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JOB 29: 1 Job again took up his parable, and said,

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Job laments his present condition, and gives an affecting account of his former prosperity, having property in abundance, being surrounded by a numerous family, and enjoying every mark of the approbation of God, Job 29:1-6. Speaks of the respect he had from the young, Job 29:7, Job 29:8; and from the nobles, Job 29:9, Job 29:10. Details his conduct as a magistrate and judge in supporting the poor, and repressing the wicked, Job 29:11-17; his confidence, general prosperity, and respect, Job 29:18-25.

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JOB 29: 2 "Oh that I were as in the months of old, as in the days when God watched over me;

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Verse 2

O that I were as in months past - Job seems here to make an apology for his complaints, by taking a view of his former prosperity, which was very great, but was now entirely at an end. He shows that it was not removed because of any bad use he had made of it; and describes how he behaved himself before God and man, and how much, for justice, benevolence, and mercy, he was esteemed and honored by the wise and good.

Preserved me - Kept, guarded, and watched over me.

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JOB 29: 3 when his lamp shone on my head, and by his light I walked through darkness,

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Verse 3

When his candle shined upon my head - Alluding most probably to the custom of illuminating festival or assembly rooms by lamps pendant from the ceiling. These shone literally on the heads of the guests.

By his light I walked through darkness - His light - prosperity and peace - continued to illuminate my way. If adversity came, I had always the light of God to direct me. Almost all the nations of the world have represented their great men as having a nimbus or Divine glory about their heads, which not only signified the honor they had, but was also an emblem of the inspiration of the Almighty.

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JOB 29: 4 as I was in the ripeness of my days, when the friendship of God was in my tent,

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Verse 4

The days of my youth - The original word rather means in the days of my winter, חרפי charpi, from חרף charaph, "to strip or make bare." Mr. Harmer supposes the rainy season is intended, when the fields, etc., parched up by long drought, are revived by the plentiful showers. Mr. Good thinks the

word as found in the Arabic, which means top or summit, and which he translates perfection, is that which should be preferred. Others think the autumnal state is meant, when he was loaded with prosperity, as the trees are with ripe fruit.

The secret of God was upon my tabernacle - בסוד אלוה *besod Eloah*, "the secret assembly of God," meaning probably the same thing that is spoken of in the beginning of this book, the sons of God, the devout people, presenting themselves before God. It is not unlikely that such a secret assembly of God Job had in his own house; where he tells us, in the next verse, "The Almighty was with him, and his children were about him." Mr. Good translates differently: When God fortified my tent over me; supposing that the Hebrew סוד *sod* is the Arabic *sud*, "a barrier or fortification." Either will make a good sense.

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JOB 29: 5 when the Almighty was yet with me, and my children were around me,

JOB 29: 6 when my steps were washed with butter, and the rock poured out streams of oil for me,

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#### Verse 6

Washed my steps with butter - See the note on Job 20:17.

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JOB 29: 7 when I went out to the city gate, when I prepared my seat in the street.

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#### Verse 7

When I went out to the gate - Courts of justice were held at the gates or entrances of the cities of the East; and Job, being an emir, was supreme magistrate: and here he speaks of his going to the gate to administer justice.

I prepared my seat in the street - I administered judgment openly, in the most public manner, and none could say that I, in any case, perverted justice. Mr. Good translates: - "As I went forth the city rejoiced at me, as I took my seat abroad."

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JOB 29: 8 The young men saw me and hid themselves. The aged rose up and stood.

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#### Verse 8

The young men saw me, and hid themselves - From all classes of persons I had the most marked respect. The Young, through modesty and bashfulness, shrunk back, and were afraid to meet the eye of their prince; and the Aged rose from their seats when I entered the place of judgment. These were the elders of the people, who also sat with the judge, and assisted in all legal cases.

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JOB 29: 9 The princes refrained from talking, and laid their hand on their mouth.

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 Verse 9

The princes refrained talking - They never ventured an opinion in opposition to mine; so fully were they persuaded of the justice and integrity of my decision.

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JOB 29: 10 The voice of the nobles was hushed, and their tongue stuck to the roof of their mouth.

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## Verse 10

The nobles held their peace - Princes שרִים sarim, and Nobles, נגידִים negidim, must have been two different classes of the great men of Idumea. שר sar, Prince, director, or ruler, was probably the head of a township, or what we would call a magistrate of a particular district. נגיד negid, a Noble, or one of those who had the privilege of standing before, or in the presence of, the chief ruler. The participle נגד neged is frequently used to signify before, in the presence of, publicly, openly. And on this account, it is most likely that the noun means one of those nobles or counsellors who were always admitted to the royal presence. Mr. Good thinks that renowned speakers or eminent orators are meant: and others have embraced the same opinion. Job here intimates that his judgment was so sound, his decisions so accredited, and his reasoning power so great, that every person paid him the utmost deference.

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JOB 29: 11 For when the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it commended me:

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## Verse 11

When the ear heard me - This and the six following verses present us with a fine exhibition of a man full of benevolence and charity, acting up to the highest dictates of those principles, and rendering the miserable of all descriptions happy, by the constant exercise of his unconfined philanthropy.

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JOB 29: 12 Because I delivered the poor who cried, and the fatherless also, who had no one to help him,

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## Verse 12

Because I delivered the poor that cried - This appears to be intended as a refutation of the charges produced by Eliphaz, Job 22:5-10, to confute which Job appeals to facts, and to public testimony.

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JOB 29: 13 the blessing of him who was ready to perish came on me, and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy.

JOB 29: 14 I put on righteousness, and it clothed me. My justice was as a robe and a diadem.

JOB 29: 15 I was eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame.

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Verse 15

I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame - Alluding probably to the difficulty of travelling in the Arabian deserts. I was eyes to the blind - those who did not know the way, I furnished with guides. I was feet to the lame - those who were worn out, and incapable of walking, I set forward on my camels, etc.

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JOB 29: 16 I was a father to the needy. The cause of him who I didn't know, I searched out.

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Verse 16

The cause which I knew not I searched out - When any thing difficult occurred, I did not give it a slight consideration; I examined it to the bottom, whatever pain, time, and trouble it cost me, that I might not pronounce a hasty judgment.

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JOB 29: 17 I broke the jaws of the unrighteous, and plucked the prey out of his teeth.

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Verse 17

I brake the jaws of the wicked - A metaphor taken from hunting. A beast of prey had entered into the fold, and carried off a sheep. "The huntsman comes, assails the wicked beast, breaks his jaws, and delivers the spoil out of his teeth. See the case 1Sam 17:34-37 (note).

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JOB 29: 18 Then I said, 'I shall die in my own house, I shall number my days as the sand.

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Verse 18

I shall die in my nest - As I endeavored to live soberly and temperately, fearing God, and departing from evil, endeavoring to promote the welfare of all around me, it was natural for me to conclude that I should live long, be very prosperous, and see my posterity multiply as the sands on the seashore.

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JOB 29: 19 My root is spread out to the waters. The dew lies all night on my branch.

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Verse 19

My root was spread out by the waters - A metaphor taken from a healthy tree growing beside a rivulet where there is plenty of water; which in consequence flourishes in all seasons; its leaf does not wither, nor its fruit fall off. See Psa 1:3; Jer 17:8.

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JOB 29: 20 My glory is fresh in me. My bow is renewed in my hand.'

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Verse 20

My glory was fresh in me - My vegetative power was great; my glory - my splendid blossom, large and mellow fruit, was always in season, and in every season.

My bow was renewed - I was never without means to accomplish all my wishes. I had prosperity everywhere.

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JOB 29: 21 "Men listened to me, waited, and kept silence for my counsel.

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Verse 21

Unto me men gave ear - The same idea as in Job 29:9-11.

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JOB 29: 22 After my words they didn't speak again. My speech fell on them.

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Verse 22

My speech dropped upon them - It descended as refreshing dew; they were encouraged, comforted, and strengthened by it.

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JOB 29: 23 They waited for me as for the rain. Their mouths drank as with the spring rain.

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Verse 23

They waited for me as for the rain - The idea continued. They longed as much to hear me speak, to receive my counsel and my decisions, as the thirsty land does for refreshing waters.

They opened their mouth wide - A metaphor taken from ground chapped with long drought.

The latter rain - The rain that falls a little before harvest, in order to fill and perfect the grain. The former rain is that which falls about seed-time, or in spring, in order to impregnate and swell the seed, and moisten the earth to produce its nourishment.

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JOB 29: 24 I smiled on them when they had no confidence. They didn't reject the light of my face.

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**Verse 24**

I laughed on them, they believed it not - Similar to that expression in the Gospel, Luk 24:41: And while they believed not for joy, and wondered, he said - . Our version is sufficiently perspicuous, and gives the true sense of the original, only it should be read in the indicative and not in the subjunctive mood: I laughed on them - they believed it not. We have a similar phrase: The news was too good to be true.

The light of my countenance - This evidence of my benevolence and regard. A smile is, metaphorically, the light of the countenance.

They cast not down - They gave me no occasion to change my sentiments or feelings towards them. I could still smile upon them, and they were then worthy of my approbation. Their change he refers to in the beginning of the next chapter.

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JOB 29: 25 I chose out their way, and sat as chief. I lived as a king in the army, as one who comforts the mourners.

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**Verse 25**

I chose out their way, and sat chief - as a king in the army - I cannot see, with some learned men, that our version of the original is wrong. I have not seen it mended, and I am sure I cannot improve it. The whole verse seems to me to point out Job in his civil, military, and domestic life. As supreme magistrate he chose out their way, adjusted their differences, and sat chief, presiding in all their civil assemblies. As captain general he dwelt as a king in the midst of his troops, preserving order and discipline, and seeing that his fellow soldiers were provided with requisites for their warfare, and the necessaries of life. As a man he did not think himself superior to the meanest offices in domestic life, to relieve or support his fellow creatures; he went about comforting the mourners - visiting the sick and afflicted, and ministering to their wants, and seeing that the wounded were properly attended. Noble Job! Look at him, ye nobles of the earth, ye lieutenants of counties, ye generals of armies, and ye lords of provinces. Look at Job! Imitate his active benevolence, and be healthy and happy. Be as guardian angels in your particular districts, blessing all by your example and your bounty. Send your hunting horses to the plough, your game cocks to the dunghill; and at last live like men and Christians.