
JOB 20: 1 Then Zophar the Naamathite answered,

Zophar answers Job, and largely details the wretchedness of the wicked and the hypocrite; shows that the rejoicing of such is short and transitory, Job 20:1-9. That he is punished in his family and in his person, Job 20:10-14. That he shall be stripped of his ill-gotten wealth, and shall be in misery, though in the midst of affluence, Job 20:15-23. He shall at last die a violent death, and his family and property be finally destroyed, Job 20:24-29.

JOB 20: 2 "Therefore do my thoughts give answer to me, even by reason of my haste that is in me.

Verse 2

Therefore do my thoughts - It has already been observed that Zophar was the most inveterate of all Job's enemies, for we really must cease to call them friends. He sets no bounds to his invective, and outrages every rule of charity. A man of such a bitter spirit must have been, in general, very unhappy. With him Job is, by insinuation, every thing that is base, vile, and hypocritical. Mr. Good translates this verse thus: "Whither would my tumult transport me? And how far my agitation within me?" This is all the modesty that appears in Zophar's discourse. He acknowledges that he is pressed by the impetuosity of his spirit to reply to Job's self-vindication. The original is variously translated, but the sense is as above.

For this I make haste - ובעבור חושי בי ubaabur chushi bi, there is sensibility in me, and my feelings provoke me to reply.

JOB 20: 3 I have heard the reproof which puts me to shame. The spirit of my understanding answers me.

Verse 3

I have heard the check of my reproach - Some suppose that Zophar quotes the words of Job, and that some words should be supplied to indicate this meaning; e.g., "I have heard (sayest thou) the check or charge of my reproach?" Or it may refer to what Job says of Zophar and his companions, Job 19:2, Job 19:3: How long will ye vex my soul - these ten times have ye reproached me. Zophar therefore assumes his old ground, and retracts nothing of what he had said. Like many of his own complexion in the present day, he was determined to believe that his judgment was infallible, and that he could not err.

JOB 20: 4 Don't you know this from old time, since man was placed on earth,

Verse 4

Knowest thou not this of old - This is a maxim as ancient as the world; it began with the first man: A wicked man shall triumph but a short time; God will destroy the proud doer.

Since man was placed upon earth - Literally, since Adam was placed on the earth; that is, since the fall, wickedness and hypocrisy have existed; but they have never triumphed long. Thou hast lately been expressing confidence in reference to a general judgment; but such is thy character, that thou hast little reason to anticipate with any joy the decisions of that day.

JOB 20: 5 that the triumphing of the wicked is short, the joy of the godless but for a moment?

JOB 20: 6 Though his height mount up to the heavens, and his head reach to the clouds,

Verse 6

Though his excellency mount up to the heavens - Probably referring to the original state of Adam, of whose fall he appears to have spoken, Job 20:4. He was created in the image of God; but by his sin against his Maker he fell into wretchedness, misery, death, and destruction.

JOB 20: 7 yet he shall perish forever like his own dung. Those who have seen him shall say, 'Where is he?'

Verse 7

He shall perish for ever - He is dust, and shall return to the dust from which he was taken. Zophar here hints his disbelief in that doctrine, the resurrection of the body, which Job had so solemnly asserted in the preceding chapter. Or he might have been like some in the present day, who believe that the wicked shall be annihilated, and the bodies of the righteous only be raised from the dead; but I know of no scripture by which such a doctrine is confirmed.

Like his own dung - His reputation shall be abominable, and his putrid carcass shall resemble his own excrement. A speech that partakes as much of the malevolence as of the asperity of Zophar's spirit.

JOB 20: 8 He shall fly away as a dream, and shall not be found. Yes, he shall be chased away like a vision of the night.

Verse 8

He shall fly away as a dream - Instead of rising again from corruption, as thou hast asserted, (Job 19:26), with a new body, his flesh shall rot in the earth, and his spirit be dissipated like a vapor; and, like a vision of the night, nothing shall remain but the bare impression that such a creature had once existed, but shall appear no more for ever.

JOB 20: 9 The eye which saw him shall see him no more, neither shall his place any more see him.

JOB 20: 10 His children shall seek the favour of the poor. His hands shall give back his wealth.

Verse 10

His children shall seek to please the poor - They shall be reduced to the lowest degree of poverty and want, so as to be obliged to become servants to the poor. Cursed be Ham, a servant of servants shall he be. There are cases where the poor actually serve the poor; and this is the lowest or most abject state of poverty.

His hands shall restore their goods - He shall be obliged to restore the goods that he has taken by violence. Mr. Good translates: His branches shall be involved in his iniquity; i.e., his children shall suffer on his account. "His own hands shall render to himself the evil that he has done to others." - Calmet. The clause is variously translated.

JOB 20: 11 His bones are full of his youth, but youth shall lie down with him in the dust.

Verse 11

His bones are full of the sin of his youth - Our translators have followed the Vulgate, *Ossa ejus implebuntur vitiis adolescentiae ejus*; "his bones shall be filled with the sins of his youth." The Syriac and Arabic have, his bones are full of marrow; and the Targum is to the same sense. At first view it might appear that Zophar refers to those infirmities in old age, which are the consequences of youthful vices and irregularities. *עלומו* *alumau*, which we translate his youth, may be rendered his hidden things; as if he had said, his secret vices bring down his strength to the dust. For this rendering Rosenmuller contends, and several other German critics. Mr. Good contends for the same.

JOB 20: 12 "Though wickedness is sweet in his mouth, though he hide it under his tongue,

Verse 12

Though wickedness be sweet in his mouth - This seems to refer to the secret sins mentioned above.

Hide it under his tongue - This and the four following verses contain an allegory; and the reference is to a man who, instead of taking wholesome food, takes what is poisonous, and is so delighted with it because it is sweet, that he rolls it under his tongue, and will scarcely let it down into his stomach, he is so delighted with the taste; "he spares it, and forsakes it not, but keeps it still within his mouth," Job 20:13. "But when he swallows it, it is turned to the gall of asps within him," Job 20:14, which shall corrode and torture his bowels.

JOB 20: 13 though he spare it, and will not let it go, but keep it still within his mouth;

JOB 20: 14 yet his food in his bowels is turned. It is cobra venom within him.

JOB 20: 15 He has swallowed down riches, and he shall vomit them up again. God will cast them out of his belly.

Verse 15

He shall vomit them up again - This is also an allusion to an effect of most ordinary poisons; they occasion a nausea, and often excruciating vomiting; nature striving to eject what it knows, if retained, will be its bane.

JOB 20: 16 He shall suck cobra venom. The viper's tongue shall kill him.

Verse 16

He shall suck the poison of asps - That delicious morsel, that secret, easily-besetting sin, so palatable, and so pleasurable, shall act on the life of his soul, as the poison of asps would do on the life of his body. The poison is called the gall of asps, it being anciently supposed that the poison of serpents consists in their gall, which is thought to be copiously exuded when those animals are enraged; as it has been often seen that their bite is not poisonous when they are not angry. Pliny, in speaking of the various parts of animals, Hist. Nat. lib. xi., c. 37, states, from this circumstance, that in the gall, the poison of serpents consists; ne quis miretur id (fel) venenum esse serpentum. And in lib. xxviii., c. 9, he ranks the gall of horses among the poisons: Damnatur (fel) equinum tantum inter venena. We see, therefore, that the gall was considered to be the source whence the poison of serpents was generated, not only in Arabia, but also in Italy.

JOB 20: 17 He shall not look at the rivers, the flowing streams of honey and butter.

Verse 17

He shall not see the rivers - Mr. Good has the following judicious note on this passage: "Honey and butter are the common results of a rich, well-watered pasturage, offering a perpetual banquet of grass to kine, and of nectar to bees; and thus loading the possessor with the most luscious luxuries of pastoral life, peculiarly so before the discovery of the means of obtaining sugar. The expression appears to have been proverbial; and is certainly used here to denote a very high degree of temporal prosperity." See also Job 29:6. To the Hebrews such expressions were quite familiar. See Exo 3:8; Exo 13:5; Exo 33:3; 2Kgs 18:32; Deu 31:20, and elsewhere. The Greek and Roman writers abound in such images. Milk and honey were such delicacies with the ancients, that Pindar compares his song to them for its smoothness and sweetness: - Χαίρε Φίλος. Εγω τοδε τοι Πεμπω μεμιγμενον μελι λευκω Συν γαλακτι· κίρναμενα δ' εερς' αμφεπει πομ' αοιδιμον, Αιολισιν εν πνοαισιν αυλων.

Pind. Nem. iii., ver. 133. "Hail, friend! to thee I tune my song;

For thee its mingled sweets prepare;

Mellifluous accents pour along;

Verse, pure as milk, to thee I bear;
On all thy actions falls the dew of praise;
Pierian draughts thy thirst of fame assuage,
And breathing flutes thy songs of triumph raise."

J. B. C.

Qui te, Pollio, amat, veniat, quo te quoque gaudet;
Mella fluant illi, ferat et rubus asper amomum.
Virg. Ecl. iii., ver. 88. "Who Pollio loves, and who his muse admires;
Let Pollio's fortune crown his full desires
Let myrrh, instead of thorn, his fences fill;
And showers of honey from his oaks distil!"

Dryden.

Ovid, describing the golden age, employs the same image: -
Flumina jam lactis, jam flumina nectaris ibant;
Flavaque de viridi stillabant ilice mella.
Metam. lib. i., ver. 3. "Floods were with milk, and floods with nectar, fill'd;
And honey from the sweating oak distill'd."

Dryden.

Horace employs a similar image in nearly the same words: -
Mella cava manant ex ilice, montibus altis;
Levis crepante lympha desilit pede.
Epod. xvi., ver. 46. "From hollow oaks, where honey'd streams distil,
And bounds with noisy foot the pebbled rill."

Francis.

Job employs the same metaphor, Job 29:6: -

When I washed my steps with butter,
And the rock poured out to me rivers of oil.

Isaiah, also, Isa 7:22, uses the same when describing the produce of a heifer and two ewes: -

From the plenty of milk that they shall produce,
He shall eat butter: butter and honey shall he eat,
Whosoever is left in the midst of the land.

And Joel, Joe 3:18: -

And it shall come to pass in that day,

The mountains shall drop down new wine,

And the hills shall flow with milk;

And all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters.

These expressions denote fertility and abundance; and are often employed to point out the excellence of the promised land, which is frequently denominated a land flowing with milk and honey: and even the superior blessings of the Gospel are thus characterized, Isa 51:1.

JOB 20: 18 That for which he laboured he shall restore, and shall not swallow it down. According to the substance that he has gotten, he shall not rejoice.

Verse 18

That which he laboreth for shall he restore - I prefer here the reading of the Arabic, which is also supported by the Syriac, and is much nearer to the Hebrew text than the common version. He shall return to labor, but he shall not eat; he shall toil, and not be permitted to enjoy the fruit of his labor. The whole of this verse Mr. Good thus translates: - "To labor shall he return, but he shall not eat.

A dearth his recompense: yea, nothing shall he taste."

It may be inquired how Mr. Good arrives at this meaning. It is by considering the word יעלס yaalos, which we translate he shall rejoice, as the Arabic (Arabic) alasa, "he ate, drank, tasted;" and the word כהיל kehil, which we make a compound word, keehey, "according to substance," to be the pure Arabic word (Arabic) kahala, "it was fruitless," applied to a year of dearth: hence kahlan, "a barren year." Conceiving these two to be pure Arabic words, for which he seems to have sufficient authority, he renders תמורתו temuratho, his recompense, as in Job 15:31, and not restitution, as here. The general meaning is, He shall labor and toil, but shall not reap, for God shall send on his land blasting and mildew. Houbigant translates the verse thus: Reddet labore partum; neque id absumet; copiosae fuerunt mercaturae ejus, sed illis non fruetur. "He shall restore what he gained by labor, nor shall he consume it; his merchandises were abundant, but he shall not enjoy them." O, how doctors disagree! Old Coverdale gives a good sense, which is no unfrequent thing with this venerable translator: -

But labore shal he, and yet have nothings to eate; great travayle shal he make for riches, but he shal not enjoye them.

JOB 20: 19 For he has oppressed and forsaken the poor. He has violently taken away a house, and he shall not build it up.

Verse 19

He hath oppressed and hath forsaken the poor - Literally, He hath broken in pieces the forsaken of the poor; **עזב דלים כי רצץ** *ki ritstsats azab dallim*. The poor have fled from famine, and left their children behind them; and this hard-hearted wretch, meaning Job all the while, has suffered them to perish, when he might have saved them alive.

He hath violently taken away a house which he builded not - Or rather, He hath thrown down a house, and hath not rebuilt it. By neglecting or destroying the forsaken orphans of the poor, mentioned above, he has destroyed a house, (a family), while he might, by helping the wretched, have preserved the family from becoming extinct.

JOB 20: 20 "Because he knew no quietness within him, he shall not save anything of that in which he delights.

Verse 20

Surely he shall not feel quietness in his belly - I have already remarked that the word **בטן** *beten*, which we translate belly, often means in the sacred Scriptures the whole of the human trunk; the regions of the thorax and abdomen, with their contents; the heart, lungs, liver, etc., and consequently all the thoughts, purposes, and inclinations of the mind, of which those viscera were supposed to be the functionaries. The meaning seems to be, "He shall never be satisfied; he shall have an endless desire after secular good, and shall never be able to obtain what he covets."

JOB 20: 21 There was nothing left that he didn't devour, therefore his prosperity shall not endure.

Verse 21

There shall none of his meat be left - Coverdale translates thus: He devoured so greedily, that he left nothinge behynde, therefore his goodes shal not prospere. He shall be stripped of every thing.

JOB 20: 22 In the fullness of his sufficiency, distress shall overtake him. The hand of everyone who is in misery shall come on him.

Verse 22

In the fullness of his sufficiency he shall be in straits - This is a fine saying, and few of the menders of Job's text have been able to improve the version. It is literally true of every great, rich, wicked man; he has no God, and anxieties and perplexities torment him, notwithstanding he has his portion in this life.

Every hand of the wicked shall come upon him - All kinds of misery shall be his portion. Coverdale translates: Though he had plenteousnesse of every thinge, yet was he poore; and, therefore, he is but a wretch on every syde.

JOB 20: 23 When he is about to fill his belly, God will cast the fierceness of his wrath on him. It will rain on him while he is eating.

Verse 23

When he is about to fill his belly - Here seems a plain allusion to the lustings of the children of Israel in the desert. God showered down quails upon them, and showered down his wrath while the flesh was in their mouth. The allusion is too plain to be mistaken; and this gives some countenance to the bishop of Killala's version of Job 20:20 - "Because he acknowledged not the quail in his stomach,

In the midst of his delight he shall not escape."

That **לש**, which we translate quietness, means a quail, also the history of the Hebrews' lustings, Exo 16:2-11, and Num 11:31-35, sufficiently proves. Let the reader mark all the expressions here, Job 20:20-23, and compare them with Num 11:31-35, and he will probably be of opinion that Zophar has that history immediately in view, which speaks of the Hebrews' murmurings for bread and flesh, and the miraculous showers of manna and quails, and the judgments that fell on them for their murmurings. Let us compare a few passages: - Job 20:20. He shall not feel quietness - **לש** selav, the quail. "He shall not save of that which he desired." Job 20:21: "There shall none of his meat be left." Exo 16:19: "Let no man leave of it till the morning." Job 20:22. In the fullness of his sufficiency, he shall be in straits - Exo 16:20: "But some of them left of it until the morning, and it bred worms and stank." Job 20:23. When he is about to fill his belly, God shall cast the fury of his wrath upon him, and shall rain it upon him while he is eating - Num 11:33: "And while the flesh was yet between their teeth, ere it was chewed, the wrath of the Lord was kindled against the people, and the Lord smote the people with a very great plague." Psa 78:26-30: "He rained flesh upon them as dust, and feathered fowls like as the sand of the sea: so they did eat and were filled-but, while the meat was in their mouth, the wrath of God came upon them," etc. These show to what Zophar refers.

JOB 20: 24 He shall flee from the iron weapon. The bronze arrow shall strike him through.

Verse 24

He shall flee from the iron weapon - Or, "Though he should flee from the iron armor, the brazen bow should strike him through." So that yf he fle the yron weapens, he shal be shott with the stele bow - Coverdale. That is, he shall most certainly perish: all kinds of deaths await him.

JOB 20: 25 He draws it out, and it comes out of his body. Yes, the glittering point comes out of his liver. Terrors are on him.

Verse 25

It is drawn, and cometh out - This refers to archery: The arrow is drawn out of the sheaf or quiver, and discharged from the bow against its mark, and pierces the vitals, and passes through the body. So Coverdale - The arowe shal be taken forth, and go out at his backe.

JOB 20: 26 All darkness is laid up for his treasures. An unfanned fire shall devour him. It shall consume that which is left in his tent.

Verse 26

A fire not blown shall consume him - As Zophar is here showing that the wicked cannot escape from the Divine judgments; so he points out the different instruments which God employs for their destruction. The wrath of God - any secret or supernatural curse. The iron weapon - the spear or such like. The bow, and its swift-flying arrow.

Darkness - deep horror and perplexity. A fire not blown - a supernatural fire; lightning: such as fell on Korah, and his company, to whose destruction there is probably here an allusion: hence the words, It shall go ill with him who is left in his tabernacle. "And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment. Get ye up from about the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. Depart from the tents of these wicked men. There came out a fire from the Lord and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense;" Num 16:20, etc.

JOB 20: 27 The heavens shall reveal his iniquity. The earth shall rise up against him.

Verse 27

The heaven shall reveal his iniquity; and the earth shall rise up against him - Another allusion, if I mistake not, to the destruction of Korah and his company. The heaven revealed their iniquity; God declared out of heaven his judgment of their rebellion. "And the glory of the Lord appeared unto all the congregation;" Num 16:20, etc. And then the earth rose up against them. "The ground clave asunder that was under them, and the earth opened her mouth and swallowed them up; and they went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them;" Num 16:31-33.

JOB 20: 28 The increase of his house shall depart. They shall rush away in the day of his wrath.

Verse 28

The increase of his house shall depart, and his goods shall flow away in the day of his wrath - A farther allusion to the punishment of the rebellious company of Korah, who not only perished themselves, but their houses also, and their goods. Num 16:32. These examples were all in point, on the ground assumed by Zophar; and such well-attested facts would not be passed over by him, had he known the record of them; and that he did know it, alludes to it, and quotes the very circumstances, is more than probable.

JOB 20: 29 This is the portion of a wicked man from God, the heritage appointed to him by God."

Verse 29

This is the portion - As God has dealt with the murmuring Israelites, and with the rebellious sons of Korah, so will he deal with those who murmur against the dispensations of his providence, and rebel against his authority. Instead of an earthly portion, and an ecclesiastical heritage, such as Korah, Dathan, and Abiram sought; they shall have fire from God to scorch them, and the earth to swallow them up. Dr. Stock, bishop of Killala, who has noticed the allusion to the quails, and for which he has been most unmeritedly ridiculed, gives us the following note on the passage: - "Here I apprehend is a fresh example of the known usage of Hebrew poets, in adorning their compositions by allusions to facts in the history of their own people. It has escaped all the interpreters; and it is the more important, because it fixes the date of this poem, so far as to prove its having been composed subsequently to the transgression of Israel, at Kibroth Hattaavah, recorded in Num 11:33, Num 11:34. Because the wicked acknowledges not the quail, that is, the meat with which God has filled his stomach; but, like the ungrateful Israelites, crammed, and blasphemed his feeder, as Milton finely expresses it, he shall experience the same punishment with them, and be cut off in the midst of his enjoyment, as Moses tells us the people were who lusted." If I mistake not, I have added considerable strength to the prelate's reasoning, by showing that there is a reference also to the history of the manna, and to that which details the rebellion of Korah and his company; and if so, (and they may dispute who please), it is a proof that the Book of Job is not so old as, much less older than, the Pentateuch, as some have endeavored to prove, but with no evidence of success, at least to my mind: a point which never has been, and I am certain never can be, proved; which has multitudes of presumptions against it, and not one clear incontestable fact for it. Mr. Good has done more in this case than any of his predecessors, and yet Mr. Good has failed; no wonder then that others, unmerciful criticisers of the bishop of Killala, have failed also, who had not a tenth part of Mr. Good's learning, nor one-hundredth part of his critical acumen. It is, however, strange that men cannot suffer others to differ from them on a subject of confessed difficulty and comparatively little importance, without raising up the cry of heresy against them, and treating them with superciliousness and contempt! These should know, if they are clergymen, whether dignified or not, that such conduct ill becomes the sacerdotal character; and that ante barbam docet senes cannot be always spoken to the teacher's advantage. As a good story is not the worse for being twice told, the following lines from a clergyman, who, for his humility and piety, was as much an honor to his vocation as he was to human nature, may not be amiss, in point of advice to all Warburtonian spirits: - "Be calm in arguing, for fierceness makes Error a fault, and truth discourtesy. Why should I feel another man's mistakes More than his sickness or his poverty?"

In love I should: but anger is not love

Nor wisdom neither; therefore, gently move. Calmness is great advantage: he that lets Another chafe, may warm him at his fire, Mark all his wanderings, and enjoy his frets; As cunning fencers suffer heat to tire.

Truth dwells not in the clouds: the bow that's there

Doth often aim at, never hit, the sphere."

Hebert.

Dr. Stock's work on the Book of Job will stand honourably on the same shelf with the best on this difficult subject.