
JOB 11: 1 Then Zophar, the Naamathite, answered,

Zophar answers Job, and reproves him severely for his attempts to justify himself; charges him with secret iniquity, and contends that God inflicts less punishment on him than his iniquities deserve, Job 11:1-6. Shows the knowledge and perfections of God to be unsearchable, and that none can resist his power, Job 11:7-11. Warns him against vanity of mind, and exhorts him to repentance on the ground that his acceptance with God is still a possible case, and that his latter days may yet become happy and prosperous, Job 11:12-20.

Verse 1

Zophar the Naamathite - Of this man and his friends, see Job 2:11. He is the most inveterate of Job's accusers, and generally speaks without feeling or pity. In sour godliness he excelled all the rest. This chapter and the twentieth comprehends all that he said. He was too crooked to speak much in measured verse.

JOB 11: 2 "Shouldn't the multitude of words be answered? Should a man full of talk be justified?"

Verse 2

Should not the multitude of words be answered? - Some translate, "To multiply words profiteth nothing."

And should a man full of talk be justified - איש שפתיים ish sephathayim, "a man of lips," a proper appellation for a great talker: he is "a man of lips," i.e., his lips are the only active parts of his system.

JOB 11: 3 Should your boastings make men hold their peace? When you mock, shall no man make you ashamed?

Verse 3

Should thy lies make men hold their peace? - This is a very severe reproof, and not justified by the occasion.

And when thou mockest - As thou despisest others, shall no man put thee to scorn? Zophar could never think that the solemn and awful manner in which Job spoke could be called bubbling, as some would translate the term לעג laag. He might consider Job's speech as sarcastic and severe, but he could not consider it as nonsense.

JOB 11: 4 For you say, 'My doctrine is pure. I am clean in your eyes.'

Verse 4

My doctrine is pure - לקחי likchi, "my assumptions." What I assume or take as right, and just, and true, are so; the precepts which I have formed, and the practice which I have founded on them, are all correct and perfect. Job had not exactly said, My doctrine and way of life are pure, and I am clean in thine eyes; but he had vindicated himself from their charges of secret sins and hypocrisy, and appealed to God for his general uprightness and sincerity: but Zophar here begs the question, in order that he may have something to say, and room to give vent to his invective.

JOB 11: 5 But oh that God would speak, and open his lips against you,

Verse 5

But O that God would speak - How little feeling, humanity, and charity is there in this prayer!

JOB 11: 6 that he would show you the secrets of wisdom! For true wisdom has two sides. Know therefore that God exacts of you less than your iniquity deserves.

Verse 6

The secrets of wisdom - All the depths of his own counsels; the heights, lengths, and breadths, of holiness. That they are double to that which is, תושיה tushiyah, which we translate that which is, is a word frequent in Job and in the Book of Proverbs, and is one of the evidences brought in favor of Solomon as the author of this book. It signifies substance or essence, and is translated by a great variety of terms; enterprise, completeness, substance, the whole constitution, wisdom, law, sound wisdom, solid complete happiness, solidity of reason and truth, the complete total sum, etc., etc. See Taylor's Hebrew and English Concord., under ישׁה. In this place the versions are various. Coverdale, following the Vulgate, translates: That he might shewe the (out of his secreite wissdome) how manyfolde his lawe is. The Septuagint, ὅτι διπλους εσται των κατα σε, that it is double to what it is with thee. Mr. Good translates, "For they are intricacies to Iniquity." This is a meaning never before given to תושיה tushiyah, and a meaning which even his own learned note will not make generally prevalent. Perhaps Zophar is here, in mind, comparing the wisdom which has been revealed with the wisdom not revealed. The perfection and excellence of the Divine nature and the purity of his law, are, in substance and essence, double or manifold to the revelation already made.

Less than thine iniquity deserveth - Mr. Good translates, And the knowledge hath withdrawn from thee because of thy sins; and represents Zophar as praying that God would reveal to him the secrets of wisdom, and the knowledge which he had withdrawn from him because of his transgressions. That Zophar intends to insinuate that God afflicted Job because of his iniquities, is evident; and that he thought that God had inflicted less chastisement upon him than his sins deserved, is not less so; and that, therefore, Job's complaining of harsh treatment was not at all well founded.

JOB 11: 7 "Can you fathom the mystery of God? Or can you probe the limits of the Almighty?"

Verse 7

Canst thou by searching find out God? - What is God? A Being self-existent, eternal, infinite, immense, without bounds, incomprehensible either by mind, or time, or space. Who then can find this Being out? Who can fathom his depths, ascend to his heights, extend to his breadths, and comprehend the infinitude of his perfections?

JOB 11: 8 They are high as heaven. What can you do? They are deeper than Sheol. What can you know?

Verse 8

It is as high as heaven - High as the heavens, what canst thou work? Deep below sheol, (the invisible world), what canst thou know? Long beyond the earth, and broad beyond the sea, is its measure. These are instances in the immensity of created things, and all out of the reach of human power and knowledge; and if these things are so, how incomprehensible must he be, who designed, created, preserves, and governs the whole!

We find the same thought in Milton: - "These are thy glorious works, Parent of good!

Almighty! Thine this universal frame:

How wondrous fair! Thyself how wondrous then!"

JOB 11: 9 Its measure is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea.

JOB 11: 10 If he passes by, or confines, or convenes a court, then who can oppose him?

Verse 10

If he cut off - As he is unlimited and almighty, he cannot be controlled. He will do whatsoever he pleases; and he is pleased with nothing but what is right. Who then will dare to find fault? Perhaps Zophar may refer to Job's former state, his losses and afflictions. If he cut off, as he has done, thy children; if he shut up, as he has done, thyself by this sore disease; or gather together hostile bands to invade thy territories and carry away thy property; who can hinder him? He is sovereign, and has a right to dispose of his own property as he pleases.

JOB 11: 11 For he knows false men. He sees iniquity also, even though he doesn't consider it.

Verse 11

He knoweth vain men - שוא מת' methey shau, "men of falsehood."

He seeth wickedness - He sees as well what is in man, as what man does; and of his actions and propensities he cannot be an indifferent spectator.

JOB 11: 12 An empty-headed man becomes wise when a man is born as a wild donkey's colt.

Verse 12

For vain man would be wise - The original is difficult and uncertain, **וַאִישׁ נָבוֹב יִלְבֵּב** veish nabub yillabeb, "And shall the hollow man assume courage," or "pride himself?" Or, as Mr. Good rather paraphrases it, Will he then accept the hollow-hearted person? The Chaldee gives two renderings: An eloquent man shall become wiser in his heart, and the colt of the wild ass is born as the son of man. Or, The wise man shall ponder it; and the refractory youth, who at last becomes prudent, shall make a great man. Coverdale - A wayne body exalteth him self; and the son of man is like a wylde asse's foale. Houbigant translates thus: - A man who hath understanding will become prudent; but he who is as the wild ass hath no heart, i.e., sense. According to this critic, the meaning is this: - A man of sense, should he at any time transgress, will learn wisdom from it; but a man of a brutish mind, uncultivated and unreflecting, will plunge yet deeper into iniquity.

Though man be born like a wild ass's colt - Is translated by Mr. Good, Or shall the wild ass colt assume the man? This is making a sense, but such as I fear the original will never allow. There is no end to the translations of this verse, and conjectures relative to its meaning. I shall conclude with the Vulgate - *Vir vanus in superbiam erigitur, et tanquam pullum onagri se liberum natum putat*, "Vain man is puffed up with pride; and he supposes himself to be born free like the wild ass's colt." Man is full of self-conceit; and imagines himself born to act as he pleases, to roam at large, to be under no control, and to be accountable to none for his actions.

JOB 11: 13 "If you set your heart aright, stretch out your hands toward him.

Verse 13

If thou prepare thine heart - Make use of the powers which God has given thee, and be determined to seek him with all thy soul.

And stretch out thine hands toward him - Making fervent prayer and supplication, putting away iniquity out of thy hand, and not permitting wickedness to dwell in thy tabernacle; then thou shalt lift up thy face without a blush, thou wilt become established, and have nothing to fear, Job 11:14, Job 11:15.

There is a sentiment in Pro 16:1, very similar to that in the Job 11:13, which we translate very improperly: - **לֵאדָם מַעְרֵכֵי לֵב** leadam maarchey leb.

To man are the preparations of the heart: **וּמֵהוּוֹה מַעֲנֵה לָשׁוֹן** umeyehovah maaneh lashon.

But from Jehovah is the answer to the tongue.

It is man's duty to pray; it is God's prerogative to answer. Zophar, like all the rest, is true to his principle. Job must be a wicked man, else he had not been afflicted. There must be some iniquity in his hand, and some wickedness tolerated in his family. So they all supposed.

JOB 11: 14 If iniquity is in your hand, put it far away. Don't let unrighteousness dwell in your tents.

JOB 11: 15 Surely then you shall lift up your face without spot; Yes, you shall be steadfast, and shall not fear:

JOB 11: 16 for you shall forget your misery. You shall remember it like waters that have passed away.

Verse 16

Because thou shalt forget thy misery - Thou shalt have such long and complete rest, that thou shalt scarcely remember thy labor.

As waters that pass away - Like as the mountain floods, which sweep every thing before them, houses, tents, cattle, and the produce of the field, and are speedily absorbed by the sandy plains over which they run, so shalt thou remember thy sufferings: they were wasting and ruinous for the time, but were soon over and gone.

JOB 11: 17 Life shall be clearer than the noonday. Though there is darkness, it shall be as the morning.

Verse 17

Thine age shall be clearer than the noonday - The rest of thy life shall be unclouded prosperity.

Thou shalt shine forth - Thou shalt be in this unclouded state, as the sun in the firmament of heaven, giving light and heat to all around thee.

Thou shalt be as the morning - Thus the sun of thy prosperity shall arise, and shine more and more unto the perfect day. This is the image which the sacred writer employs, and it is correct and elegant.

JOB 11: 18 You shall be secure, because there is hope. Yes, you shall search, and shall take your rest in safety.

Verse 18

And thou shalt be secure - Thou shalt not fear any farther evils to disturb thy prosperity, for thou shalt have a well-grounded hope and confidence that thou shalt no more be visited by adversity.

Yea, thou shalt dig - I believe this neither refers to digging his grave, nor to curiously investigating surrounding circumstances; but to the custom of digging for water in the places where they pitched

their tents. It was a matter of high importance in Asiatic countries to find good wells of wholesome water; and they were frequently causes of contention among neighboring chiefs, who sometimes stopped them up, and at other times seized them as their own. Through envy of Isaac's prosperity the Philistines stopped up all the wells which Abraham had digged, Gen 26:12-16. And we find the herdsmen of Gerar contending with Isaac's servants about the wells which the latter had digged; so that they were obliged to abandon two of the chief of them, and remove to a distance in order to dig and find quiet possession. See Gen 31:17-22. Zophar, in reference to all these sorts of contentions and petty wars about wells and springs, tells Job that in the state of prosperity to which he shall be brought by the good providence of God, he shall dig - find wells of living water; none shall contend with him; and he shall rest in safety, all the neighboring chieftains cultivating friendship with him; see on Job 5:23 (note), Job 5:24 (note); and that this is the meaning of the passage the following verse shows: Thou shalt lie down, and none shall make thee afraid; yea, many shall make suit unto thee. Thou shalt be in perfect security; no enemy shall molest thee, and many shall seek thy friendship.

JOB 11: 19 Also you shall lie down, and no one shall make you afraid. Yes, many shall court your favour.

JOB 11: 20 But the eyes of the wicked shall fail. They shall have no way to flee. Their hope shall be the giving up of the spirit."

Verse 20

The eyes of the wicked shall fail - They shall be continually looking out for help and deliverance; but their expectation shall be cut off.

And they shall not escape - They shall receive the punishment due to their deserts; for God has his eye continually upon them. מנהם ומנוס אבד *umanos abad minnehem*, literally, "And escape perishes from them." Flight from impending destruction is impossible.

And their hope shall be as the giving up of the ghost - ותקוֹתם מפֹּחַ נֶפֶשׁ *vethikratham mappach naphesh*, "And their hope an exhalation of breath," or a mere wish of the mind. They retain their hope to the last; and the last breath they breathe is the final and eternal termination of their hope. They give up their hope and their ghost together; for a vain hope cannot enter into that place where shadow and representation exist not; all being substance and reality. And thus endeth Zophar the Naamathite; whose premises were in general good, his conclusions legitimate, but his application of them to Job's case totally erroneous; because he still proceeded on the ground that Job was a wicked man, if not ostensibly, yet secretly; and that the sufferings he was undergoing were the means by which God was unmasking him to the view of men. But, allowing that Job had been a bad man, the exhortations of Zophar were well calculated to enforce repentance and excite confidence in the Divine mercy. Zophar seems to have had a full conviction of the all-governing providence of God; and that those who served him with an honest and upright heart would be ever distinguished in the distribution of temporal good. He seems however to think that rewards and punishments were distributed in this life, and does not refer, at least very evidently, to a future state. Probably his information on subjects of divinity did not extend much beyond the grave; and we have much cause to thank God for a clearer dispensation. *Deus nobis haec otia fecit.* God grant that we may make a good use of it!