
JOB 37: 1 "Yes, at this my heart trembles, and is moved out of its place.

Elihu continues to set forth the wisdom and omnipotence of God, as manifested in the thunder and lightning, Job 37:1-5; in the snows and frosts, Job 37:6-8; in various meteors; and shows the end for which they are sent, Job 37:9-13. Job is exhorted to consider the wondrous works of God in the light, in the clouds, in the winds, in heat and cold, in the formation of the heavens, and in the changes of the atmosphere, Job 37:14-22. The perfections of God, and how he should be revered by his creatures, Job 37:23, Job 37:24.

Verse 1

My heart trembleth - This is what the Septuagint has anticipated; see under Job 36:28 (note). A proper consideration of God's majesty in the thunder and lightning is enough to appall the stoutest heart, confound the wisest mind, and fill all with humility and devotion. This, to the middle of Job 37:5, should be added to the preceding chapter, as it is a continuation of the account of the thunder and lightning given at the conclusion of that chapter. Our present division is as absurd as it is unfortunate.

JOB 37: 2 Hear, oh, hear the noise of his voice, the sound that goes out of his mouth.

Verse 2

Hear attentively - "Hear with hearing." The words seem to intimate that there was actually at that time a violent storm of thunder and lightning, and that the successive peals were now breaking over the house, and the lightning flashing before their eyes. The storm continued till Elihu had finished, and out of that storm the Almighty spoke. See the beginning of the succeeding chapter, Job 38 (note).

The noise of his voice - The sudden clap.

And the sound that goeth out - The peal or continued rattling, pounding, and thumping, to the end of the peal. The whole is represented as the voice of God himself, and the thunder is immediately issuing from his mouth.

JOB 37: 3 He sends it out under the whole sky, and his lightning to the ends of the earth.

Verse 3

He directeth it under the whole heaven - He directeth it (the lightning) under the whole heaven, in the twinkling of an eye from east to west; and its light - the reflection of the flash, not the lightning, unto the ends of the earth, so that a whole hemisphere seems to see it at the same instant.

JOB 37: 4 After it a voice roars. He thunders with the voice of his majesty. He doesn't hold back anything when his voice is heard.

Verse 4

After it a voice roareth - After the flash has been seen, the peal is heard; and this will be more or fewer seconds after the peal, in proportion to the distance of the thunder cloud from the ear. Lightning traverses any space without any perceivable succession of time; nothing seems to be any obstacle to its progress. A multitude of persons taking hands, the first and the last connected with the electric machine, all feel the shock in the same instant; and were there a chain as conductor to go round the globe, the last would feel the shock in the same moment as the first. But as sound depends on the undulations of the air for its propagation, and is known to travel at the rate of only 1142 feet in a second; consequently, if the flash were only 1142 feet from the spectator, it would be seen in one second, or one swing of the pendulum, before the sound could reach the ear, though the clap and the flash take place in the same instant, and if twice this distance, two seconds, and so on. It is of some consequence to know that lightning, at a considerable distance, suppose six or eight seconds of time, is never known to burn, kill or do injury. When the flash and the clap immediately succeed each other, then there is strong ground for apprehension, as the thunder cloud is near. If the thunder cloud be a mile and a half distant, it is, I believe, never known to kill man or beast, or to do any damage to buildings, either by throwing them down or burning them. Now its distance may be easily known by means of a pendulum clock, or watch that has seconds. When the flash is seen, count the seconds till the clap is heard. Then compute: If only one second is counted, then the thunder cloud is within 1142 feet, or about 380 yards; if two seconds, then its distance is 2284 feet, or 761 yards; if three seconds, then 3426 feet, or 1142 yards; if four seconds, then the cloud is distant 4568 feet, or 1522 yards; if five seconds, then the distance is 5710 feet, or 1903 yards; if six seconds, then the distance is 6852 feet, or 2284 yards, one mile and nearly one-third; if seven seconds, then the distance of the cloud is 7994 feet, or 2665 yards, or one mile and a half, and 25 yards. Beyond this distance lightning has not been known to do any damage, the fluid being too much diffused, and partially absorbed, in its passage over electric bodies, i.e., those which are not fully impregnated by the electric matter, and which receive their full charge when they come within the electric attraction of the lightning. For more on the rain produced by thunder storms, see on Job 38:25 (note). This scale may be carried on at pleasure, by adding to the last sum for every second 1142 feet, and reducing to yards and miles as above, allowing 1760 yards to one mile.

He thundereth with the voice of his excellency - גאון geono, of his majesty: nor is there a sound in nature more descriptive of, or more becoming, the majesty of God, than that of Thunder. We hear the breeze in its rustling, the rain in its pattering, the hail in its rattling, the wind in its hollow howlings, the cataract in its dash, the bull in his bellowing, the lion in his roar; but we hear God, the Almighty, the Omnipresent, in the continuous peal of Thunder! This sound, and this sound only, becomes the majesty of Jehovah.

And he will not stay them - ולא יעקבם ולא יעקבם, and he hath not limited or circumscribed them. His lightnings light the world; literally, the whole world. The electric fluid is diffused through all nature, and everywhere art can exhibit it to view. To his thunder and lightning, therefore, he has assigned no limits. And when his voice soundeth, when the lightning goes forth, who shall assign its limits, and who can stop its progress? It is, like God, Irresistible.

JOB 37: 5 God thunders marvellously with his voice. He does great things, which we can't comprehend.

Verse 5

God thundereth marvellously with his voice - This is the conclusion of Elihu's description of the lightning and thunder: and here only should chapter 36 have ended. He began, Job 36:29, with the noise of God's tabernacle; and he ends here with the marvellous thundering of Jehovah. Probably the writer of the book of Job had seen the description of a similar thunder storm as given by the psalmist, Psa 77:16-19: - Psa 77:16 The waters saw thee, O God!The waters saw thee, and were afraid.Yea, the deeps were affrighted! Psa 77:17 The clouds poured out water;The ethers sent forth a sound;Yea, thine arrows went abroad. Psa 77:18 The voice of thy thunder was through the expanse:The lightnings illumined the globe;The earth trembled and shook! Psa 77:19 Thy way is in the sea,And thy paths on many waters;But thy footsteps are not known.

Great things doeth he - This is the beginning of a new paragraph; and relates particularly to the phenomena which are afterwards mentioned. All of them wondrous things; and, in many respects, to us incomprehensible.

JOB 37: 6 For he says to the snow, 'Fall on the earth;' likewise to the shower of rain, and to the showers of his mighty rain.

Verse 6

For he saith to the snow, Be thou on the earth - Snow is generally defined, "A well-known meteor, formed by the freezing of the vapours in the atmosphere." We may consider the formation of snow thus: - A cloud of vapours being condensed into drops, these drops, becoming too heavy to be suspended in the atmosphere, descend; and, meeting with a cold region of the air, they are frozen, each drop shooting into several points. These still continuing their descent, and meeting with some intermitting gales of a warmer air, are a little thawed, blunted, and again, by falling into colder air, frozen into clusters, or so entangled with each other as to fall down in what we call flakes.

Snow differs from hail and hoar-frost in being crystallized: this appears on examining a flake of snow with a magnifying glass; when the whole of it will appear to be composed of fine spicula or points diverging like rays from a center. I have often observed the particles of snow to be of a regular figure, for the most part beautiful stars of six points as clear and transparent as ice. On each of these points are other collateral points, set at the same angles as the main points themselves, though some are irregular, the points broken, and some are formed of the fragments of other regular stars. I have observed snow to fall sometimes entirely in the form of separate regular six-pointed stars, without either clusters or flakes, and each so large as to be the eighth of an inch in diameter.

The lightness of snow is owing to the excess of its surface, when compared with the matter contained under it.

Its whiteness is owing to the small particles into which it is divided: for take ice, opaque almost to blackness, and pound it fine, and it becomes as white as snow.

The immediate cause of the formation of snow is not well understood: it has been attributed to electricity; and hail is supposed to owe its more compact form to a more intense electricity, which unites the particles of hail more closely than the moderate electricity does those of snow. But rain, snow, hail, frost, ice, etc., have all one common origin; they are formed out of the vapours which have been exhaled by heat from the surface of the waters.

Snow, in northern countries, is an especial blessing of Providence; for, by covering the earth, it prevents corn and other vegetables from being destroyed by the intense cold of the air in the winter months; and especially preserves them from cold piercing winds. It is not a fact that it possesses in itself any fertilizing quality, such as nitrous salts, according to vulgar opinion: its whole use is covering the vegetables from intense cold, and thus preventing the natural heat of the earth from escaping, so that the intense cold cannot freeze the juices in the tender tubes of vegetables, which would rupture those tubes, and so destroy the plant.

Mr. Good alters the punctuation of this verse, and translates thus: -

Behold, he saith to the snow, Be!

On earth then falleth it.

To the rain, - and it falleth:

The rains of his might.

By the small rain, we may understand drizzling showers: by the rain of his strength, sudden thunder storms, when the rain descends in torrents: or violent rain from dissipating water-spouts.

JOB 37: 7 He seals up the hand of every man, that all men whom he has made may know it.

Verse 7

He sealet up the hand of every man - After all that has been said, and much of it most learnedly, on this verse, I think that the act of freezing is probably intended; that when the earth is bound up by intense frost, the hand, *ṭ' yad*, labor, of every man is sealed up; he can do no more labor in the field, till the south wind blow, by which a thaw takes place. While the earth is in this state of rigidity, the beasts go into their dens, and remain in their places, Job 37:8, some of them sleeping out the winter in a state of torpor, and others of them feeding on the stores which they had collected in autumn. However, the passage may mean no more than by the severity of the rains beasts are drawn to their covers; and man is obliged to intermit all his labors. The mighty rains are past. Who would have thought that on this verse, as its Scriptural foundation, the doctrine of chiromancy is built! God has so marked the hand of every man by the lines thereon exhibited, that they tell all the good or bad fortune they shall have during life; and he has done this that all men, by a judicious examination of their hands, may know his work! On this John Taisnier, a famous mathematician, lawyer, musician, and poet laureate of Cologne, has written a large folio volume, with more hands in it than fell to the lot of Briareus: - printed at Cologne, 1683.

JOB 37: 8 Then the animals take cover, and remain in their dens.

JOB 37: 9 Out of its room comes the storm, and cold out of the north.

Verse 9

Out of the south cometh the whirlwind - See the note on Job 9:9. What is rendered south here, is there rendered chambers. Mr. Good translates here, the utmost zone. The Chaldee: - "From the supreme chamber the commotion shall come; and from the cataracts of Arcturus the cold." What the whirlwind, הַסּוּפָה *suphah*, is, we know not. It might have been a wind peculiar to that district; and it is very possible that it was a scorching wind, something like the simoom.

JOB 37: 10 By the breath of God, ice is given, and the breadth of the waters is frozen.

Verse 10

By the breath of God frost is given - The freezing of water, though it is generally allowed to be the effect of cold, and has been carefully examined by the most eminent philosophers, is still involved in much mystery; and is a very proper subject to be produced among the great things which God doeth, and which we cannot comprehend, Job 37:5. Water, when frozen, becomes solid, and increases considerably in bulk. The expansive power in freezing is so great, that, if water be confined in a gun-barrel, it will split the solid metal throughout its whole length. Bombshells have been filled with water, and plugged tight, and exposed to cold air, when they have been rent, though the shell has been nearly two inches thick! Attempts have been made to account for this; but they have not, as yet, been generally successful. The breath of God freezes the waters; and that breath thaws them. It is the work of Omnipotence, and there, for the present, we must leave it.

The breadth of the waters is straitened - This has been variously translated; מוּצָק *mutsak*, which we here render straitened, we translate Job 37:18 melted. Mr. Good thinks that the idea of a mirror is implied, or something molten; and on this ground it may be descriptive of the state of water formed into ice. He therefore translates: -

By the blast of God the frost congealeth,

And the expanse of the waters into a mirror.

I have only to observe, that in the act of freezing wind or air is necessary; for it has been observed that water which lay low in ponds did not freeze till some slight current of air fell on and ruffled the surface, when it instantly shot into ice.

JOB 37: 11 Yes, he loads the thick cloud with moisture. He spreads abroad the cloud of his lightning.

Verse 11

By watering he wearieth the thick cloud - Perhaps it would be better to say, The brightness בְּרִי *beri*, dissipates the cloud; or, if we follow our version, By watering the earth he wearieth, wearieth out or emptieth, the thick cloud - causes it to pour down all its contents upon the earth, that they may

cause it to bring forth and bud. The Vulgate understood it differently: *Frumentum desiderat nubes, et nubes spargunt lumen suum.* "The grain desireth the clouds; and the clouds scatter abroad their light."

JOB 37: 12 It is turned around by his guidance, that they may do whatever he commands them on the surface of the habitable world,

Verse 12

And it is turned round about by his counsels - The original is difficult: *והוא מסבות מתהפך בתחבולתו*; *vehu mesibboth mithhappech bethachbulothav*; which has been thus paraphrased: And he - the sun, makes revolutions - causes the heavenly bodies to revolve round him, turning round himself - turning round his own axis, by his attachments - his attractive and repulsive influences, by which the heavenly bodies revolve round him, and by which, as if strongly tied to their center, *בחבל* *bechebel*, with a cable or rope, they are projected to their proper distances, and prevented from coming too near, or flying off too far.

That they may do whatsoever he commandeth them - That men may perform his will, availing themselves of the influences of the sun, moon, times, seasons, etc., to cultivate the earth for the sustenance of themselves and their cattle.

Upon the face of the world in the earth - *אל פני תבל ארצה* *al peney thebel aretsah*, over the surface of the habitable world. Perhaps the above exposition may appear to be too far-fetched; and possibly the passage refers only to the revolutions of the seasons, and the operations connected with them.

JOB 37: 13 Whether it is for correction, or for his land, or for loving kindness, that he causes it to come.

Verse 13

He causeth it to come - The Vulgate translates the text thus: *Sive in una tribu, sine in terra sua, sive in quocunque loco misericordiae suae eas jusserit inveniri.* "Whether in one tribe, or whether in his own land, or in whatsoever place of his mercy he has commanded them to come." In the preceding verse it is said that God conducts the clouds according to the orders of his counsels, whithersoever he pleases: and here it is added that, when he designs to heap favors upon any land, he commands the clouds to go thither, and pour out on it their fertilizing showers. See Calmet. The Vulgate certainly gives a good sense, and our common version is also clear and intelligible; but there are doubts whether the Hebrew will bear this meaning. Here it is stated that God sends the rain either for correction, *לשבת* *leshebet*, which signifies rod, staff, tribe, and is here taken as the symbol of correction, he sends rain sometimes as a judgment, inundating certain lands, and sweeping away their produce by irresistible floods: or for his land, *לארצו* *leartso*, his own land, Palestine, the place of his favored people: or for mercy, *לחסד* *lechosed*; when a particular district has been devoured by locusts, or cursed with drought, God, in his mercy, sends fertilizing rains to such places to restore the ears which the caterpillars have eaten, and to make the desert blossom like the garden of the Lord. Some think that Job refers to the curse brought upon the old world by the waters of the deluge. Now

although God has promised that there shall no more be a flood of waters to destroy the whole earth; yet we know he can, very consistently with his promise, inundate any particular district; or, by a superabundance of rain, render the toil of the husbandman in any place vain. Therefore, still his rain may come for judgment, for mercy, or for the especial help of his people or Church.

JOB 37: 14 "Listen to this, Job. Stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God.

Verse 14

Hearken unto this - Hear what I say on the part of God. Stand still - Enter into deep contemplation on the subject.

And consider - Weigh every thing; examine separately and collectively; and draw right conclusions from the whole.

The wondrous works of God - Endless in their variety; stupendous in their structure; complicated in their parts; indescribable in their relations and connections; and incomprehensible in the mode of their formation, in the cohesion of their parts, and in the ends of their creation.

JOB 37: 15 Do you know how God controls them, and causes the lightning of his cloud to shine?

Verse 15

Dost thou know when God disposed them - Dost thou know the laws by which they are governed; and the causes which produce such and such phenomena?

And caused the light of his cloud to shine? - Almost every critic of note understands this of the rainbow, which God gave as a sign that the earth should no more be destroyed by water. See Gen 9:13 (note), and the note there.

JOB 37: 16 Do you know the workings of the clouds, the wondrous works of him who is perfect in knowledge?

Verse 16

Dost thou know the balancings of the clouds - How are the clouds suspended in the atmosphere? Art thou so well acquainted with the nature of evaporation, and the gravity of the air at different heights, to support different weights of aqueous vapor, so as to keep them floating for a certain portion of time, and then let them down to water the earth; dost thou know these things so as to determine the laws by which they are regulated?

Wondrous works of him which is perfect in knowledge - This is a paraphrase. Mr. Good's translation is much better: - "Wonders, perfections of wisdom!"

JOB 37: 17 You whose clothing is warm, when the earth is still by reason of the south wind?

Verse 17

How thy garments are warm - What are warmth and cold? How difficult this question! Is heat incontestably a substance, and is cold none? I am afraid we are in the dark on both these subjects. The existence of caloric, as a substance, is supposed to be demonstrated. Much, satisfactorily, has been said on this subject; but is it yet beyond doubt? I fear not. But supposing this question to be set at rest, is it demonstrated that cold is only a quality, the mere absence of heat? If it be demonstrated that there is such a substance as caloric, is it equally certain that there is no such substance as frigorific? But how do our garments keep us warm? By preventing the too great dissipation of the natural heat. And why is it that certain substances, worked into clothing, keep us warmer than others? Because they are bad conductors of caloric. Some substances conduct off the caloric or natural heat from the body; others do not conduct it at all, or imperfectly; hence those keep us warmest which, being bad conductors of caloric, do not permit the natural heat to be thrown off. In these things we know but little, after endless cares, anxieties, and experiments!

But is the question yet satisfactorily answered, why the north wind brings cold, and the south wind heat? If it be so to my readers, it is not so to me; yet I know the reasons which are alleged.

JOB 37: 18 Can you, with him, spread out the sky, which is strong as a cast metal mirror?

Verse 18

Hast thou with him spread out the sky - Wert thou with him when he made the expanse; fitted the weight to the winds; proportioned the aqueous to the terrene surface of the globe; the solar attraction to the quantum of vapours necessary; to be stored up in the clouds, in order to be occasionally deposited in fertilizing showers upon the earth? and then dost thou know how gravity and elasticity should be such essential properties of atmospheric air, that without them and their due proportions, we should neither have animal nor vegetable life?

Strong - as a molten looking-glass? - Like a molten mirror. The whole concave of heaven, in a clear day or brilliant night, being like a mass of polished metal, reflecting or transmitting innumerable images.

JOB 37: 19 Teach us what we shall tell him, for we can't make our case by reason of darkness.

Verse 19

Teach us what we shall say unto him? - Thou pretendest to be so very wise, and to know every thing about God, pray make us as wise as thyself, that we may be able to approach with thy boldness the Sovereign of the world; and maintain our cause with thy confidence before him. As for our parts, we are ignorant; and, on all these subjects, are enveloped with darkness. Mr. Good translates: - "Teach us how we may address him,

When arrayed in robes of darkness."

It is a strong and biting irony, however we take it.

JOB 37: 20 Shall it be told him that I would speak? Or should a man wish that he were swallowed up?

Verse 20

Shall it be told him that I speak? - Shall I dare to whisper even before God? And suppose any one were to accuse me before him for what I have spoken of him, though that has been well intended, how should I be able to stand in his presence? I should be swallowed up in consternation, and consumed with the splendor of his majesty. But in what state art thou? What hast thou been doing? Thou hast arraigned God for his government of the world; thou hast found fault with the dispensations of his providence; thou hast even charged him with cruelty! What will become of Thee?

JOB 37: 21 Now men don't see the light which is bright in the skies, but the wind passes, and clears them.

Verse 21

And now men see not the bright light - Mr. Good gives the sense clearer: - "Even now we cannot look at the light

When it is resplendent in the heavens.

And a wind from the north hath passed along and cleared them."

Elihu seems to refer to the insufferable brightness of the sun. Can any man look at the sun shining in his strength, when a clear and strong wind has purged the sky from clouds and vapours? Much less can any gaze on the majesty of God. Every creature must sink before him. What execrably dangerous folly in man to attempt to arraign His conduct!

JOB 37: 22 Out of the north comes golden splendour. With God is awesome majesty.

Verse 22

Fair weather cometh out of the north - Is this any version of the original מצפון זהב יאתה mitstsaphon zahab yeetheh? which is rendered by almost every version, ancient and modern, thus, or to this effect: "From the north cometh gold." Calmet justly remarks, that in the time of Moses, Job, and Solomon, and for a long time after, gold was obtained from Colchis, Armenia, Phasis, and the land of Ophir, which were all north of Judea and Idumea; and are in the Scriptures ordinarily termed the north country. "But what relation can there be between, Gold cometh out of the north, and, With God is terrible majesty?" Answer: Each thing has its properties, and proper characteristics, which

distinguish it; and each country has its advantages. Gold, for instance, comes from the northern countries; so praises offered to the Supreme God should be accompanied with fear and trembling: and as this metal is from the north, and northern countries are the places whence it must be procured; so terrible majesty belongs to God, and in him alone such majesty is eternally resident. As זהב zahob, which we translate gold, (see Job 28:16), comes from a root that signifies to be clear, bright, resplendent, etc.; Mr. Good avails himself of the radical idea, and translates it splendor: - "Splendor itself is with God;

Insufferable majesty."

But he alters the text a little to get this meaning, particularly in the word יאתה yeetheh, which we translate cometh, and which he contends is the pronoun אתה itself; the י yod, as a performative, here being, as he thinks, an interpolation. This makes a very good sense; but none of the ancient versions understood the place thus, and none of the MSS. countenance this very learned critic's emendation.

JOB 37: 23 We can't reach the Almighty. He is exalted in power. In justice and great righteousness, he will not oppress.

Verse 23

Touching the Almighty, we cannot find him out - This is a very abrupt exclamation, and highly descriptive of the state of mind in which Elihu was at this time; full of solemnity, wonder, and astonishment, at his own contemplation of this "great First Cause, least understood." The Almighty! we cannot find him out.

Excellent in power and in judgment - We must not pretend to comprehend his being, the mode of his existence, the wisdom of his counsels, nor the mysteries of his conduct.

He will not afflict - לא יענה la yeanneh, he will not Answer. He will give account of none of his matters to us. We cannot comprehend his motives, nor the ends he has in view.

JOB 37: 24 Therefore men revere him. He doesn't regard any who are wise of heart."

Verse 24

Men do therefore - Therefore men, אנשים anashim, wretched, miserable, ignorant, sinful men, should fear him.

He respecteth not any - No man is valuable in his sight on account of his wisdom; for what is his wisdom when compared with that of the Omniscient? Whatever good is in man, God alone is the author of it. Let him, therefore, that glorieth, glory in the Lord.

Thus ends the speech of Elihu; a speech of a widely different description, on the whole, from that of the three friends of Job who had spoken so largely before him. In the speeches of Eliphaz, Zophar, and Bildad, there is little besides a tissue of borrowed wise sayings, and ancient proverbs and maxims, relative to the nature of God, and his moral government of the world. In the speech of Elihu

every thing appears to be original; he speaks from a deep and comprehensive mind, that had profoundly studied the subjects on which he discoursed. His descriptions of the Divine attributes, and of the wonderful works of God, are correct, splendid, impressive, and inimitable. Elihu, having now come nearly to a close, and knowing that the Almighty would appear and speak for himself, judiciously prepares for and announces his coming by the thunder and lightning of which he has given so terrific and majestic a description in this and the preceding chapter. The evidences of the Divine presence throng on his eyes and mind; the incomprehensible glory and excellency of God confound all his powers of reasoning and description; he cannot arrange his words by reason of darkness; and he concludes with stating, that to poor weak man God must for ever be incomprehensible, and to him a subject of deep religious fear and reverence. Just then the terrible majesty of the Lord appears! Elihu is silent! The rushing mighty wind, for which the description of the thunder and lightning had prepared poor, confounded, astonished Job, proclaims the presence of Jehovah: and out of this whirlwind God answers for and proclaims himself! Reader, canst thou not conceive something of what these men felt? Art thou not astonished, perplexed, confounded, in reading over these descriptions of the thunder of God's power? Prepare, then, to hear the voice of God himself out of this whirlwind.