

CHAPTER 3

INTRODUCTION TO JOB 3

In this chapter we have an account of Job's cursing the day of his birth, and the night of his conception; (^{<KRB>}Job 3:1-3); first the day, to which he wishes the most extreme darkness, (^{<KRB>}Job 3:4,5); then the night, to which he wishes the same and that it might be destitute of all joy, and be cursed by others as well as by himself, (^{<KRB>}Job 3:6-9); The reasons follow, because it did not prevent his coming into the world, and because he died not on it, (^{<KRB>}Job 3:10-12); which would, as he judged, have been an happiness to him; and this he illustrates by the still and quiet state of the dead, the company they are with, and their freedom from all trouble, oppression, and bondage, (^{<KRB>}Job 3:13-19); but however, since it was otherwise with him, he desires his life might not be prolonged, and expostulates about the continuance of it, (^{<KRB>}Job 3:20-23); and this by reason of his present troubles, which were many and great, and came upon him as he feared they would, and which had made him uneasy in his prosperity, (^{<KRB>}Job 3:24-26).

Ver. 1. *After this opened Job his mouth,* etc.] order to speak, and began to speak of his troubles and afflictions, and the sense he had of them; for though, this phrase may sometimes signify to speak aloud, clearly and distinctly, and with great freedom and boldness, yet here it seems to design no more than beginning to speak, or breaking silence after it had been long kept: he spake after his first trial and blessed the name of the Lord, and upon his second, and reprov'd his wife for her foolish speaking; but upon the visit of his three friends, and during the space of seven days, a profound silence was kept by him and them; and when he perceived that they chose not to speak to him, and perhaps his distemper also decreased, and his pain somewhat abated, he broke out into the following expressions:

and cursed his day: he did not curse his God, as Satan said he would, and his wife advised him to: nor did he curse his fellow creatures, or his friends, as wicked men in passion are apt to do, nor did he curse himself, as profane persons often do, when any evil befalls them; but he cursed his day; not the day on which his troubles came upon him, for there were more

than one, and they were still continued, but the day of his birth, as appears from (~~188B~~ Job 3:3); and so the Syriac and Arabic versions add here, “in which he was born”; and what is meant by cursing it may be learnt from his own words in the following verses, the substance of which is, that he wished either it had never been, or he had never been born; but since that was impossible, that it might be forgotten, and never observed or had in esteem, but be buried oblivion and obscurity, and be branded with a black mark, as an unhappy day, for ever: the word ^{f92} signifies, he made light of it, and spoke slightly and contemptibly of it; he disesteemed it, yea, detested it, and could not bear to think of it, and desired that it might be disrespected by God and men; so that there is no need of such questions, whether it is in the power of man to curse? and whether it is lawful to curse the creature? and whether a day is capable of a curse? The frame of mind in which Job was when he uttered these words is differently represented; some of the Jewish writers will have it that he denied the providence of God, and thought that all things depended upon the stars, or planets which rule on the day a man is born, and therefore cursed his stars; whereas nothing is more evident than that Job ascribes all that befell him to the purpose and providence of God, (~~1823H~~ Job 23:14); some say he was in the utmost despair, and had no hope of eternal life and salvation, but the contrary to this is clear from (~~1813I5~~ Job 13:15,16,18 19:25-27); and many think he had lost all patience, for which he was so famous; but if he had, he would not have been so highly spoken of as he is in (~~1816I~~ James 5:11); it is true indeed there may be a mixture of weakness with respect to the exercise of that grace at this time, and which may appear in some after expressions of his; yet were it not for these and the like, as we could not have such an idea of his sorrows and afflictions, and of that quick sense and perception he had of them, so neither of his exceeding great patience in enduring them as he did; and, besides, what impatience he was guilty of was not only graciously forgiven, but he through the grace of God was enabled to conquer; and patience had its perfect work in him, and he persevered therein to the end; though after all he is not to be excused of weakness and infirmity, since he is blamed not only by Elihu, but by the Lord himself; yea, Job himself owned his sin and folly, and repented of it, (~~1810B~~ Job 40:4,5 42:6).

Ver. 2. *And Job spake, and said.*] Or “answered and said” ^{f93}, though not a word was spoken to him by his friends; he answered to his own calamity, and to their silence, as Schmidt observes; and this word is sometimes used

when nothing goes before, to which the answer is, as many Jewish writers observe, as in (^{<B27>}Exodus 32:27 ^{<B35>}Deuteronomy 26:5 27:14); Jarchi interprets it, “he cried”, and so some others ^{f94} render it: from henceforwards to (^{<B16>}Job 42:6), this book is written in a poetical style, in Hebrew metre as is thought, which at present is pretty much unknown, even to the Jews themselves; some have been of opinion, that the following discourses between Job and his friends were not originally delivered in metre, but were put into this form by the penman or writer of the book; but of this we cannot be certain; in the Targum in the king of Spain’s Bible it is, “and Job sung and said”.

Ver. 3. *Let the day perish wherein I was born*, etc.] Here begins Job’s form of cursing his day, and which explains what is meant by it; and it may be understood either of the identical day of his birth, and then the sense is, that he wished that had never been, or, in other words, that he had never been born; and though these were impossible, and Job knew it, and therefore such wishes may seem to be in vain, yet Job had a design herein, which was to show the greatness of his afflictions, and the sense he had of them: or else of his birthday, as it returned year after year; and then his meaning is, let it not be kept and observed with any solemnity, with feasting and other expressions of joy, as the birthdays of great personages especially were, and his own very probably had been, since his children’s were, (^{<B10>}Job 1:4); but now he desires it might not be so for the future, but be entirely disregarded; he would have it perish out of his own memory, and out of the memory of others, and even be struck out of the calendar, and not be reckoned with the days of the month and year, (^{<B16>}Job 3:6); both may be intended, both the very day on which he was born, and the yearly return of it:

and the night [in which] it was said, there is a man child conceived; that is, let that night perish also; he wishes it had not been, or he had not been conceived, or for the future be never mentioned, but eternally forgotten: Job goes back to his conception, as being the spring of his sorrows; for this he knew as well as David, that he was shapen in iniquity, and conceived in sin, (see ^{<B14>}Job 14:4); but rather, since the particular night or time of conception is not ordinarily, easily, and exactly known by women themselves, and much less by men; and more especially it could not be told what sex it was, whether male or female that was conceived, and the tidings of it could not be brought by any; it seems better with Aben Ezra to render the word ^{f95}, “there is a man child brought forth”, which used to be

an occasion of joy, (^{<B162>}John 16:21); and so the word is used to bear or bring forth, (^{<B347>}1 Chronicles 4:17); (see ^{<B405>}Jeremiah 20:15); and, according to him, it was a doubt whether Job was born in the day or in the night; but be it which it will, if he was born in the day, he desires it might perish; and if in the night, he wishes the same to that; though the words may be rendered in a beautiful and elegant manner nearer the original, “and the night [which] said, a man child is conceived”^{f96}; representing, by a prosopopoeia, the night as a person conscious of the conception, as an eyewitness of it, and exulting at it, as Schultens observes.

Ver. 4. *Let that day be darkness*, etc.] Not only dark, but darkness itself, extremely dark; and which is to be understood not figuratively of the darkness of affliction and calamity; this Job would not wish for, either for himself, who had enough of that, or for others; but literally of gross natural darkness, that was horrible and dreadful, as some^{f97} render it: this was the reverse of what God said at the creation, “let there be light”, (^{<B003>}Genesis 1:3), and there was, and he called it day; but Job wishes his day might be darkness, as the night; either that it had been always dark, and never become day, or in its return be remarkably dark and gloomy:

let not God regard it, from above; that is, either God who is above, and on high, the High and Holy One, the Most High God, and who is higher than the highest, and so this is a descriptive character of him; or else this respects the place where he is, the highest heaven, where is his throne, and from whence he looks and takes notice of the sons of men, and of all things done below: and this wish must be understood consistent with his omniscience, who sees and knows all persons and things, even what are done in the dark, and in the darkest days; for the darkness and the light are alike to him; and as consistent with his providence, which is continually exercised about persons and things on earth without any intermission, even on every day in the year; and was it to cease one day, hour, or moment, all would be dissolved, and be thrown into the utmost confusion and disorder: but Job means the smiles of his providence, which he wishes might be restrained on this day; that he would not cause his sun in the heavens to shine out upon it, nor send down gentle and refreshing showers of rain on it; in which sense he is said to care for and regard the land of Canaan, (^{<B111>}Deuteronomy 11:11,12); where the same word is used as here; or the sense is, let it be so expunged from the days of the year, the when it is sought for, and if even it should be by God himself, let it not be found; or let him not “seek”^{f98} after it, to do any good upon it:

neither let the light shine upon it; the light of the sun, or the morning light, as the Targum, much less the light at noonday; even not the diurnal light, as Schmidt interprets it, in any part of the day: light is God's creature, and very delightful and desirable; the best things, and the most comfortable enjoyments, whether temporal, spiritual, or eternal, are expressed by it; and, on the other hand, a state of darkness is the most uncomfortable, and therefore the worst and most dismal things and states are signified by it.

Ver. 5. *Let darkness and the shadow of death stain it*, etc.] Let there be such darkness on it as on persons when dying, or in the state of the dead; hence the sorest afflictions, and the state of man in unregeneracy, are compared unto it, (⁴⁹²⁰⁴Psalm 23:4 ²³⁰²Isaiah 9:2); let there be nothing but foul weather, dirt, and darkness in it, which may make it very uncomfortable and undesirable; some render the word, "let darkness and [the] shadow of death redeem it"^{f99}, challenge and claim it as their own, and let light have no share or property in it:

let a cloud dwell upon it; as on Mount Sinai when the law was given; a thick dark cloud, even an assemblage of clouds, so thick and close together, that they seem but one cloud which cover the whole heavens, and obscure them, and hinder the light of the sun from shining on the earth; and this is wished to abide not for an hour or two, but to continue all the day:

let the blackness of the day terrify it; let it be frightful to itself; or rather, let the blackness be such, or the darkness of it such gross darkness, like that as was felt by the Egyptians; that the inhabitants of the earth may be terrified with it, as Moses and the Israelites were at Mount Sinai, at the blackness, tempest, thunders, and lightnings, there seen and heard: as some understand this of black vapours exhaled by the sun, with which the heavens might be filled, so others of sultry weather and scorching heat, which is intolerable: others render the words, "let them terrify it as the bitternesses of the day"^{f100}; either with bitter cursings on it, or through bitter calamities in it; or, "as those [who have] a bitter"^{f101} day", as in the margin of our Bibles, and in others.

Ver. 6. *As [for] that night*, etc.] The night of conception; Job imprecated evils on the day he was born, now on the night he was conceived in, the returns of it:

let darkness seize upon it; let it not only be deprived of the light of the moon and stars, but let an horrible darkness seize upon it, that it may be an uncommon and a terrible one:

let it not be joined unto the days of the year; the solar year, and make one of them; or, “let it not be one among them”^{f102}, let it come into no account, and when it is sought for, let it not appear, but be found wanting; “or let it not joy” or “rejoice among the days of the year”^{f103}, as Jarchi, Aben Ezra, and others interpret it, or be a joyful one, or anything joyful done or enjoyed in it:

let it not come into the number of the months; meaning not the intercalated months, as Sephorno, nor the feasts of the new moon, as others, but let it not serve to make up a month, which consists of so many days and nights, according to the course of the moon; the sense both of this and the former clause is, let it be struck out of the calendar.

Ver. 7. *Lo, let that night be solitary*, etc.] Let there be no company for journeys, or doing any business; no meetings of friends, neighbours, or relations on it, for refreshment, pleasure, and recreation, after the business of the day is over, as is frequently done; let there be no associations of this kind, or any other: in the night it was usual to have feasts on various accounts, and especially on account of marriage; but now let there be none, let there be as profound a silence as if all creatures, men and beasts, were dead, and removed from off the face of the earth, and nothing to be heard and seen on it: or, “let it be barren” or “desolate”^{f104}, so R. Simeon bar Tzemach interprets it, and refers to (²³⁴²¹Isaiah 49:21); that is, let no children be born in it, and so no occasion for any joy on that account, as follows; let it be as barren as a flint^{f105}:

let no joyful voice come therein; which some even carry to the nocturnal singing of saints in private or in public assemblies, and to the songs of angels, those morning stars in heaven; but it seems rather to design natural or civil joy, or singing on civil accounts; as on account of marriage, and particularly on account of the birth of a child, and especially his own birth, and even any expressions of joy on any account; and that there might not be so much as the crowing of a cock heard, as the Targum has it.

Ver. 8. *Let them curse it that curse the day*, etc.] Their own day, either their birthday, or any day on which evil befalls them; and now such as are used to this, Job would have them, while they were cursing their own day,

to throw some curses upon his; or that curse the daylight in general, as adulterers and murderers, who are said to rebel against the light, (see ^{<3913>}Job 24:13,17); and as some Ethiopians, who lived near Arabia, and so known to Job, who supposed there was no God, and used to curse the sun when it rose and set, as various writers relate ^{f106}, called by others ^{f107} Atlantes; or it may design such persons who were hired at funerals, to mourn for the dead, and who, in their doleful ditties and dirges, used to curse the day on which the person was born whom they lamented; or it may be rather the day on which he died; hence it follows:

who are ready to raise up their mourning; who were expert at the business, and who could raise up a howl, as the Irish now do, or make a lamentation for the dead when they pleased; such were the mourning women in (^{<3917>}Jeremiah 9:17,18); and those that were skilful of lamentation, (^{<3916>}Amos 5:16); some render the words, “who are ready to raise up Leviathan” ^{f108}, and interpret it either of the whale, which, when raised up by the fishermen, they are in danger of their vessels being overturned, and their lives lost, and then they curse the day that ever they entered into such service, and exposed themselves to such danger; or of fish in general, and of fishermen cursing and swearing when they are unsuccessful: some understand this of astrologers, magicians, and enchanters, raising spirits, and particularly the devil, who they think is meant by Leviathan; but it seems best with a little alteration from Gussetius, and Schultens after him, to render the words thus,

“let the cursers of the day fix a name upon it; let those that are ready “to anything, call it” the raiser up of Leviathan;”

that is, let such who either of themselves are used to curse days, or are employed by others to do it, brand this night with some mark of infamy; let them ascribe all dreadful calamities and dismal things unto it, as the source and spring of them; which may be signified by Leviathan, that being a creature most formidable and terrible, of which an account is given in the latter part of this book; but many Jewish writers ^{f109} render it “mourning”, as we do.

Ver. 9. *Let the stars of the twilight thereof be dark*, etc.] Either of the morning or evening twilight; both may be meant, rather the latter, because of the following clause; the sense is, let not these appear to adorn the heavens, and to relieve the darkness of the night, and make it more pleasant and delightful, as well as to be useful to travellers and sailors:

let it look for light, but [have] none; that is, either for the light of the moon and stars, to shine in the night till daybreak, or for the light of the sun at the time when it arises; but let it have neither; let the whole time, from sun setting to sunrising, from one twilight to another, be one continued gross and horrible darkness; here, by a strong and beautiful figure, looking is ascribed to the night:

neither let it see the dawning of the day; or, “let it not see the eyelids of the morning”^{f110}, or what we call “peep of day”; here, in very elegant language, the dawn of morning light is expressed, which is like the opening of an eye and its lids, quick and vibrating, when light is let in and perceived; or this may be interpreted of the sun, the eye of the morning and of light, and of its rays, which, when first darted, are like the opening of the eyelids.

Ver. 10. *Because it shut not up the doors of my [mother’s] womb*, etc.] Or “of my belly”^{f111}, or “womb”; which Aben Ezra interprets of the navel, by which the infant receives its food and nourishment before it is born, and which, if closed, he must have died in embryo; but rather it is to be understood of his mother’s womb, called his, because he was conceived and bore in it, and was brought forth from it; and the sense is, that he complains of the night, either that it did not close his mother’s womb, and hinder the conception of him, as Gersom, Sephorno, Bar Tzemach, and others, and is the usual sense of the phrase of closing the womb, and which is commonly ascribed to God, (^{<0217>}Genesis 20:17,18) (^{<0005>}1 Samuel 1:5,6); which Job here attributes to the night, purposely avoiding to make mention of the name of God, that he might not seem to complain of him, or directly point at him; or else the blame laid on that night is, that it did not so shut up the doors of his mother’s womb, that he might not have come out from thence into the world, wishing that had been his grave, and his mother always big with him, as Jarchi, and which sense is favoured by (^{<0217>}Jeremiah 20:17); a wish cruel to his mother, as well as unnatural to himself:

nor hid sorrow from mine eyes; which it would have done, had it done that which is complained of it did not; had it he could not have perceived it experimentally, endured the sorrows and afflictions he did from the Chaldeans and Sabeans, from Satan, his wife, and friends; and had never known the trouble of loss of substance, children, and health, and felt those

pains of body and anguish of mind he did; these are the reasons of his cursing the day of his birth, and the night of his conception.

Ver. 11. *Why died I not from the womb?* etc.] That is, as soon as he came out of it; or rather, as soon as he was in it, or from the time that he was in it; or however, while he was in it, that so he might not have come alive out of it; which sense seems best to agree both with what goes before and follows after; for since his conception in the womb was not hindered, he wishes he had died in it; and so some versions render it to this sense ^{f112}:

[why] did I [not] give up the ghost when I came out of the belly? since he died not in the womb, which was desirable to him, he wishes that the moment he came out of it he had expired, and is displeased because it was not so, (see ^{<2417>}Jeremiah 20:17 ^{<2391>}Hosea 9:11); thus what is the special favour of Providence, to be taken out of the womb alive, and preserved, he wishes not to have enjoyed, (see ^{<2429>}Psalms 22:9).

Ver. 12. *Why did the knees prevent me?* etc.] Not of the mother, as Jarchi, but of the midwife, who received him into her lap, and nourished and cherished him, washed him with water, salted, and swaddled him; or it may be of his father, with whom it was usual to take the child on his knees as soon as born, (see ^{<2433>}Genesis 50:23); which custom obtained among the Greeks and Romans ^{f113}; hence the goddess Levana ^{f114} had her name, causing the father in this way to own his child; his concern is, that he did not fall to the ground as he came out of his mother's womb, and with that fall die; and that he was prevented from falling by the officious knees of the midwife; that he was not suffered to fall, and be left there, without having any of the usual things done to him for the comfort and preservation of life, which was sometimes the case, (^{<2464>}Ezekiel 16:4);

or why the breasts that I should suck? since a miscarrying womb was not given, and death did not seize him immediately upon birth, but all proper care was taken to prevent it, he asks, why was there milk in the breasts of his mother or nurse to suckle and nourish him? why were there not dry breasts, such as would afford no milk, that so he might have been starved? thus he wishes the kindest things in nature and Providence had been withheld from him.

Ver. 13. *For now should I have lain still, and been quiet,* etc.] Signifying, that if the above had been his case, if he had died as soon as born, or quickly after, then he would have been laid in the grave, where he would

have lain as still as on a bed; for such is the grave to dead bodies as a bed is to those that lie down and sleep upon it; a place of ease and quiet, where there is freedom from all care and thought, from all trouble, anxiety, and distress; nay, more so than on a bed, where there is often tossing to and fro, and great disquietude, but none to the body in the grave, that is still and silent, where there is no uneasiness nor disturbance, (see ^{<18713>}Job 17:13 ^{<257D>}Isaiah 57:2);

I should have slept; soundly and quietly, which persons do not always upon their beds; sometimes they cannot sleep at all, and when they do, they are frequently distressed with uneasy thoughts, frightful dreams, and terrifying visions, (^{<18013>}Job 4:13,14 7:14); but death is a sound sleep until the resurrection morn, which Job had knowledge of, and faith in, and so considered the state of the dead in this light; death is often in Scripture expressed by sleeping, (^{<271D>}Daniel 12:2 ^{<18111>}John 11:11 ^{<18518>}1 Corinthians 15:18,20,51); which refers not to the soul, which in a separate state is active and vigorous, and always employed; but to the body, which, as in sleep, so in death, is deprived of the senses, and the exercise of them; on which account there is a great likeness between sleep and death, and out of which a man awakes brisk and cheerful, as the saints will at the time of their resurrection, which will be like an awaking out of sleep:

then had I been at rest; from all toil and labour, from all diseases and pains of body, from all troubles of whatsoever kind, and particularly from those he now laboured under, (see Gill on ^{<18177>}Job 3:17”).

Ver. 14. *With the kings and counsellors of the earth*, etc.] From whom he might descend, he being a person of great distinction and figure; and so, had he died, he would have been buried in the sepulchres of his ancestors, and have lain in great pomp and state: or rather this he says, to observe that death spares none, that neither the power of kings, who have long hands, nor the wisdom of counsellors, who have long heads, can secure them from death; and that after death they are upon a level with others; and even he suggests, that children that die as soon as born, and have made no figure in the world, are equal to them:

which built desolate places for themselves; either that rebuilt houses and cities that had lain in ruins, or built such in desolate places, where there had been none before, or formed colonies in places before uninhabited; and all this to get a name, and to perpetuate it to posterity: or rather sepulchral monuments are meant, such as the lofty pyramids of the Egyptians, and

superb mausoleums of others; which, if not built in desolate places, yet are so themselves, being only the habitations of the dead, and so they are called the desolations of old, (^{<330>}Ezekiel 26:20); and this is the sense of many interpreters ^{f115}; if any man desires, says Vansleb ^{f116}, a prospect and description of such ancient burying places, let him think on a boundless plain, even, and covered with sand, where neither trees, nor grass, nor houses, nor any such thing, is to be seen.

Ver. 15. *Or with princes that had gold*, etc.] A large abundance of it while they lived, but now, being dead, were no longer in the possession of it, but on a level with those that had none; nor could their gold, while they had it, preserve them from death, and now, being dead, it was no longer theirs, nor of any use unto them; these princes, by this description of them, seem to be such who had not the dominion over any particular place or country, but their riches lay in gold and silver, as follows:

who filled their houses with silver; had an abundance of it, either in their coffers, which they hoarded up, or in the furniture of their houses, which were much of it of silver; they had large quantities of silver plate, as well as of money; but these were of no profit in the hour of death, nor could they carry them with them; but in the grave, where they were, those were equal to them, of whom it might have been said, silver and gold they had none.

Ver. 16. *Or as an hidden untimely birth*, etc.] Or “hid, as one born out of time”, as Mr. Broughton reads it; the Septuagint use the same word as the apostle does, when he says the like of himself, (^{<438>}1 Corinthians 15:8); the word has the signification of “falling” ^{f117}, and designs an abortive, which is like to fruit that falls from the tree before it is ripe; and this may be said to be “hidden”, either in the belly, as the Targum, or however from the sight of man, it being not come to any proper shape, and much less perfection; now Job suggests, that if he had not lain with kings, counsellors, and princes, yet at least he should have been as an abortion, and that would have been as well to him: then

I had not been; or should have been nothing, not reckoned anything; should not have been numbered among beings, but accounted as a nonentity, and should have had no subsistence or standing in the world at all:

as infants [which] never saw light; and if not like an untimely birth, which is not come to any perfection, yet should have been like infants, which,

though their mothers have gone their full time with them, and they have all their limbs in perfection and proportion, yet are dead, or stillborn, their eyes have never been opened to see any light; meaning not the light of the law, as the Targum, but the light of the sun, or the light of the world, (see ^{200B}Ecclesiastes 6:3-5); infants used to be buried in the wells or caves of the mummies ^{f118}.

Ver. 17. *There the wicked cease [from] troubling*, etc.] At death, and in the grave; such who have been like the troubled sea, that cannot rest, have always been either devising or doing mischief while living, in the grave can do neither; there is no work nor device there; such who are never easy, and cannot sleep unless they do mischief, when dead have no power to do any, and are quite still and inactive; such who have been troublers of good men, as profane persons by their ungodly lives, false teachers by their pernicious doctrines and blasphemies, cruel persecutors by their hard speeches, bitter calumnies and reproaches, and severe usage; those, when they die themselves, cease from giving further trouble, or when the righteous die, they can disturb them no more; yea, a good man at death is not only no more troubled by wicked men, but no more by his own wicked heart, nor any more by that wicked one Satan; there and then all these cease from giving him any further molestation:

and there the weary be at rest; wicked men, either who here tire and weary themselves with committing sin, to which they are slaves and drudges, and especially with persecuting and troubling the saints, shall rest from such acts of sin and wickedness, of which they will be no more capable; or else good men, who are weary of sin, and long to be rid of it, to whom it is a burden, and under which they groan, and are weary of the troubles and afflictions they meet with in the world; and what with one thing and another are weary of their lives, and desire to depart and be with Christ; these at death and in the grave are at rest, their bodies from toil and labour, and from all painful disorder, and pressing afflictions, and from all the oppressions and vexations of wicked and ungodly men; their souls rest in the arms of Jesus, from sin and all consciousness of it, from the temptations of Satan, from all doubts and fears, and every spiritual enemy, by whom they can be no more annoyed: some render the words, “there rest the labours of strength” ^{f119}: such toils are over that break the strength of men; or “the labours of violence” ^{f120}, which are imposed upon them through violence, by cruel and imperious men; but at death and in the grave

will cease and be no more, even labour of all sorts; (see ^{<6413>}Revelation 14:13).

Ver. 18. [*There the prisoners rest together*, etc.] “Are at ease”, as Mr. Broughton renders the words; such who while they lived were in prison for debt, or were condemned to the galleys, to lead a miserable life; or such who suffered bonds and imprisonment for the sake of religion, at death their chains are knocked off, and they are as much at liberty, and enjoy as much ease, as the dead that never were prisoners; and not only rest together with those who were their fellow prisoners, but with those who never were in prison, yea, with those who cast them into it; for there the prisoners and those that imprisoned them are upon a level, enjoying equal ease and liberty:

they hear not the voice of the oppressor; or “exactor” ^{f121}; neither of their creditors that demanded their debt of them, and threatened them with a prison, or that detained them in it; nor of the jail keeper that gave them hard words as well as stripes; nor of cruel taskmasters, who kept them to hard service in prison, and threatened them severely if they did not perform it, like the taskmasters in Egypt, (^{<6511>}Exodus 5:11,13); but, in the grave, the blustering, terrifying, voice of such, is not heard.

Ver. 19. [*The small and great are there*, etc.] Both as to age, and with respect to bulk and strength of body, and also to estate and dignity; children and men, or those of low and high stature, or in a mean or more exalted state of life, as to riches and honour, these all come to the grave without any difference, and lie there without any distinction ^{f122} “little and great are there all one”; as Mr. Broughton renders the words, (see ^{<6612>}Revelation 20:12);

and the servant [is] free from his master; death dissolves all relations among men, and takes away the power that one has legally over another, as the husband over the wife, who at death is loosed from the law and power of her husband, (^{<6712>}Romans 7:2); and so parents over their children, and masters over their servants; there the master and the servant are together, without any superiority of the one to the other: the consideration of all the above things made death and the state of the dead in the grave appear to Job much more preferable than life in his present circumstances; and therefore, since it had not seized on him sooner, and as soon as he before had wished it had, he desires it might not be long before it came upon him, as in (^{<6812>}Job 3:20-26).

Ver. 20. *Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery,* etc.] That labours under various calamities and afflictions, as Job did, being stripped of his substance, deprived of his children, and now in great pain of body and distress of mind; who, since he died not so soon as he wished he had, expostulates why his life is protracted; for that is what he means by light, as appears from the following clause, even the light of the living, or the light of the world; which though sweet and pleasant to behold to a man in health, yet not to one in pain of body and anguish of mind, as he was, who chose rather to be in the dark and silent grave; this he represents as a gift, as indeed life is, and the gift of God: the words may be rendered, “wherefore does he give light?”^{f123} that is, God, as some^{f124} supply it, who is undoubtedly meant, though not mentioned, through reverence of him, and that he might not seem to quarrel with him; the principle of life is from him, and the continuance and protraction of it, and all the means and mercies by which it is supported; and Job asks the reasons, which he seems to be at a loss for, why it should be continued to a person in such uncomfortable circumstances as he was in; though these, with respect to a good man as he was, are plain and obvious: such are continued in the world under afflictions, both for their own good, and for the glory of God, that their graces may be tried, their sins purged away or prevented, and they made more partakers of divine holiness; and be weaned from this world, and fitted for another, and not be condemned with the world of the ungodly:

and life unto the bitter [in] soul; whose lives are embittered to them by afflictions, comparable to the waters of Marah, and to wormwood and gall, which occasion bitterness of spirit in them, and bitter complaints from them; (see ~~18135~~ Job 13:26 23:16 27:2).

Ver. 21. *Which long for death, but it [cometh] not,* etc.] Who earnestly desire, wistly look out, wish for, and expect it, and with open mouth gape for it, as a hungry man for his food, or as the fish for the bait, or the fishermen for the fish, as some^{f125} observe the word may signify; but it comes not to their wish and expectation, or so soon as they would have it; the reason is, because the fixed time for it is not come, otherwise it will certainly come at God’s appointed time, and often in an hour not thought of; death is not desirable in itself, being a dissolution of nature, or as it is the sanction of the law, or the wages of sin, or a penal evil; and though it is and may be lawfully desired by good men, that they may be free from sin, and be in a better capacity to serve the Lord, and that they may be for ever

with him; yet such desires should be expressed with submission to the divine will, and the appointed time should be patiently waited for, and should not be desired merely to be rid of present afflictions and troubles, which was the case of Job, and of those he here describes; (see ~~6606~~ Revelation 9:6);

and dig for it more than for hid treasures; which are naturally hid in the earth; as gold and silver ore, with other metals and precious stones; or which are of choice concealed there from the plunder of others; the former seems rather to be meant, and in digging for which great pains, diligence, and industry, are used, (see ~~3000~~ Proverbs 2:4,5); and is expressive of the very great importunity and strong desire of men in distressed circumstances after death, seeking diligently and pressing importunately for it; the sin of suicide not being known, or very rare, in that early time, or however was shunned and abhorred even by those that were most weary of their lives: some render it, “who dig for it out off hid treasures”^{f126}; out of the bowels of the earth, and the lowest parts of it, could they but find it there: but the Targum, Jarchi, and others, understand it comparatively, as we do.

Ver. 22. *Which rejoice exceedingly*, etc.] Or, “which joy till they do skip again”, as Mr. Broughton renders it, and to the same purport others^{f127}; are so elated as to skip and dance for joy:

[and] are glad when they can find the grave; which is to be understood either of those who dig in the earth for hid treasure, such as is laid there by men; when they strike and hit upon a grave where they expect to find a booty; it being usual in former times to put much riches into the sepulchres of great personages, as Sanctius on the place observes; so Hyrcanus, opening the sepulchre of David, found in it three thousand talents of silver, as Josephus^{f128} relates: or rather this is said of the miserable and bitter in soul, who long for death, and seek after it; who, when they perceive any symptoms of its near approach, are exceedingly pleased, and rejoice at it, as when they observe the decays of nature, or any disorder and disease upon them which threaten with death; for this cannot be meant of the dead carrying to the grave, who are insensible of it, and of their being put into it.

Ver. 23. *Why is light given to a man whose way is hid*, etc.] Some of the Jewish writers connect this with (~~3000~~ Job 3:22), thus; “who rejoice [and] are glad when they find a grave for a man”, etc. but it should be observed that such are said to rejoice at finding a grave, not for others, but for themselves; the words stand in better connection with (~~3000~~ Job 3:20), from

whence the supplement is taken in our version and others; and so it is a continuation or repetition of the expostulation why light and life, or the light of the living, should be given to persons as before described, and here more largely; and Job himself is principally designed, as is generally thought, whose way, according to him, was hid from the Lord, neglected and not cared for by him but overlooked and slighted, and no regard had to the injuries done him, as the church also complains, (^{<3417>}Isaiah 40:27); or front whom the way of the Lord was hid; his way in the present afflictive dispensations of Providence, the causes and reasons of which he could not understand; not being conscious of any notorious sin committed, indulged, and continued in, that should bring these troubles on him: or the good and right way was hid from him in which he should walk; he was at a loss to know which was that way, since by his afflictions he was ready to conclude that the way he had been walking in was not the right, and all his religion was in vain; and according to this sense he laboured under the same temptation as Asaph did, (^{<4973>}Psalm 73:13,14); or his way of escape out of his present troubles was unknown to him; he saw no way open for him, but shut up on every side: or there was no way for others to come to him, at least they cared not for it; he who had used to have a large levee, some to have his counsel and advice, and to be instructed by him, others to ask relief of him, and many of the highest rank and figure to visit, caress, and compliment him; but now all had forsaken him, his brethren and acquaintance, and his kinsfolk and familiar friends kept at a distance from him, as if they knew not the way to him:

and whom God hath hedged in? not with the hedge of his power, providence, and protection, as before; but with thorns and afflictions, and in such manner as he could not get out, or extricate himself; all avenues and ways of escape being blocked up, (see ^{<3817>}Lamentations 3:7,9 ^{<3816>}Hosea 2:6); though, after all, the words may be considered as a concession, and as descriptive of a man the reverse of himself, and be supplied thus; “indeed light may be given to a man”, a mighty man, as the word ^{f129} signifies, a man strong, hale, and robust; “whose way is hid”, or “covered” ^{f130}; who is hid in the secret of God’s presence, and in the pavilion of his power; who dwells in his secret place, and under the shadow of the Almighty, (^{<4911>}Psalm 31:20 91:1); who is under the shelter of his providence, preserved from diseases of body, and protected from the plunder and depredations of enemies, and enjoys great affluence and prosperity, as his three friends about him did, and whom he may point at:

“and whom God hath hedged in”; as he had formerly set a hedge about him in his providence, though now he had plucked it up; (see ^{<8110>}Job 1:10).

Ver. 24. *For my sighing cometh before I eat*, etc.] Or, “before my bread”, or “food”^{f131}; before he sat down to eat, or had tasted of his food, there were nothing but sighing and sobbing, so that he had no appetite for his food, and could take no delight in it; and, while he was eating, his tears mingled with it, so that these were his meat and his drink continually, and he was fed with the bread and water of affliction; and therefore what were light and life to such a person, who could not have the pleasure of one comfortable meal?

and my roarings are poured out like the waters; he not only wept privately and in secret, and cried more publicly both to God and in the presence of men, but such was the force and weight of his affliction, that he even roared out, and that like a lion; and his afflictions, which were the cause of these roarings, are compared to waters and the pouring of them out; for the noise these waterspouts made, and for the great abundance of them, and for their quick and frequent returns, and long continuance, one wave and billow rolling upon another.

Ver. 25. *For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me*, etc.] Some refer this to his fears about his children, lest they should sin and offend God, and bring down his judgments on them, and now what he feared was come to pass, (^{<8105>}Job 1:5); others take in all his sorrows and troubles; which, through the changeableness of the world, and the uncertainty of all things in it, and the various providences of God, he feared would come upon him at one time or another; and this he mentions to justify his expostulation, why light and life should be continued to such a man, who, by reason of his fear and anxiety of mind, never had any pleasure in his greatest prosperity, destruction from the Almighty being a terror to him; (^{<8123>}Job 31:23); but I think it is not reasonable to suppose that a man of Job’s faith in God, and trust in him, should indulge such fears to such a degree; nor indeed that he could ever entertain such a thought in him, nor even surmise that such shocking calamities and distresses should come upon him as did: but this is to be understood not of his former life, in prosperity, but of the beginning of his afflictions; when he heard of the loss of one part of his substance, he was immediately possessed with a fear of losing another; and when he heard of that, he feared the loss of a third, and even of all; then of his children, and next of his health:

and that which I was afraid of is come unto me: which designs the same, in other words, or a new affliction; and particularly the ill opinion his friends had of him; he feared that through these uncommon afflictions he should be reckoned an ungodly man, an hypocrite; and as he feared, so it was; this he perceived by the silence of his friends, they not speaking one word of comfort to him; and by their looks at him, and the whole of their behaviour to him.

Ver. 26. *I was not in safety,* etc.] This cannot refer to the time of his prosperity; for he certainly then was in safety, God having set an hedge about him, so that none of his enemies, nor even Satan himself, could come at him to hurt him:

neither had I rest, neither was I quiet; which also was not true of him before his afflictions, for he did then enjoy great peace, rest, and quietness; he lay in his nest at ease, and in great tranquillity; and thought and said he should die in such a state, (see ^{<K&OIS>} Job 29:18), etc. nor is the sense of these expressions, that he did not take up his rest and satisfaction in outward things, and put his trust and confidence in his riches, and yet trouble came upon him; but this relates to the time of the beginning of his troubles and afflictions, from which time he was not in safety, nor had any rest and peace; there was no intermission of his sorrows; but as soon as one affliction was over, another came:

yet trouble came; still one after another, there was no end of them; or, as Mr. Broughton renders it, “and now cometh a vexation”; a fresh one, a suspicion of hypocrisy; and upon this turns the whole controversy, managed and carried on between him and his friends in the following part of this book.