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JOB 8: 1 Then Bildad the Shuhite answered,

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Bildad answers, and reproves Job for his justifying himself, Job 8:1, Job 8:2. Shows that God is just, and never punishes but for iniquity; and intimates that it was on account of their sins that his children were cut off, Job 8:3, Job 8:4. States that, if Job would humble himself to the Almighty, provided he were innocent, his captivity would soon be turned, and his latter end be abundantly prosperous, Job 8:5-7. Appeals to the ancients for the truth of what he says; and draws examples from the vegetable world, to show how soon the wicked may be cut off, and the hope of the hypocrite perish, Job 8:8-19. Asserts that God never did cast off a perfect man nor help the wicked; and that, if Job be innocent, his end shall be crowned with prosperity, Job 8:20-22.

Verse 1

Bildad the Shuhite - Supposed to be a descendant of Shuah, one of the sons of Abraham, by Keturah, who dwelt in Arabia Deserta, called in Scripture the east country. See Gen 25:1, Gen 25:2, Gen 25:6.

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JOB 8: 2 "How long will you speak these things? Shall the words of your mouth be a mighty wind?"

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Verse 2

How long wilt thou speak these things? - Wilt thou still go on to charge God foolishly? Thy heavy affliction proves that thou art under his wrath; and his wrath, thus manifested, proves that it is for thy sins that he punisheth thee.

Be like a strong wind? - The Arabic, with which the Syriac agrees, is (Syriac) rucholazomati, the spirit of pride. Wilt thou continue to breathe forth a tempest of words? This is more literal.

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JOB 8: 3 Does God pervert justice? Or does the Almighty pervert righteousness?

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Verse 3

Doth God pervert judgment! - God afflicts thee; can he afflict thee for naught? As he is just, his judgment is just; and he could not inflict punishment unless there be a cause.

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JOB 8: 4 If your children have sinned against him, He has delivered them into the hand of their disobedience.

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Verse 4

If thy children have sinned - I know thy children have been cut off by a terrible judgment; but was it not because by transgression they had filled up the measure of their iniquity?

And he have cast them away - Has sent them off, says the Targum, to the place of their transgression - to that punishment due to their sins.

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JOB 8: 5 If you want to seek God diligently, make your supplication to the Almighty.

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Verse 5

If thou wouldest seek unto God - Though God has so severely afflicted thee, and removed thy children by a terrible judgment; yet if thou wilt now humble thyself before him, and implore his mercy, thou shalt be saved. He cut them off in their sins, but he spares thee; and this is a proof that he waits to be gracious to thee.

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JOB 8: 6 If you were pure and upright, surely now he would awaken for you, and make the habitation of your righteousness prosperous.

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Verse 6

If thou wert pure and upright - Concerning thy guilt there can be no doubt; for if thou hadst been a holy man, and these calamities had occurred through accident, or merely by the malice of thy enemies, would not God, long ere this, have manifested his power and justice in thy behalf, punished thy enemies, and restored thee to affluence?

The habitation of thy righteousness - Strongly ironical. If thy house had been as a temple of God, in which his worship had been performed, and his commandments obeyed, would it now be in a state of ruin and desolation?

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JOB 8: 7 Though your beginning was small, yet your latter end would greatly increase.

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Verse 7

Though thy beginning was small - Thy former state, compared to that into which God would have brought thee, would be small; for to show his respect for thy piety, because thou hadst, through thy faithful attachment to him, suffered the loss of all things, he would have greatly multiplied thy former prosperity, so that thou shouldest now have vastly more than thou didst ever before possess.

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JOB 8: 8 "Please inquire of past generations. Find out about the learning of their fathers.

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Verse 8

Inquire - of the former age - לדור רישון ledor rishon, of the first age; of the patriarchs; the first generation of men that dwelt upon the earth: not of the age that was just past, as Mr. Peters and several others have imagined, in order to keep up the presumption of Job's high antiquity. Bildad most evidently refers to an antiquity exceedingly remote.

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JOB 8: 9 (For we are but of yesterday, and know nothing, because our days on earth are a shadow.)

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Verse 9

For we are but of yesterday, and know nothing - It is evident that Bildad refers to those times in which human life was protracted to a much longer date than that in which Job lived; when men, from the long period of eight or nine hundred years, had the opportunity of making many observations, and treasuring up a vast fund of knowledge and experience. In comparison with them, he considers that age as nothing, and that generation as being only of yesterday, not having had opportunity of laying up knowledge: nor could they expect it, as their days upon earth would be but a shadow, compared with that substantial time in which the fathers had lived. Perhaps there may be an allusion here to the shadow projected by the gnomon of a dial, during the time the sun is above the horizon. As is a single solar day, so is our life. The following beautiful motto I have seen on a sundial: Umbrae Sumus! "We are shadows!" referring to the different shadows by which the gnomon marked the hours, during the course of the day; and all intended to convey this moral lesson to the passengers: Your life is composed of time, marked out by such shadows as these. Such as time is, such are you; as fleeting, as transitory, as unsubstantial. These shadows lost, time is lost; time lost, soul lost! Reader take heed! The writer of this book probably had before his eyes these words of David, in his last prayer, 1Chr 29:15: "For we are strangers before thee, and sojourners, as all our fathers were; our days upon earth are as a Shadow, and there is no expectation. There is no reason to hope that they shall be prolonged; for our lives are limited down to threescore years and ten, as the average of the life even of old men.

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JOB 8: 10 Shall they not teach you, tell you, and utter words out of their heart?

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Verse 10

Shall not they teach thee - Wilt thou not treat their maxims with the utmost deference and respect? They utter words from their heart - what they say is the fruit of long and careful experience.

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JOB 8: 11 "Can the papyrus grow up without mire? Can the rushes grow without water?"

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Verse 11

Can the rush grow - The word גומא gome, which we translate rush, is, without doubt, the Egyptian flag papyrus, on which the ancients wrote, and from which our paper derives its name. The Septuagint, who made their Greek translation in Egypt, (if this book made a part of it), and knew well

the import of each word in both languages, render  $\chi\eta\lambda$  gome by  $\pi\alpha\pi\upsilon\rho\omicron\varsigma$  papyrus, thus:  $\text{Μη θαλλει παπυροϛ ανευ υδατοϛ}$ ; Can the Papyrus flourish without water? Their translation leaves no doubt concerning the meaning of the original. They were probably writing on the very substance in question, while making their translation. The technical language of no science is so thoroughly barbarous as that of botany: the description of this plant by Linnaeus, shall be a proof. The plant he calls "Cyperus Papyrus; Class Triandria; Order Monogynia; Culm three-sided, naked; umbel longer than the involucre; involucre three-leaved, setaceous, longer; spikelets in threes - Egypt, etc. Involucre eight-leaved; general umbel copious, the rays sheathing at the base; partial on very short peduncles; spikelets alternate, sessile; culm leafy at the base; leaves hollow, ensiform." Hear our plain countryman John Gerarde, who describes the same plant: "Papyrus Nilotica, Paper Reed, hath many large flaggie leaves, somewhat triangular and smooth, not much unlike those of cats-taile, rising immediately from a tuft of roots, compact of many strings; amongst the which it shooteth up two or three naked stalkes, square, and rising some six or seven cubits high above the water; at the top whereof there stands a tuft or bundle off chaffie threds, set in comely order, resembling a tuft of floures, but barren and void of seed;" Gerarde's Herbal, p. 40. Which of the two descriptions is easiest to be understood by common sense, either with or without a knowledge of the Latin language? This plant grows in the muddy banks of the Nile, as it requires an abundance of water for its nourishment.

Can the flag grow without water? - Parkhurst supposes that the word  $\text{יִחַל}$  achu, which we render flag, is the same with that species of reed which Mr. Hasselquist found growing near the river Nile. He describes it (p. 97) as "having scarcely any branches, but numerous leaves, which are narrow, smooth, channelled on the upper surface; and the plant about eleven feet high. The Egyptians make ropes of the leaves. They lay the plant in water, like hemp, and then make good and strong cables of them." As  $\text{יִחַל}$  ach signifies to join, connect, associate, hence  $\text{יָחִי}$  achi, a brother,  $\text{יִחַל}$  achu may come from the same root, and have its name from its usefulness in making ropes, cables, etc., which are composed of associated threads, and serve to tie, bind together, etc.

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JOB 8: 12 While it is yet in its greenness, not cut down, it withers before any other reed.

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Verse 12

Whilst it is yet in his greenness - We do not know enough of the natural history of this plant to be able to discern the strength of this allusion; but we learn from it that, although this plant be very succulent, and grow to a great size, yet it is short-lived, and speedily withers; and this we may suppose to be in the dry season, or on the retreat of the waters of the Nile. However, Soon Ripe, soon Rotten, is a maxim in horticulture.

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JOB 8: 13 So are the paths of all who forget God. The hope of the godless man shall perish,

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Verse 13

So are the paths - The papyrus and the rush flourish while they have a plentiful supply of ooze and water; but take these away, and their prosperity is speedily at an end; so it is with the wicked and profane; their prosperity is of short duration, however great it may appear to be in the beginning.

Thou also, O thou enemy of God, hast flourished for a time; but the blast of God is come upon thee, and now thou art dried up from the very roots.

The hypocrite's hope shall perish - A hypocrite, or rather profligate, has no inward religion, for his heart is not right with God; he has only hope, and that perishes when he gives up the ghost. This is the first place in which the word hypocrite occurs, or the noun חָנֵף *chaneph*, which rather conveys the idea of pollution and defilement than of hypocrisy. A hypocrite is one who only carries the mask of godliness, to serve secular purposes; who wishes to be taken for a religionist, though he is conscious he has no religion. Such a person cannot have hope of any good, because he knows he is insincere: but the person in the text has hope; therefore hypocrite cannot be the meaning of the original word. But all the vile, the polluted, and the profligate have hope; they hope to end their iniquities before they end life; and they hope to get at last to the kingdom of heaven. Hypocrite is a very improper translation of the Hebrew.

JOB 8: 14 Whose confidence shall break apart, Whose trust is a spider's web.

#### Verse 14

Whose hope shall be cut off - Such persons, subdued by the strong habits of sin, hope on fruitlessly, till the last thread of the web of life is cut off from the beam; and then they find no more strength in their hope than is in the threads of the spider's web. Mr. Good renders, Thus shall their support rot away. The foundation on which they trust is rotten, and by and by the whole superstructure of their confidence shall tumble into ruin.

JOB 8: 15 He shall lean on his house, but it shall not stand. He shall cling to it, but it shall not endure.

#### Verse 15

He shall lean upon his house - This is all allusion to the spider. When he suspects his web, here called his house, to be frail or unsure, he leans upon it in different parts, propping himself on his hinder legs, and pulling with his fore claws, to see if all be safe. If he find any part of it injured, he immediately adds new cordage to that part, and attaches it strongly to the wall. When he finds all safe and strong, he retires into his hole at one corner, supposing himself to be in a state of complete security, when in a moment the brush or the besom sweeps away both himself, his house, and his confidence. This I have several times observed; and it is in this that the strength and point of the comparison consist. The wicked, whose hope is in his temporal possessions strengthens and keeps his house in repair; and thus leans on his earthly supports; in a moment, as in the case of the spider, his house is overwhelmed by the blast of God's judgments, and himself probably buried in its ruins. This is a very fine and expressive metaphor, which not one of the commentators that I have seen has ever discovered.

JOB 8: 16 He is green before the sun. His shoots go out along his garden.

## Verse 16

He is green before the sun - This is another metaphor. The wicked is represented as a luxuriant plant, in a good soil, with all the advantages of a good situation; well exposed to the sun; the roots intervolving themselves with stones, so as to render the tree more stable; but suddenly a blast comes, and the tree begins to die. The sudden fading of its leaves, etc., shows that its root is become as rottenness, and its vegetable life destroyed. I have often observed sound and healthy trees, which were flourishing in all the pride of vegetative health, suddenly struck by some unknown and incomprehensible blast, begin to die away, and perish from the roots. I have seen also the prosperous wicked, in the inscrutable dispensations of the Divine providence, blasted, stripped, made bare, and despoiled, in the same way.

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JOB 8: 17 His roots are wrapped around the rock pile. He sees the place of stones.

JOB 8: 18 If he is destroyed from his place, then it shall deny him, saying, 'I have not seen you.'

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## Verse 18

If he destroy him from his place - Is not this a plain reference to the alienation of his inheritance? God destroys him from it; it becomes the property of another; and on his revisiting it, the place, by a striking prosopopoeia, says, "I know thee not; I have never seen thee." This also have I witnessed; I looked on it, felt regret, received instruction, and hasted away.

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JOB 8: 19 Behold, this is the joy of his way: out of the earth, others shall spring.

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## Verse 19

Behold this is the joy of his way - A strong irony. Here is the issue of all his mirth, of his sports, games, and pastimes! See the unfeeling, domineering, polluting and polluted scape-grace, levelled with those whom he had despised, a servant of servants, or unable to work through his debaucheries, cringing for a morsel of bread, or ingloriously ending his days in that bane of any well-ordered and civilized state, a parish workhouse. This also I have most literally witnessed.

Out of the earth shall others gross - As in the preceding case, when one plant or tree is blasted or cut down, another may be planted in the same place; so, when a spendthrift has run through his property, another possesses his inheritance, and grows up from that soil in which he himself might have continued to flourish, had it not been for his extravagance and folly. This verse Mr. Good applies to God himself, with no advantage to the argument, nor elucidation of the sense, that I can see. I shall give his translation, and refer to his learned notes for his vindication of the version he has given: - "Behold the Eternal (הוא) exulting in his course;

Even over his dust shall raise up another."

In this way none of the ancient versions have understood the passage. I believe it to be a strong irony, similar to that which some think flowed from the pen of the same writer: Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth; and walk in the ways of

thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes. But know thou, that for all these God will bring thee into judgment; Ecc 11:9. These two places illustrate each other.

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JOB 8: 20 "Behold, God will not cast away a blameless man, neither will he uphold the evildoers.

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Verse 20

Behold, God will not cast away a perfect man - This is another of the maxims of the ancients, which Bildad produces: "As sure as he will punish and root out the wicked, so surely will he defend and save the righteous."

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JOB 8: 21 He will still fill your mouth with laughter, your lips with shouting.

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Verse 21

Till he fill thy mouth with laughing - Perhaps it may be well to translate after Mr. Good "Even yet may he fill thy mouth with laughter!" The two verses may be read as a prayer; and probably they were thus expressed by Bildad, who speaks with less virulence than his predecessor, though with equal positiveness in respect to the grand charge, viz., If thou wert not a sinner of no mean magnitude, God would not have inflicted such unprecedented calamities upon thee. This most exceptionable position, which is so contrary to matter of fact, was founded upon maxims which they derived from the ancients. Surely observation must have, in numberless instances, corrected this mistake. They must have seen many worthless men in high prosperity, and many of the excellent of the earth in deep adversity and affliction; but the opposite was an article of their creed, and all appearances and facts must take its colouring. Job's friends must have been acquainted, at least, with the history of the ancient patriarchs; and most certainly they contained facts of an opposite nature. Righteous Abel was persecuted and murdered by his wicked brother, Cain. Abram was obliged to leave his own country on account of worshipping the true God; so all tradition has said. Jacob was persecuted by his brother Esau; Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers; Moses was obliged to flee from Egypt, and was variously tried and afflicted, even by his own brethren. Not to mention David, and almost all the prophets. All these were proofs that the best of men were frequently exposed to sore afflictions and heavy calamities; and it is not by the prosperity or adversity of men in this world, that we are to judge of the approbation or disapprobation of God towards them. In every case our Lord's rule is infallible: By their fruits ye shall know them.

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JOB 8: 22 Those who hate you shall be clothed with shame. The tent of the wicked shall be no more."

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