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JOB 35: 1 Moreover Elihu answered,

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Elihu accuses Job of impious speeches, Job 35:1-4. No man can affect God by his iniquity, nor profit him by his righteousness, Job 35:5-8. Many are afflicted and oppressed, but few cry to God for help; and, for want of faith, they continue in affliction, Job 35:9-16.

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JOB 35: 2 "Do you think this to be your right, or do you say, 'My righteousness is more than God's,'

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Verse 2

My righteousness is more than God's? - This would indeed be a blasphemous saying; but Job never said so, neither directly nor constructively: it would be much better to translate the words צדקי מאל tsidki meel, I am righteous Before God. And Job's meaning most certainly was, "Whatever I am in your sight, I know that in the sight of God I am a righteous man;" and he had a right to assume this character, because God himself had given it to him.

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JOB 35: 3 That you ask, 'What advantage will it be to you? What profit shall I have, more than if I had sinned?'

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Verse 3

What advantage will it be unto thee? - As if he had said to God, "My righteousness cannot profit thee, nor do I find that it is of any benefit to myself." Or perhaps Elihu makes here a general assertion, which he afterwards endeavors to exemplify: Thou hast been reasoning how it may profit thee, and thou hast said, "What profit shall I have in righteousness more than in sin?"

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JOB 35: 4 I will answer you, and your companions with you.

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Verse 4

I will answer thee - I will show thee the evil of a sinful way, and the benefit of righteousness; and supply what thy friends have omitted in their discourses with thee.

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JOB 35: 5 Look to the heavens, and see. See the skies, which are higher than you.

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Verse 5

Look unto the heavens - These heavens, and their host, God has created: the bare sight of them is sufficient to show thee that God is infinitely beyond thee in wisdom and excellence.

Behold the clouds - שַׁחַקִּים shechakim, the ethers, (Vulgate, aethera), from שַׁחַק shachak, to contend, fight together: the agitated or conflicting air and light; the strong agitation of these producing both light and heat. Look upon these, consider them deeply, and see and acknowledge the perfections of the Maker.

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JOB 35: 6 If you have sinned, what effect do you have against him? If your transgressions are multiplied, what do you do to him?

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Verse 6

If thou sinnest - God is not benefited by thy righteousness, nor injured by thy iniquity, howsoever multiplied it may be.

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JOB 35: 7 If you are righteous, what do you give him? Or what does he receive from your hand?

JOB 35: 8 Your wickedness may hurt a man as you are, and your righteousness may profit a son of man.

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Verse 8

Thy wickedness may hurt - It is better to translate this literally:

To a man like thyself is thy wickedness:

And to the son of man, thy righteousness:

That is: -

Thou mayest injure thyself and others by thy wickedness,

And thou mayest benefit both by thy righteousness;

But God thou canst neither hurt nor profit.

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JOB 35: 9 "By reason of the multitude of oppressions they cry out. They cry for help by reason of the arm of the mighty.

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Verse 9

By reason of the multitude - Or rather, "From among the multitude" the oppressed clamor, יַזְעִיקוּ yaziku: they shout, יִשׁוּעוּ yeshavveu, because of the mighty. The wicked rich oppress the wicked poor; these cry aloud because of their oppressors; but they have no relief, because they call not upon God.

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JOB 35: 10 But no one says, 'Where is God my Maker, who gives songs in the night,

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Verse 10

Where is God my Maker - They have no just apprehension of his being; they do not consider themselves his creatures, or that he who created them still preserves them, and would make them happy if they would pray unto him.

Who giveth songs in the night - This is variously translated. "Before whom the high angels give praise in the night." - Chaldee. "Who sets the night-watches." - Septuagint. "Gives meditations in the night." - Syriac and Arabic. "And that shyneth upon us that we might prayse him in the night." - Coverdale.

A holy soul has continual communion with God: night and day its happiness is great; and God, from whom it comes, is the continual subject of its songs of praise.

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JOB 35: 11 who teaches us more than the animals of the earth, and makes us wiser than the birds of the sky?'

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Verse 11

Who teacheth us more than the beasts - "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know me, my people do not consider;" Isa 1:3. Beasts, birds, fowls, and in many cases pond-fishes, know and seem thankful to the hand that feeds them; while man, made much more noble than they, gifted with the greatest powers, privileged with the most important benefits, considers not the Lord, nor discerns the operation of his hand. Quadrupeds, reptiles, and fowls, have more gratitude to their masters than man has to his God.

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JOB 35: 12 There they cry, but no one gives answer, because of the pride of evil men.

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Verse 12

There they cry - They bewail their calamities, but sorrow not for the cause of them; they cry against their oppressors, but they call not upon God.

Because of the pride of evil men - Or מִפְּנֵי mippeney, from the face, presence, or influence, of the pride of wicked men. They cry for deliverance from the pride of wicked men; but they are not heard, because they cry not to God.

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JOB 35: 13 Surely God will not hear an empty cry, neither will the Almighty regard it.

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Verse 13

Surely God will not hear vanity - He will not attend to such vain cries; they cry from their oppressions, but they cry not to God.

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JOB 35: 14 How much less when you say you don't see him. The cause is before him, and you wait for him!

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Verse 14

Thou sayest thou shalt not see Him - Several MSS. have "Thou shalt not see me," and the Septuagint, and one other, "Thou shalt not see us," but without the points, תשורנו, the original may be read see Him or see Us, the third person singular, or the first person plural.

Yet judgment is before him - Rest assured that God has not forgotten either to punish or to save; therefore trust in him; choose to be a monument of his mercy, rather than of his justice.

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JOB 35: 15 But now, because he has not visited in his anger, neither does he greatly regard arrogance.

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Verse 15

But - because it is not so - Rather, "But now, because he visiteth not in his anger." This is more literal than the versions generally proposed; and the sense of the place appears to be this: Because vengeance is not speedily executed on an evil work, therefore are the hearts of the children of men set in them to do iniquity. This is, in effect, the charge which Elihu brings against Job.

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JOB 35: 16 Therefore Job opens his mouth with empty talk, and he multiplies words without knowledge."

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Verse 16

Therefore doth Job open his mouth in vain - God will execute vengeance when it may best serve the ends of his justice, providence, and mercy. The delay of judgment is not proof that it shall not be executed; nor is the deferring of mercy any proof that God has forgotten to be gracious.

He multiplieth words without knowledge - However this may apply to Job, it most certainly applies very strongly and generally to the words, not only of Job's three friends, but to those also of Elihu himself. The contest is frequently a strife of words.