that they must soon be blasted. I even ventured to pronounce their doom; for I knew that, in the order of God's providence, that was inevitable. I cursed his habitation.

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JOB 5: 4 His children are far from safety. They are crushed in the gate. Neither is there any to deliver them,

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 Verse 4

His children are far from safety - His posterity shall not continue in prosperity. Ill gotten, ill spent; whatever is got by wrong must have God's curse on it.

They are crushed in the gate - The Targum says, They shall be bruised in the gate of hell, in the day of the great judgment. There is reference here to a custom which I have often had occasion to notice: viz., that in the Eastern countries the court-house, or tribunal of justice, was at the Gate of the city; here the magistrates attended, and hither the plaintiff and defendant came for justice.

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JOB 5: 5 whose harvest the hungry eats up, and take it even out of the thorns. The snare gapes for their substance.

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## Verse 5

Whose harvest - Their possessions, because acquired by unjust means, shall not be under the protection of God's providence; he shall abandon them to be pillaged and destroyed by the wandering half-starved hordes of the desert banditti. They shall carry it suddenly off; even the thorns - grain, weeds, thistles, and all, shall they carry off in their rapacious hurry.

The robber swalloweth us - Or, more properly, the thirsty, צמִיִּם tsammim, as is plain from their swallowing up or gulping down; opposed to the hungry or half-starved, mentioned in the preceding clause. The hungry shall eat up their grain, and the thirsty shall drink down their wine and oil, here termed חֵילִם cheylam, their strength or power, for the most obvious reasons.

There seem to be two allusions in this verse: 1. To the hordes of wandering predatory banditti, or half-starved Arabs of the desert, who have their scanty maintenance by the plunder of others. These descendants of Ishmael have ever had their hands against all men, and live to this day in the same predatory manner in which they have lived for several thousands of years. M. Volney's account of them is striking: "These men are smaller, leaner, and blacker, than any of the Bedouins yet discovered. Their wasted legs had only tendons without calves. Their belly was shrunk to their back. They are in general small, lean, and swarthy, and more so in the bosom of the desert than on the borders of the more cultivated country. They are ordinarily about five feet or five feet two inches high; they seldom have more than about six ounces of food for the whole day. Six or seven dates, soaked in melted butter, a little milk, or curd, serve a man for twenty-four hours; and he seems happy when he can add a small portion of coarse flour, or a little ball of rice. Their camels also, which are their only support, are remarkably meagre, living on the meanest and most scanty provision. Nature has given it a small head without ears, at the end of a long neck without flesh. She has taken from its legs and thighs every muscle not immediately requisite for motion; and in short has bestowed on its withered body only the vessels and tendons necessary to connect its frame together. She has furnished it with a strong jaw, that it may grind the hardest aliments; and, lest it should consume too much, she has straitened its stomach, and obliged it to chew the cud." Such is the description given of the Bedouin and his camel, by M. Volney, who, while he denies the true God, finds out a deity which he calls Nature, whose works evince the highest providence, wisdom, and design! And where does this most wonderful and intelligent goddess dwell? Nowhere but in the creed of the infidel; while the genuine believer knows that nature is only the agent created and

employed by the great and wise God to accomplish, under his direction, the greatest and most stupendous beneficial effects. The second allusion in the verse I suppose to be to the loss Job had sustained of his cattle by the predatory Sabeans; and all this Eliphaz introduces for the support of his grand argument, to convict Job of hidden crimes, on which account his enemies were permitted to destroy his property; that property, because of this wickedness, being placed out of the protection of God's providence.

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JOB 5: 6 For affliction doesn't come out of the dust, neither does trouble spring out of the ground;

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#### Verse 6

Affliction cometh not forth of the dust - If there were not an adequate cause, thou couldst not be so grievously afflicted.

Spring out of the ground - It is not from mere natural causes that affliction and trouble come; God's justice inflicts them upon offending man.

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JOB 5: 7 but man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward.

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#### Verse 7

Yet man is born unto trouble - לעמל leamal, to labor. He must toil and be careful; and if in the course of his labor he meet with trials and difficulties, he should rise superior to them, and not sink as thou dost.

As the sparks fly upward - ובני רשף יגביהי עוף ubeney resheph yagbihu uph; And the sons of the coal lift up their flight, or dart upwards. And who are the sons of the coal? Are they not bold, intrepid, ardent, fearless men, who rise superior to all their trials; combat what are termed chance and occurrence; succumb under no difficulties; and rise superior to time, tide, fate, and fortune? I prefer this to all the various meanings of the place with which I have met. Coverdale translates, It is man that is borne unto misery, like as the byrde for to fle. Most of the ancient versions give a similar sense.

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JOB 5: 8 "But as for me, I would seek God. I would commit my cause to God,

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#### Verse 8

I would seek unto God - Were I in your place, instead of wasting my time, and irritating my soul with useless complaints, I would apply to my Maker, and, if conscious of my innocence, would confidently commit my cause to him.

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JOB 5: 9 who does great things that can't be fathomed, marvellous things without number;

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 Verse 9

Which doeth great things - No work, however complicated, is too deep for his counsel to plan; none, however stupendous, is too great for his power to execute. He who is upright is always safe in referring his cause to God, and trusting in him.

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JOB 5: 10 who gives rain on the earth, and sends waters on the fields;

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## Verse 10

Who giveth rain upon the earth - The Chaldee gives this verse a fine turn: "Who gives rain on the face of the land of Israel, and sends waters on the face of the provinces of the people." Similar to our Lord's saying, which is expressed in the half of the compass: Your Father which is in heaven - Sendeth Rain on the Just and on the Unjust; Mat 5:45.

Sendeth waters upon the fields - The term חֲצוֹת chutsoth, which we translate fields, and generally signifies streets, may here mean those plantations which are laid out in ridges or plats, in an orderly, regular manner. God does not only send rain upon the earth in a general manner, but, by an especial providence, waters the cultivated ground, so that not one ridge is destitute of its due proportion of fructifying moisture.

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JOB 5: 11 so that he sets up on high those who are low, those who mourn are exalted to safety.

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## Verse 11

To set up on high those that be low - He so distributes his providential blessings without partiality, that the land of the poor man is as well sunned and watered as that of the rich; so that he is thus set upon a level with the lords of the soil.

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JOB 5: 12 He frustrates the devices of the crafty, So that their hands can't perform their enterprise.

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## Verse 12

He disappointeth the devices of the crafty - All these sayings refer to God's particular providence, by which he is ever working for the good, and counterworking the plots of the wicked. And as various as are the contingent, capricious, and malevolent acts of men, so varied are his providential interferences; disappointing the devices, snares, and plots of the crafty, so that their plans being confounded, and their machinery broken in pieces, their hands cannot perform their enterprises.

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JOB 5: 13 He takes the wise in their own craftiness; the counsel of the cunning is carried headlong.

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 Verse 13

He taketh the wise in their own craftiness - So counterworks them as to cause their feet to be taken in their own snares, and their evil dealings to fall on their own pate. Such frequent proofs has God given of his especial interference in behalf of the innocent, who have been the objects of the plots and evil designs of the wicked, by turning those evil devices against their framers, that he who digs a pit for his neighbor shall fall into it himself has become a universal adage, and has passed, either in so many words or in sense, into all the languages of all the people of the earth. Lucretius expresses it strongly:

Circumretit enim vis atque injuria quemque,

Atque, unde exorta est, ad eum plerumque revortit.

Lucret. lib. v., ver. 1151. "For force and wrong entangle the man that uses them;

And, for the most part, recoil on the head of the contriver."

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JOB 5: 14 They meet with darkness in the day time, and grope at noonday as in the night.

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## Verse 14

They meet with darkness in the daytime - God confounds them and their measures; and, with all their cunning and dexterity, they are outwitted, and often act on their own projects, planned with care and skill, as if they had been the crudest conceptions of the most disordered minds. They act in noonday as if the sun were extinct, and their eyes put out. Thus does God "abate their pride, assuage their malice, and confound their devices."

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JOB 5: 15 But he saves from the sword of their mouth, even the needy from the hand of the mighty.

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## Verse 15

He saveth the poor from the sword, from their mouth - This is rather a harsh construction. To avoid this, some have proposed to render מחרב mechereb, which we translate from the sword, the persecuted, but, I am afraid, on very slender authority. Instead of מחרב מפיהם mechereb mippihem, "from the sword, from their mouth," eleven of Kennicott and De Rossi's MSS. read מחרב פיהם mechereb pihem, from the sword of their mouth; and with these MSS. the Chaldee, Vulgate, Syriac, and Arabic agree. The verse, therefore, may be translated thus: -

He saveth from the sword of their mouth;

The poor from the hand of the mighty.

Or thus: -

He saveth from the sword of their mouth;

And with a strong hand the impoverished.

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JOB 5: 16 So the poor has hope, and injustice shuts her mouth.

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Verse 16

So the poor - לֵדַל dal, he who is made thin, who is wasted, extenuated; hath hope - he sees what God is accustomed to do, and he expects a repetition of gracious dealings in his own behalf; and because God deals thus with those who trust in him, therefore the mouth of impiety is stopped. Religion is kept alive in the earth, because of God's signal interventions in behalf of the bodies and souls of his followers.

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JOB 5: 17 “Behold, happy is the man whom God corrects. Therefore do not despise the chastening of the Almighty.

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Verse 17

Behold, happy is the man - הִנֵּה hinneh, behold, is wanting in five of Kennicott's and De Rossi's MSS., and also in the Syriac, Vulgate, and Arabic. We have had fathers of our flesh, who corrected us for their pleasure, or according to their caprices, and we were subject to them: how much more should we be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? for he corrects that we may be partakers of his holiness, in order that we may be rendered fit for his glory. See Heb 12:5; Jam 1:12; and Pro 3:12.

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JOB 5: 18 For he wounds, and binds up. He injures, and his hands make whole.

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Verse 18

For he maketh sore, and bindeth up - Thus nervously rendered by Coverdale, For though he make a wounde, he giveth a medicyne agayne; though he smyte, his honde maketh whole agayne.

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JOB 5: 19 He will deliver you in six troubles; yes, in seven no evil shall touch you.

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Verse 19

He shall deliver thee in six troubles - The numbers six and seven are put here for many. Though a number of troubles should come upon thee all at once, and there should be no hope, humanly speaking, yet God would rid thee out of them all; for he saves as well from many as from few. We may also understand the words, He who hath been thy deliverer in past troubles, will not deny his help in those which are to come.

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JOB 5: 20 In famine he will redeem you from death; in war, from the power of the sword.

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Verse 20

In famine he shall redeem thee - The Chaldee, which understands this chapter as speaking of the troubles and deliverances of the Israelites in Egypt and the wilderness, renders this verse as follows: "In the famine of Egypt he redeemed thee from death; and in the war of Amalek, from the slaying of the sword."

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JOB 5: 21 You shall be hidden from the scourge of the tongue, neither shall you be afraid of destruction when it comes.

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Verse 21

Thou shalt be hid from the scourge of the tongue - The Targum refers this to the incantations of Balaam: "From injury by the tongue of Balaam thou shalt be hidden in the clouds; and thou shalt not fear from the blasting of the Midianites, when it shall come." Perhaps no evil is more dreadful than the scourge of the tongue: evil-speaking, detraction, backbiting, calumny, slander, tale-bearing, whispering, and scandalizing, are some of the terms which we use when endeavoring to express the baleful influence and effects of that member, which is a world of fire, kindled from the nethermost hell. The Scripture abounds with invectives and execrations against it. See Psa 31:20; Psa 52:2-4; Pro 12:18; Pro 14:3; Jam 3:1-8.

Neither shalt thou be afraid - "Thou shouldst have such strong confidence in God, that even in the presence of destruction thou shouldst not fear death," the God of life and power being with thee.

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JOB 5: 22 At destruction and famine you shall laugh, neither shall you be afraid of the animals of the earth.

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Verse 22

At destruction and famine thou shalt laugh - This most forcibly expresses the strongest security, and confidence in that security. "In the desolation of Sihon, and in the famine of the desert, thou shalt laugh; and of the camps of Og, who is compared to a wild beast of the earth, thou shalt not be afraid." - Targum.

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JOB 5: 23 For you shall be allied with the stones of the field. The animals of the field shall be at peace with you.

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Verse 23

Thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field - Instead of אבני abney, stones, Mr. Good reads בני beney, sons, or produce; but this reading is not supported by any ancient version, nor, as far as I know, by any MS. yet collated. We must, therefore, take up the text as we find it, and make the best we can of the present reading. The Chaldee gives a plausible sense: Thou needest not to fear, "because thy covenant is on tables of stone, which are publicly erected in the field; and the Canaanites, which are compared to the beasts of the field, have made peace with thee." Perhaps the reference is to those rocks or strong holds, where banditti secured themselves and their prey, or where the emirs or neighboring chiefs had their ordinary residence. Eliphaz may be understood as saying: Instead, then, of taking advantage of thee, as the Sabeans have done, the circumjacent chieftains will be confederate with thee; and the very beasts of the field will not be permitted to harm thy flocks.

Coverdale seems to have had an idea of this kind, as we find he translates the verse thus: -

But the castels in the londe shall be confederate with the,

And the beastes of the felde shall give the peace.

I believe the above to be the meaning of the place. See the next verse, Job 5:24 (note).

JOB 5: 24 You shall know that your tent is in peace. You shall visit your fold, and shall miss nothing.

#### Verse 24

Thou shalt know - Thou shalt be so fully satisfied of the friendly disposition of all thy neighbors, that thou shalt rest secure in thy bed, and not be afraid of any danger, though sleeping in thy tent in the field; and when thou returnest from thy country excursions, thou shalt find that thy habitation has been preserved in peace and prosperity, and that thou hast made no mistake in thy trust, in thy confidence, or in thy confederates. The word אהלך oholecha, "thy tabernacle," means simply a tent, or moveable dwelling, composed of poles, pins, and cloth, or skin, to be pitched any where in a few moments, and struck again with the same ease. The word נוך navecha, which we properly translate thy habitation, signifies a solid, permanent dwelling-place. See Jos 22:4, Jos 22:6-8; 2Sam 18:17; 2Sam 19:8; 1Kgs 12:16; Psa 52:7; Psa 91:10; Psa 132:3; Lam 2:4; Mal 2:12; and with these passages compare the place in the text. As to תחת techeta, which we translate thou shalt not sin, it comes from חטא chata, to err, to mistake, to miss the mark: hence to sin, transgress God's laws, seeking for happiness in forbidden and unlawful things, and therefore missing the mark, because in them happiness is not to be found: and it is very likely, from the connection above, that to mistake or err is its meaning in this place. I need not add, that the Arab chiefs, who had their castles or strong holds, frequently in their country excursions lodged in tents in the open fields; and that on such occasions a hostile neighbor sometimes took advantage of their absence, attacked and pillaged their houses, and carried off their families and household. See at the end of this chapter, Job 5:27 (note).

JOB 5: 25 You shall know also that your seed shall be great, Your offspring as the grass of the earth.

#### Verse 25



Thine offspring as the grass - Thou shalt have a numerous and permanent issue.

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JOB 5: 26 You shall come to your grave in a full age, like a shock of grain comes in its season.

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#### Verse 26

Thou shalt come to thy grave - Thou shalt not die before thy time; thou shalt depart from life like a full-fed guest; happy in what thou hast known, and in what thou hast enjoyed.

Like as a shock of corn - Thou shalt completely run through the round of the spring, summer, autumn, and winter of life; and thou shalt be buried like a wholesome seed in the earth; from which thou shalt again rise up into an eternal spring!

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JOB 5: 27 Look this, we have searched it, so it is. Hear it, and know it for your good."

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#### Verse 27

Lo this, we have searched it - What I have told thee is the sum of our wisdom and experience on these important points. These are established maxims, which universal experience supports.

Know - understand, and reduce them to practice for thy good. Thus ends Eliphaz, the Temanite, "full of wise saws and ancient instances;" but he miserably perverted them in his application of them to Job's case and character. They contain, however, many wholesome truths, of which the wise in heart may make a very advantageous practical use.

The predatory excursions referred to in Job 5:23 were not unfrequent among our own barbarous ancestors. An affecting picture of this kind is drawn by Shakespeare, from Holinshed's Chronicles, of the case of Macduff, whose castle was attacked in his absence by Macbeth and his wife and all his children murdered. A similar incident was the ground of the old heroic ballad of Hardicanute. When the veteran heard that a host of Norwegians had landed to pillage the country, he armed, and posted to the field to meet the invading foe. He slew the chief in battle, and routed his pillaging banditti. While this was taking place, another party took the advantage of his absence, attacked his castle, and carried off or murdered his lovely wife and family; which, being perceived on his return by the war and age-worn chief, is thus affectingly described by the unknown poet: -

Loud and chill blew the westlin wind, Sair beat the heavy shower,

Mirk grew the nicht eir Hardyknute Wan neir his stately tower:

His tower that us'd with torches bleise To shine sae far at night,

Seim'd now as black as mourning weid, Nae marvel, sair he sich'd. "Thair's nae light in my lady's bowir, Thair's nae light in my hall;

Nae blink shynes round my Fairly fair, Nor ward stands on my wall. "What bodes it, Thomas! Robert! say?" Nae answer - speaks their dreid; "Stand back, my sons, I'll be your gyde;" But bye they pass'd with speid. "As fast I haif sped ovr Scotland's foes" There ceis'd his brag of weir.

Sair schamt to mind ocht but his dame, And maiden Fairly fair.

Black feir he felt; but what to feir He wist not yet with dreid;

Sair schook his body, sair his limbs, And all the warrior fled.

The ending of this poem is lost; but we here see that the castle of Hardicanute was surprised, and his family destroyed, or carried off, while he and his sons had been employed in defeating the invading Norwegians. Thank God! civilization, the offspring of the spread of Christianity, has put an end to these barbarous practices among us; but in the East, where Christianity is not, they flourish still. Britons! send out your Bible and your missionaries to tame these barbarians; for whom heathenism has done nothing, and the Koran next to nothing. Civilization itself, without the Bible, will do as little; for the civilized Greeks and Romans were barbarians, fell and murderous; living in envy and malice, hateful, hating one another, and offering hundreds at a time of human victims to their ruthless deities. Nothing but Christianity ever did, or even can, cure these evils.