
JOB 7: 1 "Isn't a man forced to labour on earth? Aren't his days like the days of a hired hand?"

Job continues to deplore his helpless and afflicted state, Job 7:1-6. He expostulates with God concerning his afflictions, Job 7:7-12; describes the disturbed state of his mind by visions in the night season; abhors life, Job 7:13-16; and, showing that he is unworthy of the notice of God, begs pardon and respite, Job 7:17-21.

Verse 1

Is there not an appointed time to man - The Hebrew, with its literal rendering, is as follows: הלא ארץ ארץ לאנוש עלי ארץ halo tsaba leenosh aley arets, "Is there not a warfare to miserable man upon the earth?" And thus most of the versions have understood the words. The Septuagint: Ποτερον ουχι πειρατηριον εστι ο βιος ανθρωπου επι της γης; "Is not the life of man a place of trial upon earth?" The Vulgate: Militia est vita hominis super terram, "The life of man is a warfare upon earth?" The Chaldee is the same. N'y a-t-il pas comme un train de guerre ordonne aux mortels sur la terre? "Is there not a continual campaign ordained for mortals upon the earth?" French Bible. The German and Dutch the same. Coverdale: Is not the life off man upon earth a very batayle? Carmarden, Rouen, 1566: Hath man any certayne tyme upon earth? Syriac and Arabic: "Now, man has time upon the earth." Non e egli il tempo determinato a l'huomo sopra la terra?" "Is there not a determined time to man upon the earth?" Bib. Ital., 1562. All these are nearer to the true sense than ours; and of a bad translation, worse use has been made by many theologians. I believe the simple sentiment which the writer wished to convey is this: Human life is a state of probation; and every day and place is a time and place of exercise, to train us up for eternal life. Here is the exercise, and here the warfare: we are enlisted in the bands of the Church militant, and must accomplish our time of service, and be honorably dismissed from the warfare, having conquered through the blood of the Lamb; and then receive the reward of the heavenly inheritance.

JOB 7: 2 As a servant who earnestly desires the shadow, as a hireling who looks for his wages,

Verse 2

Earnestly desireth the shadow - As a man who labors hard in the heat of the day earnestly desires to get under a shade, or wishes for the long evening shadows, that he may rest from his labor, get his day's wages, retire to his food, and then go to rest. Night is probably what is meant by the shadow; as in Virgil, Aen. iv., ver. 7:

Humentemque Aurora polo dimoverat Umbram. "The morning had removed the humid shadow, i.e., night, from the world."

Where Servius justly observes:

Nihil interest, utrum Umbram an Noctem dicat: Nox enim Umbra terrae est, "It makes no difference whether he says shadow or night; for night is the shadow of the earth."

JOB 7: 3 so am I made to possess months of misery, wearisome nights are appointed to me.

Verse 3

So am I made to possess - But night is no relief to me, it is only a continuance of my anxiety and labor. I am like the hireling, I have my appointed labor for the day. I am like the soldier harassed by the enemy: I am obliged to be continually on the watch, always on the look out, with scarcely any rest.

JOB 7: 4 When I lie down, I say, 'When shall I arise, and the night be gone?' I toss and turn until the dawning of the day.

Verse 4

When I lie down - I have so little rest, that when I do lie down I long for the return of the light, that I may rise. Nothing can better depict the state of a man under continual afflictions, which afford him no respite, his days and his nights being spent in constant anguish, utterly unable to be in any one posture, so that he is continually changing his position in his bed, finding ease nowhere: thus, as himself expresses it, he is full of tossings.

JOB 7: 5 My flesh is clothed with worms and clods of dust. My skin closes up, and breaks out afresh.

Verse 5

My flesh is clothed with worms - This is perhaps no figure, but is literally true: the miserably ulcerated state of his body, exposed to the open air, and in a state of great destitution, was favorable to those insects that sought such places in which to deposit their ova, which might have produced the animals in question. But the figure is too horrid to be farther illustrated.

Clods of dust - I believe all the commentators have here missed the sense. I suppose Job to allude to those incrustations of indurated or dried pus, which are formed on the tops of pustules in a state of decay: such as the scales which fall from the pustules of the smallpox, when the patient becomes convalescent. Or, if Job's disease was the elephantiasis, it may refer to the furfuraceous scales which are continually falling off the body in that disorder. It is well known, that in this disease the skin becomes very rigid, so as to crack across, especially at the different joints, out of which fissures a loathsome ichor is continually exuding. To something like this the words may refer, My Skin is Broken, and become Loathsome.

JOB 7: 6 My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and are spent without hope.

Verse 6

Swifter than a weaver's shuttle - The word *אָרֵג* *areg* signifies rather the weaver than his shuttle. And it has been doubted whether any such instrument were in use in the days of Job. Dr. Russell, in his account of Aleppo, shows that though they wove many kinds of curious cloth, yet no shuttle was used, as they conducted every thread of the woof by their fingers. That some such instrument as the shuttle was in use from time immemorial, there can be no doubt: and it is certain that such an instrument must have been in the view of Job, without which the figure would lose its expression and force. In almost every nation the whole of human existence has been compared to a web; and the principle of life, through the continual succession of moments, hours, days, weeks, months, and years, to a thread woven through that web. Hence arose the fable of the Parcae or Fates, called also the Destinies or Fatal Sisters. They were the daughters of Erebus and Nox, darkness and night; and were three in number, and named Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos. Clotho held the distaff; Lachesis spun off the thread; and Atropos cut it off with her scissors, when it was determined that life should end. Job represents the thread of his life as being spun out with great rapidity and tenuity, and about to be cut off.

And are spent without hope - Expectation of future good was at an end; hope of the alleviation of his miseries no longer existed. The hope of future good is the balm of life: where that is not, there is despair; where despair is, there is hell. The fable above mentioned is referred to by Virgil, *Ecl. iv.*, ver. 46, but is there applied to time: -

Talia Secla, suis dixerunt, currite, fuis

Concordes stabili fatorum numine Parcae. "The Fates, when they this happy thread have spun

Shall bless the sacred clue, and bid it smoothly run."

Dryden.

Isaiah uses the same figure, *Isa 38:12*: -

My life is cut off, as by the weaver:

He will sever me from the loom.

In the course of the day thou wilt finish my web.

Lowth.

Coverdale translates thus: My dayes passe over more spedely then a weaver can weave out his webbe and are gone or I am awarre.

A fine example of this figure is found in the Teemour Nameh, which I shall give in Mr. Good's translation: - "Praise be to God, who hath woven the web of human affairs in the loom of his will and of his wisdom, and hath made waves of times and of seasons to flow from the fountain of his providence into the ocean of his power." The simile is fine, and elegantly expressed.

JOB 7: 7 Oh remember that my life is a breath. My eye shall no more see good.

Verse 7

My life is wind - Mr. Good translates, "O remember that, if my life pass away, mine eye shall turn no more to scenes of goodness;" which he paraphrases thus: "O remember that, if my life pass away, never more shall I witness those scenes of Divine favor, never more adore thee for those proofs of unmerited mercy, which till now have been so perpetually bestowed on me." I think the common translation gives a very good sense.

JOB 7: 8 The eye of him who sees me shall see me no more. Your eyes shall be on me, but I shall not be.

Verse 8

Shall see me no more - If I die in my present state, with all this load of undeserved odium which is cast upon me by my friends, I shall never have an opportunity of vindicating my character, and regaining the good opinion of mankind.

Thine eyes are upon one, and I am not - Thou canst look me into nothing. Or, Let thine eye be upon me as judged to death, and I shall immediately cease to live among men.

JOB 7: 9 As the cloud is consumed and vanishes away, so he who goes down to Sheol shall come up no more.

Verse 9

As the cloud is consumed - As the cloud is dissipated, so is the breath of those that go down to the grave. As that cloud shall never return, so shall it be with the dead; they return no more to sojourn with the living. See on the following verses.

JOB 7: 10 He shall return no more to his house, neither shall his place know him any more.

Verse 10

He shall return no more to his house, neither shall his place know him any more - He does not mean that he shall be annihilated but that he shall never more become an inhabitant of the earth. The word שאול, which we properly enough translate grave, here signifies also the state of the dead, hades, and sometimes any deep pit, or even hell itself.

JOB 7: 11 "Therefore I will not keep silent. I will speak in the anguish of my spirit. I will complain in the bitterness of my soul.

Verse 11

Therefore I will not refrain - All is hopeless; I will therefore indulge myself in complaining.

JOB 7: 12 Am I a sea, or a sea monster, that you put a guard over me?

Verse 12

Am I a sea, or a whale - "Am I condemned as the Egyptians were who were drowned in the Red Sea? or am I as Pharaoh, who was drowned in it in his sins, that thou settest a keeper over me?" Targum. Am I as dangerous as the sea, that I should be encompassed about with barriers, lest I should hurt mankind? Am I like an ungovernable wild beast or dragon, that I must be put under locks and bars? I think our own version less exceptionable than any other hitherto given of this verse. The meaning is sufficiently plain. Job was hedged about and shut in with insuperable difficulties of various kinds; he was entangled as a wild beast in a net; the more he struggled, the more he lost his strength, and the less probability there was of his being extricated from his present situation. The sea is shut in with barriers, over which it cannot pass; for God has "placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it: and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it," Jer 5:22. "For thou hast set a bound that they may not pass over; that they turn not again to cover the earth;" Psa 104:9. "Or who shut up the sea with doors, when it brake forth, as if it had issued out of the womb? When I made the cloud the garment thereof, and thick darkness a swaddling band for it, and brake up for it my decreed place, and set bars and doors; and said, Hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed;" Job 38:8. Here then is Job's allusion: the bounds, doors, garment, swaddling bands, decreed place, and bars, are the watchers or keepers which God has set to prevent the sea from overflowing the earth; so Job's afflictions and distresses were the bounds and bars which God had apparently set to prevent him from injuring his fellow creatures. At least Job, in his complaint, so takes it. Am I like the sea, which thou hast imprisoned within bounds, ready to overwhelm and destroy the country? or am I like a dragon, which must be cooped up in the same way, that it may not have the power to kill and destroy? Surely in my prosperity I gave no evidence of such a disposition; therefore should not be treated as a man dangerous to society. In this Job shows that he will not refrain his mouth.

JOB 7: 13 When I say, 'My bed shall comfort me. My couch shall ease my complaint;'

JOB 7: 14 then you scare me with dreams, and terrify me through visions:

Verse 14

Thou sparest me with dreams - There is no doubt that Satan was permitted to haunt his imagination with dreadful dreams and terrific appearances; so that, as soon as he fell asleep, he was suddenly roused and alarmed by those appalling images. He needed rest by sleep, but was afraid to close his eyes because of the horrid images which were presented to his imagination. Could there be a state more deplorable than this?

JOB 7: 15 so that my soul chooses strangling, death rather than my bones.

 Verse 15

Chooseth strangling - It is very likely that he felt, in those interrupted and dismal slumbers, an oppression and difficulty of breathing something like the incubus or nightmare; and, distressing as this was, he would prefer death by this means to any longer life in such miseries.

JOB 7: 16 I loathe my life. I don't want to live forever. Leave me alone, for my days are but a breath.

Verse 16

I loathe it; I would not live alway - Life, in such circumstances, is hateful to me; and though I wish for long life, yet if length of days were offered to me with the sufferings which I now undergo, I would despise the offer and spurn the boon. Mr. Good is not satisfied with our common version, and has adopted the following, which in his notes he endeavors to illustrate and defend: Job 7:15 So that my soul coveteth suffocation, And death in comparison with my suffering. Job 7:16 No longer would I live! O, release me! How are my days vanity!

JOB 7: 17 What is man, that you should magnify him, that you should set your mind on him,

Verse 17

What is man that thou shouldest magnify him? and that thou shouldest set thine heart upon him? - Two different ideas have been drawn from these words: -

1. Man is not worth thy notice; why therefore dost thou contend with him?
2. How astonishing is thy kindness that thou shouldest fix thy heart - thy strongest affections, on such a poor, base, vile, impotent creature as man, (אִנוֹשׁ enosh), that thou shouldest so highly exalt him beyond all other creatures, and mark him with the most particular notice of thy providence and grace!

The paraphrase of Calmet is as follows: "Does man, such as he at present is, merit thy attention! What is man that God should make it his business to examine, try, prove, and afflict him? Is it not doing him too much honor to think thus seriously about him? O Lord! I am not worthy that thou shouldest concern thyself about me!"

JOB 7: 18 that you should visit him every morning, and test him every moment?

JOB 7: 19 How long will you not look away from me, nor leave me alone until I swallow down my spittle?

Verse 19

Till I swallow down my spittle? - This is a proverbial expression, and exists among the Arabs to the present day; the very language being nearly the same. It signifies the same as, Let me draw my breath; give me a moment's space; let me have even the twinkling of an eye. I am urged by my sufferings to continue my complaint; but my strength is exhausted, my mouth dry with speaking. Suspend my sufferings even for so short a space as is necessary to swallow my spittle, that my parched tongue may be moistened, so that I may renew my complaint.

JOB 7: 20 If I have sinned, what do I do to you, you watcher of men? Why have you set me as a mark for you, so that I am a burden to myself?

Verse 20

I have sinned; what shall I do - Dr. Kennicott contends that these words are spoken to Eliphaz, and not to God, and would paraphrase them thus: "You say I must have been a sinner. What then? I have not sinned against thee, O thou spy upon mankind! Why hast thou set up me as a butt or mark to shoot at? Why am I become a burden unto thee? Why not rather overlook my transgression, and pass by mine iniquity? I am now sinking to the dust! To-morrow, perhaps, I shall be sought in vain!" See his vindication of Job at the end of these notes on this book. Others consider the address as made to God. Taken in this light, the sense is plain enough. Those who suppose that the address is made to God, translate the Job 7:20 thus: "Be it that I have sinned, what injury can I do unto thee, O thou Observer of man? Why hast thou set me up as a mark for thee, and why am I made a burden to thee?" The Septuagint is thus: Εἰ ἐγὼ ἥμαρτον, τί δυνήσομαι πράξει, ὁ ἐπιστάμενος τὸν νοῦν τῶν ἀνθρώπων; If I have sinned, what can I do, O thou who knowest the mind of men? Thou knowest that it is impossible for me to make any restitution. I cannot blot out my offenses; but whether I have sinned so as to bring all these calamities upon me, thou knowest, who searchest the hearts of men.

JOB 7: 21 Why do you not pardon my disobedience, and take away my iniquity? For now shall I lie down in the dust. You will seek me diligently, but I shall not be."

Verse 21

And why dost thou not pardon - These words are spoken after the manner of men. If thou have any design to save me, if I have sinned, why dost thou not pardon my transgression, as thou seest that I am a dying man; and to-morrow morning thou mayest seek me to do me good, but in all probability I shall then be no more, and all thy kind thoughts towards me shall be unavailing? If I have sinned, then why should not I have a part in that mercy that flows so freely to all mankind? That Job does not criminate himself here, as our text intimates, is evident enough from his own repeated assertions of his innocence. And it is most certain that Bildad, who immediately answers, did not consider him as criminating but as justifying himself; and this is the very ground on which he takes up the subject. Were we to admit the contrary, we should find strange inconsistencies, if not contradictions, in Job's speeches: on such a ground the controversy must have immediately terminated, as he would then have acknowledged that of which his friends accused him; and here the book of Job would have ended.