
JOB 17: 1 "My spirit is consumed. My days are extinct, And the grave is ready for me.

Job complains of the injustice of his friends, and compares his present state of want and wo with his former honor and affluence, Job 17:1-6. God's dealings with him will ever astonish upright men; yet the righteous shall not be discouraged, but hold on his way, Job 17:7-9. Asserts that there is not a wise man among his friends, and that he has no expectation but of a speedy death, Job 17:10-16.

Verse 1

My breath is corrupt - Rather, My spirit is oppressed, רוחי חבלה ruchi chubbalah: My days are extinct, and the sepulchral cells are ready for me - Parkhurst. There is probably a reference here to cemeteries, where were several niches, in Each of which a corpse was deposited. See on Job 17:16 (note). For חבלה chubbalah, corrupted or oppressed, some MSS. have חלה chalah, is made weak; and one has גבלה is worn down, consumed: this is agreeable to the Vulgate, Spiritus meus attenuabatur; "My spirit is exhausted."

JOB 17: 2 Surely there are mockers with me. My eye dwells on their provocation.

Verse 2

Are there not mockers with me? - This has been variously translated. The Vulgate: "I have not sinned, and yet my eye dwells upon afflictions." Septuagint: "I conjure you, laboring under afflictions, what evil have I done? Yet strangers have robbed me of my substance." Mr. Good: "But are not revilers before me? Alas, mine eye penetrateth their rebukes." Calmet thinks the Hebrew might be translated thus: "If I have not been united in friendship with the wicked, why are my eyes in bitterness?" Coverdale translates both verses thus: My breth fayleth, my dayes are shortened, I am harde at deathes dore. I have disceaved no man, yet must myne eye continue in hevynesse. Mr. Heath "Were it not so, I have sarcasms enow in store; and I could spend the whole night unmoved at their aggravations." The general meaning is sufficiently plain, and the reader has got translations enough.

JOB 17: 3 "Now give a pledge, be collateral for me with yourself. Who is there who will strike hands with me?"

Verse 3

Lay down now - Deposit a pledge; stake your conduct against mine, and your life and soul on the issue; let the cause come before God, let him try it; and see whether any of you shall be justified by him, while I am condemned.

JOB 17: 4 For you have hidden their heart from understanding, Therefore you shall not exalt them.

 Verse 4

For thou hast hid their heart - This address is to God; and here he is represented as doing that which in the course of his providence he only permits to be done.

Shalt thou not exalt them - This was exactly fulfilled: not one of Job's friends was exalted; on the contrary, God condemned the whole; and they were not received into the Divine favor till Job sacrificed, and made intercession for them.

JOB 17: 5 He who denounces his friends for plunder, Even the eyes of his children shall fail.

Verse 5

He that speaketh flattery - There is a great variety of meaning given to the terms in this verse. The general sense is, The man who expects much from his friends will be disappointed: while depending on them his children's eyes may fail in looking for bread.

JOB 17: 6 “But he has made me a byword of the people. They spit in my face.

Verse 6

He hath made me also a by-word - My afflictions and calamities have become a subject of general conversation, so that my poverty and affliction are proverbial. As poor as Job, As afflicted as Job, are proverbs that have even reached our times and are still in use.

Aforetime I was as a tabret - This is not the translation of the Hebrew ותפת לפנים אהיה vethopheth lephanim eheyeh. Instead of לפנים lephanim, I would read לפניהם liphneghem, and then the clause might be translated thus: I shall be as a furnace, or consuming fire (Topheth) before them. They shall have little reason to mock when they see the end of the Lord's dealings with me; my example will be a consuming fire to them, and my false friends will be confounded. Coverdale translates thus: He hath made me as it were a byworde of the comon people. I am his gestinge stocke amonge them.

JOB 17: 7 My eye also is dim by reason of sorrow. All my members are as a shadow.

Verse 7

Mine eye also is dim - Continual weeping impairs the sight; and indeed any affliction that debilitates the frame generally weakens the sight in the same proportion.

All my members are as a shadow - Nothing is left but skin and bone. I am but the shadow of my former self.

JOB 17: 8 Upright men shall be astonished at this. The innocent shall stir up himself against the godless.

Verse 8

Upright men shall be astonished - In several of these verses Job is supposed to speak prophetically of his future restoration, and of the good which religious society should derive from the history of his original affluence, consequent poverty and affliction, and final restoration to health, peace, and prosperity. The upright will receive the account with astonishment, and wonder at the dispensations of the Almighty; while hypocrites, false professors and the sour-headed, godly, shall be unmasked, and innocent men, whether in affliction or affluence, shall be known to be favourites of the Almighty.

JOB 17: 9 Yet shall the righteous hold on his way. He who has clean hands shall grow stronger and stronger.

Verse 9

The righteous also shall hold on his way - There shall be no doubt concerning the dispensations of the Divine providence. My case shall illustrate all seemingly intricate displays of God's government. None shall be stumbled at seeing a godly man under oppression, knowing that God never permits any thing of the kind but for the good of the subject, and the manifestation of his own mercy, wisdom, and love. Therefore whatever occurs to the righteous man, he will take it for granted that all is well and justly managed, and that the end will be glorious.

Shall be stronger and stronger - He shall take encouragement from my case, stay himself on the Lord, and thus gain strength by every blast of adversity. This is one grand use of the book of Job. It casts much light on seemingly partial displays of Divine providence: and has ever been the great text-book of godly men in a state of persecution and affliction. This is what Job seems prophetically to declare.

JOB 17: 10 But as for you all, come on now again; I shall not find a wise man among you.

Verse 10

But as for you all - Ye are too proud, and too full of self-importance, to profit by what ye see. Return - enter into yourselves, consider your ways, go again to school, get back to your own houses, and endeavor to acquire humility and knowledge; for there is not one wise man among you.

JOB 17: 11 My days are past, my plans are broken off, as are the thoughts of my heart.

Verse 11

My days are past - Job seems to relapse here into his former state of gloom. These transitions are very frequent in this poem; and they strongly mark the struggle of piety and resignation with continued affliction, violent temptation, and gloomy providences.

The thoughts of my heart - All my purposes are interrupted; and all my schemes and plans, in relation to myself and family, are torn asunder, destroyed, and dissipated.

JOB 17: 12 They change the night into day, saying 'The light is near' in the presence of darkness.

Verse 12

They change the night into day - These purposes and thoughts are so very gloomy, that they change day into night.

The light is short because of darkness - אור קרוב מפני חשך or karob mippeney choshek, "The light is near from the face of darkness." I have scarcely any light: what is called light is so near akin to darkness, that it is scarcely severed from it. There is either no light, or merely such as is sufficient to render darkness visible. A fine picture of the state of his mind - he was generally in darkness; but had occasional gleams of hope.

JOB 17: 13 If I look for Sheol as my house, if I have spread my couch in the darkness,

Verse 13

The grave is mine house - Let my life be long or short, the grave at last will be my home. I expect soon to lie down in darkness - there is my end: I cannot reasonably hope for any thing else.

JOB 17: 14 If I have said to corruption, 'You are my father;' to the worm, 'My mother,' and 'my sister;'

Verse 14

I have said to corruption - I came from a corrupted stock, and I must go to corruption again. The Hebrew might be thus rendered: To the ditch I have called, Thou art my father. To the worm, Thou art my mother and my sister. I am in the nearest state of affinity to dissolution and corruption: I may well call them my nearest relations, as I shall soon be blended with them.

JOB 17: 15 where then is my hope? as for my hope, who shall see it?

Verse 15

And where is now my hope? - In the circumstances in which I am found, of what use can hope be? Were I to form the expectation of future good, who could ever see it realized? Is it then any wonder that I should complain and bemoan my wretched lot?

JOB 17: 16 Shall it go down with me to the gates of Sheol, or descend together into the dust?"

Verse 16

They shall go down to the bars of the pit - All that I have must descend into the depths of the grave. Thither are we all going; and there alone can I rest. בַּדֵּי baddey, which we translate bars, signifies also branches, distended limbs, or claws, and may here refer either to a personification of the grave, a monster who seizes on human bodies, and keeps them fast in his deadly gripe; or to the different branching-off-alleys in subterranean cemeteries, or catacombs, in which niches are made for the reception of different bodies.

When our rest together is in the dust - That is, according to some critics, My hope and myself shall descend together into the grave. It shall never be realized, for the time of my departure is at hand.

In those times what deep shades hung on the state of man after death, and on every thing pertaining to the eternal world! Perplexity and uncertainty were the consequences; and a corresponding gloom often dwelt on the minds of even the best of the Old Testament believers. Job's friends, though learned in all the wisdom of the Arabians, connected with the advantages derivable from the Mosaic writings, and perhaps those of the earlier prophets, had little clear or distinct in their minds relative to all subjects post mortem, or of the invisible world. Job himself, though sometimes strongly confident, is often harassed with doubts and fears upon the subject, insomuch that his sayings and experience often appear contradictory. Perhaps it could not be otherwise; the true light was not then come: Jesus alone brought life and immortality to light by his Gospel.